

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

298<sup>TH</sup> MEETING

FULL COUNCIL SESSION

Hyatt Centric French Quarter New Orleans, Louisiana

JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 1, 2024

**VOTING MEMBERS**

Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama  
 Kesley Banks.....Texas  
 Susan Boggs.....Alabama  
 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana  
 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi  
 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana  
 Tom Frazer.....Florida  
 Bob Gill.....Florida  
 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas  
 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi  
 Anthony Overton.....Alabama  
 Chris Schieble (designee for Patrick Banks).....Louisiana  
 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi  
 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS  
 C.J. Sweetman.....Florida  
 Ed Walker.....Florida  
 Troy Williamson.....Texas

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC  
 LT Carl Fuhs.....USCG

**STAFF**

Max Birdsong.....Social Scientist  
 Assane Diagne.....Economist  
 Matt Freeman.....Economist  
 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director  
 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer  
 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist  
 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel  
 Natasha Mendez-Ferrer.....Fishery Biologist  
 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer  
 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison  
 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager  
 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director  
 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant  
 Carly Somerset.....Fisheries Outreach Specialist

1

2 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

3 Anthony Angello.....

4 Kindra Arnesen.....

5 Major Dean Aucoin.....LA

6 Ryan Balsinger.....

7 Tony Barnes.....

8 Suzanna Blake.....NMFS

9 Charles Braat.....

10 ASAC Terrell Bradford.....NOAA OLE

11 Ryan Bradley.....Long Beach, MS

12 Eric Brazer.....Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance

13 Brandon Branch.....Crystal River, FL

14 William Callis.....Augusta, GA

15 Laura Chicola.....

16 Ben Choi.....Tampa, FL

17 Mike Colby.....Clearwater, FL

18 Taylor Coke.....

19 Bruce Cromer.....

20 Scott Daggett.....Madeira Beach, FL

21 Bill Dantuono.....

22 Jason Delacruz.....FL

23 Tim Dillingham.....FL

24 Taryn Duong.....

25 Derek Engle.....

26 Jessica Essig.....

27 Jeff Fahrenkopf.....

28 John Fidi.....

29 Alex Fischer.....

30 Richard Fischer.....LA

31 Sonja Fordham.....

32 Troy Frady.....Orange Beach, AL

33 Jamie Gaspard.....

34 Robert Grable.....

35 Jim Green.....Destin, FL

36 Ken Haddad.....ASA, FL

37 Brian Hansen.....

38 Sean Heverin.....Madeira Beach, FL

39 Scott Hickman.....Galveston, TX

40 Sean Hodson.....

41 Chris Horton.....Congressional Sportsmen Foundation

42 Dylan Hubbard.....FL

43 Jesse Hunt.....FL

44 Michael Jennings.....Freeport, TX

45 Bradley Jones.....

46 Caleb Joiner.....

47 Randy Lauser.....

48 Jennifer Lee.....NOAA

1 Brian Lewis.....Clearwater, FL  
2 Stephanie Lockhart.....Las Vegas, NV  
3 Lissa Lynckner.....BOEM  
4 Kerry Marhefka.....SAFMC  
5 Lawrence Marino.....LA  
6 Peter Mudrak.....LGL, TX  
7 Josh Murphy.....Madeira Beach, FL  
8 Rob Murphy.....FL  
9 Patrick Neukam.....Madeira Beach, FL  
10 Christina Package-Ward.....NMFS  
11 Steve Papen.....Madeira Beach, FL  
12 Angalette Parent-Perez.....  
13 Kelia Paul.....Panama City, FL  
14 C.J. Peppe.....Tampa, FL  
15 Clay Porch.....SEFSC  
16 Charlie Renier.....FL  
17 Evan Rexroat.....  
18 Michael Rubino.....NOAA  
19 Richard Ryan.....FL  
20 Mark Scaglione.....  
21 Eric Schmidt.....FL  
22 Will Schmidt.....  
23 Clay Shidler.....Crystal River, FL  
24 Chris Smalley.....FL  
25 Andrew Smith.....  
26 Duane Smith.....NOAA General Counsel  
27 Kay Smith.....  
28 Randy Sobieraj.....  
29 Alex Spring.....Tampa Bay, FL  
30 Rondal Springston.....  
31 Stephen Stang.....FL  
32 Ryan Thillberg.....  
33 Moi Van.....  
34 Richard Vargas.....  
35 Kyle Varn.....  
36 Donald Veasey.....FL  
37 Ted Venker.....CCA  
38 Justin Visconti.....Naples, FL  
39 John Walter.....SEFSC  
40 Richard Warren.....FL  
41 Garner Wetzell.....Gulfport, MS  
42 Johnny Williams.....Galveston, TX  
43 Dale Woodruff.....AL  
44 Bob Zales.....Panama City, FL  
45 Zach Zistre.....Crystal River, FL  
46 Jesse Zuban.....Tarpon Springs, FL  
47  
48  
49

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1  
2  
3 Table of Motions..... 5  
4  
5 Call to Order, Announcements, and Introductions..... 8  
6  
7 Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes..... 11  
8  
9 Presentations..... 12  
10     Update on NMFS' National Seafood Strategy Regional  
11     Implementation Plan..... 12  
12     Update from BOEM on Wind Energy Development in the GOM.... 20  
13     Opportunities to Advance EEJ in GOM Fisheries through the  
14     Southeast EEJ Implementation Plan..... 32  
15     Discussion of Exempted Fishing Permit Application..... 40  
16  
17 Public Comment..... 45  
18  
19 Recommendation on Exempted Fishing Permit Application..... 121  
20  
21 Committee Reports..... 122  
22     Administrative/Budget Committee Report..... 122  
23     Law Enforcement Committee Report..... 136  
24     Data Collection Committee Report..... 138  
25     Shrimp Committee Report..... 146  
26     Sustainable Fisheries Committee Report..... 149  
27     Education and Outreach Committee Report..... 152  
28  
29 Supporting Agencies Update..... 162  
30     Louisiana Law Enforcement Efforts..... 162  
31     South Atlantic Council Liaison..... 164  
32     NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE)..... 236  
33  
34 Reef Fish Committee Report..... 171  
35  
36 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission..... 203  
37  
38 U.S. Coast Guard..... 206  
39  
40 Discussion of Council Planning and Primary Activities..... 208  
41  
42 Other Business..... 212  
43     Litigation Update..... 212  
44     Discussion of Annual Requirement for Red Grouper IA..... 215  
45     Discussion of 2024 Red Snapper For-Hire Season..... 215  
46     Discussion on Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary..... 222  
47  
48 Adjournment ..... 223  
49

TABLE OF MOTIONS

1  
2  
3 [PAGE 121](#): Motion to recommend approval of the exempted fishing  
4 permit submitted by LGL, Inc. [The motion carried on page 122.](#)

5  
6 [PAGE 123](#): Motion to accept the proposed changes to the SOPPs in  
7 Section 2.5 related to the SSC. [The motion carried on page 123.](#)

8  
9 [PAGE 124](#): Motion to accept the proposed changes to the SOPPs with  
10 the removal of "without cause" in Section 2.5.2. [The motion](#)  
11 [carried on page 128.](#)

12  
13 [PAGE 132](#): Motion to approve the proposed activities for Phase II  
14 of the Inflation Reduction Act. [The motion carried on page 132.](#)

15  
16 [PAGE 133](#): Motion to approve the number of recreational council  
17 members to be increased, at the Chair's direction, from two to  
18 three (two private and one for-hire). [The motion carried on page](#)  
19 [135.](#)

20  
21 [PAGE 140](#): Motion to direct staff to include Motions 1, 2, 3, 4,  
22 6 and 11 from the January 2024 Ad Hoc Charter-for-Hire Data  
23 Collection Advisory Panel into the charter-for-hire electronic  
24 data collection document. [The motion carried on page 142.](#)

25  
26 [PAGE 148](#): Motion to support the Shrimp Futures Project. [The](#)  
27 [motion carried on page 148.](#)

28  
29 [PAGE 150](#): Motion to approve the updated allocation review  
30 schedule. [The motion carried on page 150.](#)

31  
32 [PAGE 172](#): Motion in Action 1 to add an Alternative 3 to remove  
33 wenchman from the midwater snapper complex, but remain in the Reef  
34 Fish FMP. [The motion carried on page 172.](#)

35  
36 [PAGE 175](#): Motion to write a letter to NOAA's Office of Science  
37 and Technology and the states escalating the review and evaluation  
38 of the recreational effort extrapolation methodologies between  
39 MRIP-FES and state effort programs. These findings should be  
40 presented to the Gulf SSC and council as soon as possible. [The](#)  
41 [motion carried on page 180.](#)

42  
43 [PAGE 183](#): Motion to stop work on Draft Options: Gag Grouper  
44 Management Measures. [The motion carried on page 183.](#)

45  
46 [PAGE 184](#): Motion to make Option 2 the preferred. [The motion](#)

1 [carried on page 185.](#)

2  
3 [PAGE 185](#): Motion to approve the Abbreviated Framework Action:  
4 Modifications to Catch Limits for Gulf of Mexico Lane Snapper and  
5 that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and  
6 implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and  
7 appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary  
8 changes in the document. The Council Chair is given the authority  
9 to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and  
10 appropriate. [The motion carried on page 186.](#)

11  
12 [PAGE 187](#): Motion in Action 1 to add an Alternative 4 to require  
13 a commercial reef fish permit to maintain an account. [The motion](#)  
14 [carried on page 187.](#)

15  
16 [PAGE 189](#): Motion to request the SEFSC work with Gulf Council staff  
17 to outline a proposed action plan for revising aspects of the SEDAR  
18 process and planning to be presented at the spring SEDAR Steering  
19 Committee meeting to include consideration of state surveys  
20 becoming fully integrated replacements for FES, consideration of  
21 conducting assessments of some stocks outside of SEDAR, and the  
22 potential for utilization of other methods, such as interim  
23 assessments, for some species towards implementation of more  
24 responsive approaches. [The motion carried on page 196.](#)

25  
26 [PAGE 199](#): Motion to accept the proposed changes to the charge for  
27 the Ad Hoc Red Snapper/Grouper-Tilefish IFQ AP. Revised Charge:  
28 To evaluate and make recommendations relative to requirements for  
29 participation in the red snapper and grouper/tilefish individual  
30 fishing quota (IFQ) programs considered in Reef Fish Amendment 59  
31 and to modifications to IFQ shares and annual allocation  
32 distribution approaches proposed in Reef Fish Amendment 60. [The](#)  
33 [motion carried on page 199.](#)

34  
35 [PAGE 200](#): Motion to readvertise and repopulate the Ad Hoc Red  
36 Snapper/Grouper-Tilefish IFQ AP. [The motion carried on page 201.](#)

37  
38 [PAGE 201](#): Motion to direct the SSC to include consideration of  
39 the Great Red Snapper Count in the terms of reference for the  
40 planned benchmark assessment of Gulf red snapper. Consideration  
41 should be sensitive to the concerns expressed by the peer-review  
42 team during the SEDAR 74 Review Workshop. [The motion carried on](#)  
43 [page 203.](#)

44  
45 [PAGE 216](#): Motion to request the Regional Administrator reopen the  
46 red snapper for-hire fishery the Friday before Thanksgiving, if it

1 is determined that the red snapper for-hire ACT has not been met.  
2 [The motion was withdrawn on page 221.](#)

3

4

- - -

5

1 The Full Council of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council  
2 convened at the Hyatt Centric French Quarter in New Orleans,  
3 Louisiana on Wednesday morning, January 31, 2024, and was called  
4 to order by Chairman Kevin Anson.

5  
6 **CALL TO ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENTS, INTRODUCTIONS**  
7

8 **CHAIRMAN KEVIN ANSON:** Welcome to the 298<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Gulf  
9 Council. My name is Kevin Anson, chair of the council. If you  
10 have a cell phone, or similar device, we ask that you place it on  
11 silent or vibrant mode during the meeting. Also, in order for all  
12 to be able to hear the proceedings, we ask that you have any  
13 private conversations outside the room. Please be advised that  
14 alcoholic beverages are not permitted in the meeting room.

15  
16 The Gulf Council is one of eight regional councils established in  
17 1976 by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act, known today  
18 as the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The council's purpose is to serve as  
19 a deliberative body to advise the Secretary of Commerce on fishery  
20 management measures in the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico.  
21 These measures help to ensure that fishery resources in the Gulf  
22 are sustained, while providing the best overall benefit for the  
23 nation.

24  
25 The council has seventeen voting members, eleven of whom are  
26 appointed by the Secretary of Commerce and include individuals  
27 from a range of geographical areas in the Gulf of Mexico with  
28 experience in various aspects of fisheries. The membership also  
29 includes the five state fishery managers from each Gulf state and  
30 the Regional Administrator from NOAA's Southeast Fisheries  
31 Service, as well as several non-voting members.

32  
33 Public input is a vital part of the council's deliberative process,  
34 and comments, both oral and written, are accepted and considered  
35 by the council throughout the process. We will welcome public  
36 comment from in-person and virtual attendees.

37  
38 Anyone joining us virtually who wishes to speak during the public  
39 comment should register for comment online. Virtual participants  
40 that are registered to comment should ensure that they are  
41 registered for the webinar under the same name they used to  
42 register to speak. In-person attendees wishing to speak during  
43 the public comment should sign-in at the registration kiosk located  
44 at the back of the meeting room. We accept only one registration  
45 per person. Public comment may end before the published agenda  
46 time if all registered in-person and virtual participants have  
47 completed their comment.



1 A digital recording is used for the public record, and, therefore,  
2 for the purpose of voice identification, I would ask that meeting  
3 participants seated at the table identify him or herself, starting  
4 on my left.

5  
6 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** J.D. Dugas, Louisiana.

7  
8 **MR. BILLY BROUSSARD:** Billy Broussard, Louisiana.

9  
10 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** Chris Schieble, Louisiana.

11  
12 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** Joe Spraggins, Mississippi.

13  
14 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** Dale Diaz, Mississippi.

15  
16 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Dave Donaldson, Gulf States Marine Fisheries  
17 Commission.

18  
19 **MR. MICHAEL MCDERMOTT:** Michael McDermott, Mississippi.

20  
21 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Dakus Geeslin, Texas.

22  
23 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** Kesley Banks, Texas.

24  
25 **MR. TROY WILLIAMSON:** Troy Williamson, Texas.

26  
27 **MS. KERRY MARHEFKA:** Kerry Marhefka, South Atlantic Council  
28 liaison.

29  
30 **LT. CARL FUHS:** Carl Fuhs, U.S. Coast Guard.

31  
32 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Mara Levy, NOAA Office of General Counsel.

33  
34 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Andy Strelcheck, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast  
35 Regional Office.

36  
37 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Clay Porch, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Fisheries  
38 Science Center.

39  
40 **MR. BOB GILL:** Bob Gill, Florida.

41  
42 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Tom Frazer, Florida.

43  
44 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** C.J. Sweetman, Florida.

45  
46 **MR. ED WALKER:** Ed Walker, Florida.

47  
48 **DR. ANTHONY OVERTON:** Anthony Overton, Alabama.

1  
2 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Susan Boggs, Alabama.

3  
4 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Carrie Simmons, council staff.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** As many of you know, we had a couple of individuals  
7 who were very much involved with the council process that passed  
8 away last year, and so I would like to take a couple of moments to  
9 talk about them.

10  
11 The first is Dr. Robert, or Bob, Shipp, and his impact across  
12 marine fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico is hard to quantify, because  
13 it was so multifaceted and far-reaching. He influenced policy at  
14 the council for eight terms, which is twenty-four years, and he  
15 served as chair and vice chair multiple times during his tenure.

16  
17 While Dr. Shipp produced vast amounts of science throughout his  
18 career, his signature research was focused on the value of  
19 artificial reefs for the production of red snapper and other key  
20 game species. His work can be partially credited for Alabama's  
21 first-place standing as the state with the largest artificial reef  
22 network in U.S. waters.

23  
24 He was a mentor to countless students at the University of South  
25 Alabama, where he spent much of his career as a professor and  
26 researcher. Bob also served as a liaison between the scientific  
27 community and the fishing public, bringing awareness to the species  
28 and science unique to our region. He served as the head judge for  
29 the Alabama Deep-Sea Fishing Rodeo for years, and he published *Dr.*  
30 *Bob Shipp's Guide to Fishes of the Gulf of Mexico*, a comprehensive  
31 reference on finfish in the Gulf.

32  
33 Dr. Shipp had a knack for translating complex science into easily-  
34 understandable information appropriate for audiences that range  
35 from everyday fishermen to members of Congress. As a friend, Bob  
36 was always quick with a kind word and prepared to share a tale of  
37 adventure on the high-seas. His loss is a great loss for the  
38 entire Gulf of Mexico.

39  
40 The next individual that I would like to recognize is Mr. Charlie  
41 Bergmann. Charlie was a dedicated professional whose passion for  
42 fisheries and marine conservation was unparalleled. Charlie's  
43 career spanned decades of impactful work in fisheries management  
44 and conservation, throughout a variety of roles, working for the  
45 Mississippi Department of Marine Resources, NOAA Fisheries, and  
46 the Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

47  
48 Charlie served on the council's Reef Fish and Coastal Migratory

1 Pelagics Advisory Panels for many years, where his insights and  
2 leadership were invaluable. He regularly attended council  
3 meetings, and he always shared a valuable perspective and  
4 contributed helpful advice. Charlie's contributions have been  
5 recognized with numerous awards, including the Director's Award  
6 from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and multiple bronze  
7 medal awards from the United States Department of Commerce,  
8 highlighting his commitment to innovation and excellence in his  
9 field.

10  
11 Beyond his professional achievements, Charlie will be remembered  
12 for his unwavering passion for the wellbeing of our marine  
13 ecosystems and the communities that depend on them. His legacy  
14 lives on in the policies that he shaped and the lessons that he  
15 imparted to many of us in this room. Thank you. Next is the  
16 Adoption of the Agenda. Are there any changes that need to be  
17 made to the agenda? Dr. Simmons.

18  
19 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

20  
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could we add  
22 a short discussion of the annual request for interim analysis on  
23 red grouper?

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes. Added. Ms. Boggs.

26  
27 **MS. BOGGS:** I would like to add a discussion about the red snapper  
28 charter-for-hire 2024 season.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you. Mr. Diaz.

31  
32 **MR. DIAZ:** I would like to see if Ms. Levy could give us a  
33 litigation update.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I think that is on the agenda. Yes. Anyone else?  
36 Is there a motion to accept the agenda with the added items? We  
37 have a motion by C.J. Is there a second to the motion?

38  
39 **MS. BOGGS:** Second.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing  
42 none, the motion carries. Next up is Approval of the Minutes from  
43 the last Full Council meeting. Are there any changes that need to  
44 be made, or comments made on the minutes? Is there any opposition  
45 to accepting the minutes as written? All right. Seeing none, the  
46 minutes are approved.

47  
48 That will take us to Presentations, Tab A, Number 7, and we have

1 an update on NMFS' National Seafood Strategy Regional  
2 Implementation Plan, and it will be presented by Dr. Rubino. Are  
3 you online, sir?

4  
5 **DR. MICHAEL RUBINO:** I am, yes. Can you hear me okay?

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We can hear you just fine. Go ahead, please.

8  
9 **PRESENTATIONS**

10 **UPDATE ON NMFS' NATIONAL SEAFOOD STRATEGY REGIONAL**  
11 **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

12  
13 **DR. RUBINO:** All right, and I will ask to have slides advanced as  
14 I go, and so thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and to the whole  
15 council for having me on to provide you with a little bit of  
16 background and a preview of what this National Seafood Strategy  
17 Implementation Plan is about and where we're going with it.

18  
19 We all remember that, in 2020, really our world turned upside down  
20 with COVID, and seafood markets in the U.S. were severely  
21 disrupted, with a loss of revenue, and, yes, we've come back  
22 gradually from that, during the past several years, but, in the  
23 past decade, we've also been dealing with the effects of changing  
24 climate. In some parts of the country, you've got moving stocks,  
25 stock collapses, and, in your part of the world, there's certainly  
26 been some intense storm events that have disrupted the seafood  
27 industry, infrastructure, docks, working waterfronts, and it has  
28 made life difficult, in terms of rebuilding efforts.

29  
30 During that process, both internally, in terms of our leadership  
31 team and staff consultations, and also talking to a wide variety  
32 of people in the U.S. seafood industry and our partners, we have  
33 been thinking about and gathering ideas on, well, how do we deal  
34 with climate change going forward, and how do we get ready for the  
35 next market disruption, and, in the longer-term, how do we build  
36 a more resilient commercial U.S. seafood production industry?

37  
38 Over the past several decades, we've done a huge amount of work  
39 together under Magnuson, putting together management plans and  
40 rebuilding plans for all of our fisheries, and we've heard, loud  
41 and clear, that the survey work, and the allocations done through  
42 the fishery management councils, continue to be a critical and  
43 essential service that the Fisheries Service provides to the U.S.  
44 seafood industry, but we've also heard, in the face of climate  
45 change and market disruptions, that that's no longer sufficient to  
46 maintain a healthy industry, and that we, as an agency, need to  
47 work with all of you on refocusing and strengthening the industry  
48 services part of what we do as an agency, and I'm going to give

1 some examples in a minute, as well as to work across federal and  
2 state agencies to leverage sort of a whole-of-government approach  
3 to strengthening the seafood industry.

4  
5 This is sort of the overview, and I think it gave you an idea of  
6 where we're headed with this. There's no new money to do this,  
7 with a few exceptions, and so partnership and leveraging are going  
8 to be key, as well as highlighting and building on what our  
9 existing capabilities are.

10  
11 Just a review of what the objectives of this strategy are, and I  
12 mentioned resilience. We want to get greater value from  
13 production, and we want to increase seafood production, both from  
14 wild-capture and aquaculture, where possible. In the face of some  
15 of the consolidation and global pressures, we also want to make  
16 sure that we maintain a diversity of opportunity in the industry,  
17 and we want to put more U.S. seafood on U.S. plates.

18  
19 As I said, this has been a year or two-year process, with wide  
20 discussions, and we've got over a hundred -- I think actually 150  
21 individual comments on the seafood strategy itself, including from  
22 the Southern Shrimp Alliance, the Reef Fish Shareholders, and  
23 others in the Gulf region, and so thank you very much for all of  
24 your comments and suggestions. Most of the comments we got were  
25 that the seafood strategy itself was great, but the comments  
26 focused on what are we going to do in terms of implementation, and  
27 what are we going to focus on, and so that's what we're working on  
28 right now.

29  
30 The seafood strategy is divided into wild-capture, aquaculture,  
31 the market access, both international and domestic, and then a  
32 catchall on the blue economy, how do we support infrastructure and  
33 workforce development through economic and market analyses, and,  
34 today, I just wanted to sort of slice the pie a little bit  
35 differently and give you a preview of the kinds of activities we're  
36 thinking about, but grouped by sort of action or activity, and the  
37 first one is the socioeconomic analysis.

38  
39 This is the one place where we actually have a little bit of new  
40 money to work, and that acronym "CEFI" stands for climate and  
41 ecosystem fishery initiative, where our scientists are, over the  
42 next three years, going to build a variety of regional climate  
43 change models, looking at potential scenarios for what climate  
44 does to various fisheries stocks.

45  
46 Well, to that, we're going to do economic, market, and social  
47 science analysis as well, and so what kinds of costs are involved  
48 here, and how is industry going to shift in the face of climate

1 change, and what does that do to markets? How do we recapitalize  
2 the fleet, or change gear type and so on, and so bringing this  
3 kind of data, and analysis, to councils, to the council process,  
4 to stakeholders in general, could be a critical, and a relatively  
5 low-cost, way to provide additional information, so that you as  
6 councils, and as an industry, can make decisions going forward in  
7 the face of all these uncertainties.

8  
9 Another grouping of activities that we do is we don't act alone,  
10 and we need to do a better job of leveraging federal, state, and  
11 other partners and participants in the seafood industry. Yes, we  
12 work collaborative with Sea Grant, and our seafood inspection  
13 program provides a lot of the specifications for USDA's seafood  
14 purchase programs, food assistance and school lunch programs, but  
15 we've also got the Economic Development Administration, the  
16 Department of Transportation, other parts of USDA, the Rural  
17 Development Program, the Agricultural Marketing Service, and how  
18 can we work more closely with them to bring their assets and  
19 resources to bear to support the seafood industry?

20  
21 We've also got an aquaculture program that works with the Army  
22 Corps and EPA and states to get, you know, oyster farming permits  
23 through the permit process, as well as looking longer-term, and,  
24 in your region of the world, the aquaculture opportunity areas,  
25 and so looking at the best places to do aquaculture and to get the  
26 environmental type of analyses out of the way before permit  
27 applicants come in, and so that's an -- Those are just examples of  
28 coordination and leverage that we would like to focus on.

29  
30 We also want to tell the story of U.S. seafood, and to tell that  
31 story better, and, you know, we often hear that U.S. producers  
32 aren't getting credit in the marketplace for all the good work  
33 that we do collectively under Magnuson, and we're not getting a  
34 price premium for sustainability, or shelf space for U.S. products,  
35 and so how do we communicate that to consumers, to opinion makers,  
36 to key decision-makers, that maintaining a healthy and sustainable  
37 U.S., both wild-capture and aquaculture sectors, are important to  
38 this country, and to tell that story?

39  
40 We then also have a variety of other program tools, and all of  
41 those acronyms are the program or headquarters offices that work  
42 with our regional offices and science centers, and so the  
43 international -- You know, we live in a global marketplace, and so  
44 both leveling the playing field for U.S. producers, in terms of  
45 the Seafood Import Monitoring Program, which is undergoing a whole  
46 rethink at the moment, to assistance on exports.

47  
48 The Seafood Inspection Program is important in terms of, if you

1 want to export to markets in other countries, or have your product  
2 processed in another country, the Seafood Inspection Program can  
3 help. As I mentioned, the Seafood Inspection Programs work with  
4 USDA buying programs. We have an in-house bank, the Fishery  
5 Finance Program, which provides loans, and it wants to get more  
6 creative of how to do so-called blended finance, working with other  
7 investment providers in the seafood industry.

8  
9 Spatial planning is another tool, particularly that the National  
10 Ocean Service provides, and the ocean reports, which initially was  
11 developed for aquaculture, is now being used for offshore wind and  
12 working with the fishing industry to sort of locate offshore wind  
13 facilities in a way that disrupt, or works with, fishing and  
14 aquaculture, and there a number of other tools that we have going  
15 forward.

16  
17 Artificial intelligence, AI, is much talked about, and we're all  
18 trying to get our heads wrapped around that, in terms of what that  
19 does to both complicate and simplify our lives, and we have grant  
20 programs.

21  
22 Those are examples of our existing capabilities and how we would  
23 traditionally go about working on industry services and working  
24 with you on strengthening the seafood industry. We can also think  
25 about this on sort of a cross-sectional basis, where we can bring  
26 a variety of capabilities together, and a variety of federal and  
27 state agencies together, to work on particular challenges in the  
28 seafood industry, and, on Monday, I believe, John Walter provided  
29 -- He had a presentation to the council on the Shrimp Futures  
30 Project, and so shrimp, in the Gulf and the South Atlantic, is a  
31 case in point, where, if we don't do something collectively over  
32 the next several years, the difficulties, both in terms of import  
33 competition and high fuel prices, some of the infrastructure  
34 disruption from hurricanes, and how do we get out from under that  
35 and maintain and build on a very good product coming out of the  
36 Gulf and South Atlantic? At the moment, shrimp is, I think, about  
37 6 percent of the U.S. market for shrimp, and how do we get that  
38 back to 10, 12, 15, 20 percent?

39  
40 By bringing a whole variety of activities to work together,  
41 economic, leveraging the other agencies, telling the story,  
42 working with retailers and wholesalers, doing economic and social  
43 science analysis, and is that something that maybe we can do  
44 collectively, to focus on a particular challenge, and there are  
45 other examples in other parts of the country.

46  
47 At the moment, we're putting together a short implementation plan,  
48 basically a report to all of you on how this all fits together and

1 what we plan to do. We will welcome stakeholder and partner  
2 comment on that going forward, and this will be a living document,  
3 and it will help to inform our activities going forward, and so  
4 let me stop there and see if there are any questions, and thank  
5 you very much for listening.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Dr. Rubino. Do we have any questions  
8 from the council members? General Spraggins.

9  
10 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I appreciate your presentation, and I  
11 understand and agree with you, and I understand the shrimp  
12 industry, where we're at, is desperately hurting. I know that,  
13 when you're trying to get sixty cents, and eighty-five cents, you  
14 know, a pound, when it gets to the processor, that person can't go  
15 out and spend five-dollars for diesel per gallon and be able to  
16 upgrade, and I know that the USDA has come back, and I just saw  
17 the latest, where they're going to buy some of the frozen that's  
18 in stock, and be able to put it out, and that's helping some, but,  
19 you know, we can band-aid this thing all we want to, but, until we  
20 do something to stop the imports, I don't think we're ever going  
21 to be able to fix this industry.

22  
23 If we don't fix it shortly, we may not have an industry, because  
24 there's only so many of them still in it, and, when you're losing  
25 money every day, it doesn't take you long to figure out that you  
26 need to do something else, and so I really appreciate anything you  
27 all can do to help us. Is there some way of putting some type of  
28 tax, or embargo, or whatever on shrimp coming in? Is there some  
29 way of putting something to be able to help the shrimpers, and so  
30 I appreciate it.

31  
32 **DR. RUBINO:** Well, as I said, John Walter had a presentation  
33 related to all of this, and you've got Dave Donaldson, who is there  
34 with you today, who has been involved in some of these discussions,  
35 and we would very much like to get the advice of the Gulf Council,  
36 and the South Atlantic Council, on how to proceed with all of this.

37  
38 The Sea Grant programs are standing by to help as well, and our  
39 International Affairs Office, and the Seafood Inspection Program  
40 as well, are thinking about this, and so I very much look forward  
41 to working with all of you on shrimp and as an example of something  
42 we can do together under this rubric and the seafood strategy.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Walker.

45  
46 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My comments are exactly those  
47 of General Spraggins. On the last page here, it says that imports  
48 dominate U.S. market prices, due to lower -- Or U.S. market due to



1 lower prices, and that's the real issue here. These other things  
2 may be helpful, to some extent, and I'm not sure that it's the  
3 purview of this particular project, but I have to chime in here as  
4 well that the imports are what is killing our guys, particularly  
5 our shrimpers, and a tax, or a tariff, on imported shrimp, from  
6 this layman's perspective, seems like it would be helpful, and I  
7 obviously understand that might be outside the purview of this  
8 project, but that's the -- With people where I live, that's viewed  
9 as the number-one problem.

10  
11 **DR. RUBINO:** Well, I think we're all aware of that, and it is the  
12 purview of this project, in the sense that, yes, other federal  
13 agencies make decisions about tariffs, or import restrictions, or  
14 quality decisions about imports, but we, as an agency, working  
15 with you, can provide information, and advice, to those agencies,  
16 in terms of economic and market analysis, and so our International  
17 Affairs Office plays that role, and the Seafood Inspection Program  
18 plays that role, but we can also, I think, work on -- In the  
19 meantime, not give up on the U.S. market. There are buyers in the  
20 U.S. for U.S. shrimp, and it's a great product when it comes out  
21 of the water, and how do we get that shrimp into premium markets,  
22 as well as mainstream markets, in the United States and continue  
23 to do that in the face of these price pressures? It's not easy,  
24 but there's a willingness to work with all of you, and, once again,  
25 I mean, we've had this challenge now for some time.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.

28  
29 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Rubino. I appreciate the  
30 presentation, and I think you kind of answered most of what I was  
31 going to ask here, but I would like to reiterate what General  
32 Spraggins said, and Mr. Walker. From Louisiana's perspective, the  
33 price has just plummeted, and, obviously, we know these things are  
34 -- We talked about it with Dr. Walter's presentation on Shrimp  
35 Futures during the Shrimp Committee, and that will probably be on  
36 the AP agenda, and it would be good if, I think, this presentation  
37 would be available to the Shrimp AP meeting as well, coming up in  
38 March.

39  
40 I believe we're also going to ask for some information to be  
41 presented at our upcoming March 6<sup>th</sup> Shrimp Taskforce meeting on all  
42 of this strategy for our shrimpers locally, but, if it wasn't for  
43 the USDA purchasing of shrimp over the past couple of years in  
44 Louisiana, I don't even know if our fleet would be in the current  
45 status that it's in, and that has helped tremendously, and I would  
46 encourage future purchasing of shrimp product in that manner, until  
47 we can get this situation of dumping of imported shrimp controlled,  
48 at least from the federal level. The states just don't have the

1 resources, at the time, to handle that, and I think we need as  
2 much help as we can get. Thank you.

3  
4 **DR. RUBINO:** A shoutout to the agency's Seafood Inspection Program  
5 there, and, I mean, certainly congressional requests helped, but  
6 the Seafood Inspection Program has been working tirelessly behind  
7 the scenes with USDA on the specifications and the inspection of  
8 the seafood that's purchased by USDA for those programs, and I  
9 just wanted to make sure that everybody realizes that we're working  
10 hard behind the scenes on that one.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** General Spraggins.

13  
14 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, sir, and, if I could, another quick  
15 appeal, and, you know, you talked a little bit about education,  
16 and you talked a little bit about marketing, in a sense, and, you  
17 know, obviously, getting people in America to understand what  
18 they're buying, and, when they buy something from a grocery store  
19 or whatever, what are they really getting, and is there a way that  
20 we can put a lot more emphasis on it?

21  
22 I mean, obviously, the shrimp that's coming from imports is not  
23 the quality of shrimp you're getting from the Gulf of Mexico, or  
24 other parts of the United States, and what I'm getting at is, you  
25 know, we try to put it on -- I saw where Alabama is trying to pass  
26 a law that you have to put where it came from, the origin, and I  
27 know Louisiana, I think, has that. Mississippi is trying right  
28 now, but the point is, is the USDA going to back it?

29  
30 Are they going to turn around and do anything about it, whenever  
31 there's a restaurant and they don't put anything on it, or they  
32 don't serve it the right way, and is there a way -- You know, the  
33 education level is there, and we need to get the education to the  
34 people, and we also need to back it, and we need the United States  
35 government, and NOAA could help us with this, so that they could  
36 be able to back this and be able to tell people that you have to  
37 put -- You have to back it, and you have to tell the truth, but I  
38 believe, if you got enough information out there to the public, of  
39 how bad that shrimp is coming from other places, you might change  
40 some things anyway.

41  
42 **DR. RUBINO:** One very quick example of the kind of outreach and  
43 education we can do is -- I'm here in the Mid-Atlantic, the  
44 Washington, D.C. area, and there's a grocery Mid-Atlantic --  
45 Actually, a national grocery chain that features domestic shrimp,  
46 and they work with a local wholesaler that sends trucks down from  
47 North Carolina all the way to Florida, depending upon the season,  
48 and they truck fresh, headed, on-ice shrimp to their supermarkets

1 overnight, and they feature that, and it tells a great story, and  
2 so we're thinking about doing some videos, with short video clips,  
3 around that, so it could make it on Instagram and Facebook and so  
4 on, for people to see how it goes from the boat all the way to a  
5 supermarket, and it's fresh, literally within hours.

6  
7 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you for the presentation, and, as you mentioned,  
8 the agency doesn't have a lot of funding to put towards this  
9 initiative, and so we're going to leverage the capacity of other  
10 organizations, and, besides the issues that have already been  
11 brought up, one of the big issues, in our neck of the world, is  
12 the loss of working waterfront. As people get priced out,  
13 commercial fishermen can't afford to keep their boats anywhere  
14 where it's convenient. Having said that, I noticed, and I think  
15 it was Slide 8, that you mentioned DOT's Port Infrastructure  
16 Development Program, and I wonder if you could elaborate on that,  
17 how that might help.

18  
19 **DR. RUBINO:** It sounds like that was Clay Porch.

20  
21 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, it was, Mike.

22  
23 **DR. RUBINO:** We've got a couple of colleagues who are learning  
24 about what the Department of Transportation does in the field of  
25 supporting the seafood industry, and we're a little more familiar  
26 with the Economic Development Administration and some of the things  
27 they've been doing recently to support towards seafood  
28 infrastructure, through some of their grant programs, their  
29 business development programs.

30  
31 I can get back to you in the future with more details about the  
32 Department of Transportation, and we're in a learning mode with  
33 them. We've come a little further with EDA, as well as with some  
34 of the USDA programs, both with the agricultural marketing service  
35 and rural development and their loan guarantee programs, and so  
36 that doesn't quite answer your question, but that's where we are  
37 at this point.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Simmons.

40  
41 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you,  
42 Dr. Rubino, for the presentation. I have some planning questions  
43 for you, regarding the slide that's up, for spring of 2024, where  
44 it says regions identify potential pilots, and can you tell us a  
45 little bit more about that, and how you see engaging with the  
46 council, the APs, and what we should be thinking about during this  
47 process, because that's not too far away.

1 **DR. RUBINO:** So far, it's been informal. The Shrimp Futures  
2 Project sort of grew out of a series of discussions that John  
3 Walter and others have had, with Dave Donaldson and Sea Grant and  
4 myself, and that's one example of identifying a regional  
5 initiative, or a pilot project, or whatever you want to term it,  
6 but there are others that could emerge, and other parts of the  
7 country are thinking about things too, and so we don't have a  
8 formal process, but, if there's something in particular the council  
9 would like to work on, and work with the agency under this umbrella  
10 of a seafood strategy, and if the seafood strategy umbrella would  
11 provide an additional impetus for doing something that you want to  
12 do, we would be happy to talk about that.

13  
14 I think, for the shrimp initiative, it would be great to have the  
15 councils engaged, with the commission and the Sea Grant programs  
16 and the agency, on whatever is going to come out of that, so that  
17 it -- Because you're in close touch with many of the industry, in  
18 terms of what the key issues are.

19  
20 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you for that information, and  
21 I would just bring up to the council that, when we convened the  
22 Spiny Lobster AP, and I think it was last year, they brought up  
23 many of the same concerns regarding imports and tariffs and  
24 labeling and that kind of stuff, and so I don't know if the council  
25 wishes to also engage that industry or not.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Food for thought for the future. Does anyone  
28 else have any questions for Dr. Rubino? Seeing none, Dr. Rubino,  
29 thank you for being here today and presenting.

30  
31 **DR. RUBINO:** Thank you very much, and I look forward to the meetings  
32 in March that were mentioned.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Next on the agenda is an update from  
35 the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on wind energy development  
36 in the Gulf of Mexico and Ms. Lynckner. Hello and welcome.

37  
38 **UPDATE FROM BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT (BOEM) ON WIND**  
39 **ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN THE GULF OF MEXICO**

40  
41 **MS. LISSA LYNCKNER:** Good morning. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and  
42 members of the council. Good morning, everyone. My name is Lissa  
43 Lynckner, and I'm with the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. My  
44 title is Chief of Staff, and I like to say that nothing is not my  
45 job, including, lately, co-leading outreach and engagement for the  
46 renewable energy program in the Gulf of Mexico.

47  
48 I would like to also note that I'm born and raised here, and so I

1 was born and raised on the water. My family are commercial  
2 fishermen. My father was a shrimper and a crabber, and I think he  
3 was a little disappointed that I didn't want to run one of his  
4 shrimp boats, and I decided to go the science route, and I studied  
5 blue crab migration, and so thank you for having me.

6  
7 Two takeaways from today is that collaboration and continued  
8 communication, now and into the future, is going to be crucial,  
9 and so we have a lot of work ahead, and so thank you for this  
10 opportunity. We are grateful to continue to be able to present  
11 our process and show you where we are.

12  
13 One thing I wanted to note upfront is that, while it might appear  
14 that our process has changed over the last few years in the Gulf  
15 of Mexico, and that's due to our commitments to the Inflation  
16 Reduction Act and timeframes and things like that, which I will  
17 get into, but one thing that has not changed is our commitment to  
18 hear you, to listen and to incorporate important information, your  
19 information, into our process and our decision-making.

20  
21 Our mission is the offshore development and exploration for energy  
22 and minerals, and that is three miles out for most of the states,  
23 and it's nine miles out for Texas and Florida in the Gulf of  
24 Mexico. One thing that you can't see here, but it's important to  
25 note, is I'm talking about wind today, but we have four mission  
26 areas that are happening in the Gulf of Mexico.

27  
28 We have over 2,000 active leases for oil and gas, and we have our  
29 wind program, with our one lease, and then we have marine minerals,  
30 and we are in the process of doing analyses to understand the  
31 potential for carbon storage and carbon sequestration in the Gulf,  
32 and so, while we're talking about wind today, it's important to  
33 note our process internally for looking at all of these happening  
34 at the same time, as well as coordinating with the other uses in  
35 the basin.

36  
37 This slide is really busy, and this our national renewable energy  
38 process, or our status, and so the takeaway on what you see here  
39 is we've had twelve lease sales, total, nationwide, with one being  
40 in the Gulf. We have thirty-four active leases, one in the Gulf,  
41 and we have an administrative goal of thirty gigawatts by 2030,  
42 and that is only six years away. We currently have about six  
43 projects approved, and we would need about ten more, within that  
44 six year period, to reach this administrative goal, and so there's  
45 a lot of work coming, and we don't have all the answers. It's  
46 meetings like this, and it's coordination and cooperation, that's  
47 going to get us across the finish line.

1 Focusing on the Gulf of Mexico, I want to give a background on how  
2 we got to where we are and an overview of our process. In the  
3 interest of time, I'm going to touch on some of those, and, if we  
4 have further questions, I can certainly follow-up, because the  
5 nugget of our talk is where are we today and where are we going in  
6 the next year or so.

7  
8 Where we started. In 2020, the Governor of Louisiana requested a  
9 taskforce, and so, later that year, we responded with recommending  
10 a regional taskforce, and, in just a six-month time period, we  
11 turned around our inaugural intergovernmental taskforce that  
12 includes Texas -- That includes Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama,  
13 and Texas.

14  
15 It's important to note that the Gulf of Mexico -- There are many  
16 advantages for why renewable energy would be advantageous here.  
17 The proximity to the supply chain, but not only the supply chain,  
18 but the workforce and the rich history of data and studies and  
19 science we have here as we develop the program.

20  
21 There are some challenges, and they're not insurmountable, but the  
22 windspeed is one, and the market price is one, and also designing  
23 technology that can withstand hurricane winds, turbines and rotors  
24 that can withstand that. It's not insurmountable, but  
25 opportunities.

26  
27 Looking at our process for renewable energy, there's four parts.  
28 There is the rigorous planning and analysis phase that happens in  
29 advance of the federal government allowing a company to get a  
30 lease, and that's where we've spent the last -- Most of our time  
31 here in the Gulf of Mexico, and then, outside of that red box, and  
32 I will get back to the red box, but the next phase would be site  
33 assessment, and we have a rigorous site assessment analysis phase  
34 before we would allow a company to go in and construct and operate,  
35 and so, looking at where we are in the Gulf of Mexico, we're inside  
36 of that red box right now. We're in the planning and analysis  
37 phase for Gulf of Mexico II, and, for Gulf of Mexico I, we are  
38 right on the edge of the box.

39  
40 We had our first lease sale last year, in August, and we had one  
41 lease, and so we're in the process of communicating with them, and  
42 they will be providing their communication plans to us.

43  
44 For Gulf of Mexico Wind II, we are -- We have finished the area  
45 identification process, and so which areas could be considered for  
46 leasing areas, and our next step would be, if given the go ahead,  
47 to publish leasing documents that would offer leasing siting areas  
48 for comment.

1  
2 This is a more detailed version of that process, looking out from  
3 the onset of our process all the way through installation, and so  
4 the takeaway for this is so how do we gather input throughout our  
5 process? I want to note, and I'm going to walk through each of  
6 those tan boxes briefly, but our process to gather input is  
7 ongoing. We are internally developing our strategy, and it's  
8 getting better each month, on how to continue the conversations  
9 regularly, and so we would like to understand the concerns, and  
10 begin to develop solutions, before we get to timeframes where we  
11 have a formal comment period, a formal stake in the ground.

12  
13 We want to -- By the time we get to say our first step, which would  
14 be request for information, where we're trying to understand the  
15 range of industry interest, and so our call for information and  
16 nominations, and what are the concerns that we should be  
17 considering in this large leasing area. In the area identification  
18 process, where we're now winnowing-down, and we're saying, okay,  
19 we heard your comments in the call, and now here's a subset of  
20 smaller areas. Before we even get to these formal comment periods,  
21 we want to have this relationship ongoing, and, when we're putting  
22 things out on the street, no one is surprised.

23  
24 There are some things, schedule-wise, in what we're allowed to  
25 communicate, as far as timeframes on things, and decisions on  
26 things, and those are mostly out of D.C., but we will let you know  
27 as soon as we can, and those continued relationships, and  
28 communication, will help make sure we're all -- That we're not  
29 surprised by things.

30  
31 This is just a real quick rendition of our process. We found it  
32 beneficial, from looking at years of success from operations and  
33 lessons learned in the Gulf of Mexico for programmatic, getting  
34 the big picture right there, getting all the players at the table  
35 that have some interest to understand their perspective and to  
36 understand their concerns, and so starting larger, taking  
37 comments, and winnowing to a smaller area, to a smaller area, to  
38 a smaller area, and so, by the time that we get down to where a  
39 lease would actually be, these are highly deconflicted, and they  
40 are well communicated.

41  
42 How do we do that? Well, a comment that we received in one of our  
43 comment processes, the call for information, somebody recommended  
44 that we partner with NOAA and using their spatial planning model,  
45 and we call it ocean planning. There's a few different names for  
46 it, but this has been -- This has been a journey for BOEM, and so  
47 we started in the Gulf of Mexico, and using a spatial model, where  
48 we are taking all of the data that we have in the Gulf and

1 overlaying it, and I have some examples in subsequent slides, but  
2 this has now been adopted by all the other regions, and so this is  
3 an example of we create a suitability -- It's a suitability model,  
4 and so we're looking at which areas are most deconflicted, and we  
5 target those for wind, and the conflict span the range.

6  
7 We have fifty-four datasets, and those include anything looking at  
8 economic factors, looking at logistics factors, fisheries factors,  
9 industry and operations, and so looked at the presence-absence,  
10 and also the quantification of those -- Of the data in determining  
11 which areas were up to 95 percent deconflicted, and so this is an  
12 example of a data layer.

13  
14 On the left, we have shrimp data, and on the right we have pelagic  
15 bird data, and so this is -- Basically, this is showing how we are  
16 assessing things, and we want to minimize overlapping areas that  
17 we're planning wind where we would see there would be impact with  
18 these resources.

19  
20 From this process, the ocean planning process, we were fortunate.  
21 We have a very large area in the Gulf of Mexico. Other regions in  
22 the nation don't have the large span to be able to assess and do  
23 this programmatic approach, but, from there, we wanted to assess  
24 what are the best locations for wind, and these thirteen areas,  
25 which we're calling wind energy options, came out of the model,  
26 and that was the starting point for us to begin the further  
27 winnowing, to where we could offer a lease.

28  
29 Bringing us to our first lease sale, we finalized two wind energy  
30 areas out of those thirteen options, and that was Wind Energy I  
31 and Wind Energy M, and then we further partnered with NOAA and the  
32 National Center for Coastal Ocean Science team, NCOS, and we  
33 winnowed further to determine where the best lease siting areas  
34 are, where we have the least impacts on fisheries and shrimping,  
35 on birds, on shipping, on port access, et cetera, and they  
36 identified three areas that we offered in the last lease sale.

37  
38 One significant comment we received from industry is that they had  
39 to be at least 100,000 acres, and so each of the three that we  
40 offered in the last lease sale, two south of Galveston and one  
41 south of Lake Charles, they were greater than 90,000.

42  
43 Another thing that we wanted to note today, and I think we  
44 mentioned this before, but we offered two bidding credits in the  
45 last sale. One bidding credit was a 20 percent bid credit for  
46 contributions to workforce training and supply chain development  
47 and then a 10 percent bid credit for contributing to a fisheries  
48 mitigation fund, and this was to be comparable to the fisheries



1 mitigation fund that is required by OCSLA, the Outer Continental  
2 Shelf Lands Act, similar to the oil and gas program.

3  
4 The takeaway for this is we found it necessary to incentivize this  
5 type of mitigation, but BOEM does not administer the funds, and  
6 BOEM does not manage this process, and so the developer is  
7 responsible for applying for it, and they're responsible for either  
8 finding a third party or, like in the Northeast, they have gathered  
9 together in a coalition to help manage this fund, but BOEM does  
10 have oversight and review, but we are not administering it.

11  
12 Looking at the sale, fifteen companies qualified, two companies  
13 bid, and one company won our one lease off of Lake Charles, and  
14 that was RWE.

15  
16 What does that mean? It was \$5.6 million, and, you know, if the  
17 uptake becomes electricity, it can power over half-a-million  
18 homes, and so this was a success, in our opinion, not only to have  
19 our first lease sale in the Gulf, but because of the process and  
20 the community built along the way. We did this together.

21  
22 Looking more closely are where we are with that specific lease, we  
23 have gone through -- All the way to issuing the lease, and, like  
24 I mentioned earlier, we're working with them for their  
25 communication plans, and, within the next few months, we will begin  
26 working with them on their site assessment planning. Following  
27 that, they would move into site assessment surveys, and then  
28 submitting a construction and operation plan that we would review  
29 and conduct environmental analyses.

30  
31 So where are we going? What does our future potential look like?  
32 As I mentioned earlier, we had thirteen wind area options, and two  
33 were finalized in our first sale. We had eleven remaining options  
34 to consider, starting last summer, and so, in June of last summer,  
35 we were given the directive to look into what a second sale in the  
36 Gulf of Mexico for renewable energy would look like, and, again,  
37 we went back to our stakeholders, our federal partners, our tribes,  
38 and we wanted to industry, and to industry, what of these eleven  
39 make sense for you, and do you have additional concerns? Are there  
40 things that we missed? We started with these eleven, and we  
41 started our engagement process again, and we are daily talking to  
42 everyone, trying to understand what of these eleven should we move  
43 forward with.

44  
45 We were looking for new data or information to consider, and we  
46 had just finished a very extensive outreach and engagement for the  
47 whole entire area that resulted in the thirteen areas, but now we  
48 were -- Again, six months to a year later, we're looking more

1 closely at the remaining eleven, and were there additional space  
2 use conflicts that we hadn't considered?

3  
4 This time, we ran into -- We were continuing our outreach and  
5 engagement, but we are now going to consider comments for winnowing  
6 further in our proposed sale notice, if that comes out in -- You  
7 know, there's still not a decision on it, but if that comes out in  
8 the next few months or so. The takeaway for this is we went back  
9 to everyone, and we asked them again, you know, and these are the  
10 specific questions we asked. We sent them out to our stakeholder  
11 list, and we had a roundtable in August of last year, where we  
12 heard back in-person, and we heard back in writing, and that  
13 information was brought forward and helped us narrow down the final  
14 wind energy areas that we put out last fall.

15  
16 In October of last year -- From June to say August, September,  
17 October, we were heavily talking to everyone. Again, we do not  
18 have all the answers. We talked to the Coast Guard, and we talked  
19 to the Southern Shrimp Alliance, and we talked to industry, et  
20 cetera, and which areas should be on or off the table as we consider  
21 our second sale, and the input that we received, some substantive  
22 input, is 100,000 acres is significant, and so that eliminated a  
23 number of the areas that were less than 100,000, and then industry  
24 was interested in east of I, and so that also eliminated.

25  
26 We worked closely with Southern Shrimp Alliance, and there was  
27 some issues with one of our wind energy areas that had mid to high  
28 shrimping activity in it, and we knocked that WEA off the table,  
29 or wind energy area, and so we came down to what we thought was a  
30 well-informed four remaining areas, and that was J, K, L, and N,  
31 and they're tiny on there, but it's essentially everything -- The  
32 WEAs that were east of the ones we had finalized last year.

33  
34 Now there is a total of five, because, when we had the sale last  
35 year, two of the leases in I did not sell, and so we have a pool  
36 of wind energy areas, and that's what we're considering as we look  
37 at Wind 2. This does not mean that every wind energy area is going  
38 to have a lease area in the next sale, and it just means that we  
39 done extensive analysis, and outreach and engagement, on these  
40 areas, and this is what we have, and this is our pool to consider.

41  
42 What are our next steps? Internally, we have worked with the NCOS  
43 team to look at siting for lease areas in each of those final five  
44 wind energy areas, and we have prioritized them, and we are now  
45 internally in the process of recommending them to our leadership.  
46 No decisions are made whether we're going to have a sale, and no  
47 decisions have been made whether we're going to put a proposed  
48 sale notice document out, but we are working on it, and we will be

1 ready.

2  
3 The point of the proposed sale notice would be to minimize, again  
4 -- We're going to take the comments, and inputs, that we would  
5 receive during that comment period, and we would minimize any  
6 potential impacts to our leasing areas, within our leasing areas,  
7 and we would have, within that timeframe, another  
8 intergovernmental taskforce, along with our small working  
9 meetings, and we don't say this too often, but you can call us  
10 anytime, and we will set up a meeting, and so we're always -- We're  
11 interested in comments, and feedback, at any time.

12  
13 Again, we don't have a decision on a sale, and we don't have  
14 specific timeframes, but, if you do some math, and you use the  
15 requirements from the Inflation Reduction Act, we had our last oil  
16 and gas sale on December 20 of last year, and our leases for wind  
17 would have to be signed by December 20 of this year, and it's about  
18 sixty days to get that done following an auction, and so, if you  
19 back-calculate, we would have some leasing documents coming out in  
20 the spring and summer, and potentially an auction in the early  
21 fall, but, if we don't have a sale this year, we would have an oil  
22 and gas sale next year, in 2025, and that was recently put out in  
23 the national program, and we would have a year from then, and that  
24 is what I have. Thank you.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Ms. Lynckner, for the detailed  
27 presentation, and, to respond to your initial comments, before you  
28 got into the presentation, we certainly appreciate all of the  
29 outreach that you have done, and the information that folks from  
30 BOEM have provided to us, and the openness of the process that you  
31 all did ultimately choose to do the wind energy here in the Gulf  
32 of Mexico, and so, again, just we really appreciate your  
33 willingness to come and provide us this information. It's very  
34 helpful, and so thank you. Do we have any questions? Mr. Schieble.

35  
36 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Ms. Lynckner. I appreciate BOEM coming  
37 and updating us at each of these meetings. I think it's good to  
38 see how the timeline progresses forward and where we are in the  
39 timelines, and it's been a long process, and so it helps to update,  
40 and, also, I appreciate BOEM sending us someone local, that knows  
41 Louisiana, who understands Louisiana fisheries, to present this  
42 stuff to us, and I think that's important at each of the regional  
43 meetings.

44  
45 I actually have a bird question for you, believe it or not, and so  
46 I'm not the bird guy, but I venture out into the fourth floor of  
47 our building once in a while, and talk to the wildlife guys, and  
48 some of their concerns, with these wind leases, are the migratory

1 birds that come through in those areas on the Gulf, and I noticed  
2 the slide show talks about pelagic bird consideration of twenty-  
3 four species, and was there consideration also for migratory birds,  
4 even though this is a Gulf fisheries council, but bear with me.

5  
6 **MS. LYNCKNER:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble, for your question.  
7 Absolutely, and so we worked really closely with the Fish and  
8 Wildlife Service, and they provided data to us to -- Actually, I  
9 can't remember what slide it is, but the example that I showed you  
10 was a dataset from them, where we worked with them, and we actually  
11 implemented buffers to minimize the overlap of the migratory bird  
12 pathway with our plans for where we put the windfarms, or allow  
13 the lease that could potentially be a windfarm, and so, yes,  
14 absolutely, and we are always open, as more information is coming  
15 out, if we need to adjust our analyses. Thank you.

16  
17 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Good. Thank you. I appreciate the answer.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Gill.

20  
21 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ms. Lynckner,  
22 for coming. I have commented before, but I very much appreciate,  
23 echoing the comments that have already been made, you all's  
24 frequent appearances at council meetings and getting the word out  
25 and keeping everybody up-to-speed.

26  
27 My question is looking down the road, unfortunately negatively,  
28 but the sale from Number 1 was, as I understand it, disappointing  
29 to the agency, and what are BOEM's thoughts relative to Sale Number  
30 2, if they're similar or worse, in terms of response to your lease  
31 sale? Are you thinking, for example, of moving forward with a  
32 third iteration, or what are your thoughts, if things go south of  
33 where you're planning to be, of what steps you might take?

34  
35 **MS. LYNCKNER:** Thank you for that question, and so I would have to  
36 actually say that we were pretty ecstatic, even though we had one  
37 lease, and we moved pretty quickly in our leasing process, due to  
38 our community we have here in the Gulf of Mexico, the community of  
39 collaboration we already have, and some lessons learned that we  
40 pulled from how to get things done in the Gulf of Mexico, and so,  
41 when looking at the timeframe from the initiation of our first  
42 taskforce to when we got a lease issued, we are -- It was only  
43 like two-and-a-half years, and we're pretty ecstatic about that,  
44 and it's a stake in the ground, and it's a starting point.

45  
46 Even though, yes, we would have liked a greater turnout, and we  
47 spent probably the better part of the last fall trying to  
48 understand what happened, and there's some macroeconomics in

1 there, and there's some inflation issues, and we've learned a lot  
2 about what happened, per se, but, looking forward, as we continue  
3 to talk to industry, consistency is really important.

4  
5 One thing we've learned is, when we were putting out annual lease  
6 sale schedules, something they could plan on, it was helpful to  
7 them, and so, whether or not this is the perfect time for a second  
8 sale, we know that our consistency, over time, is going to help  
9 everybody understand, and so, as we move forward with putting that  
10 potentially next sale, the second and third, we're looking forward  
11 to creating that same kind of framework that industry, and our  
12 resource partners, have looked to for planning and consistency  
13 purposes, because we asked industry what's a good time for you,  
14 and they were like, well, and not that we're basing it all on that,  
15 but it's like when would the timing be, and they can't give a good  
16 answer, and so we can do what we can do, which is provide  
17 consistency.

18  
19 **MR. GILL:** Thank you for that, and so, if I read between the tea  
20 leaves here, barring hitting the jackpot on Lease 2, there is a  
21 likelihood of continuing follow-on lease sales until you get to  
22 whatever goal you're trying to achieve, and is that a fair  
23 statement?

24  
25 **MS. LYNCKNER:** I would say we're definitely looking ahead and  
26 planning. The decisions haven't been made, and not only are we -  
27 - You know, we're collaborating according with the state, and those  
28 are key partners in helping some of this, and, when they make --  
29 Like Louisiana has administrative goals of five gigawatts by 2035.  
30 When they come out with things like that, as we can coordinate  
31 with them, other states of Mississippi, Alabama, and Texas, all of  
32 that -- It's all a piece of the puzzle, and so, yes, we're  
33 definitely -- We have a positive outlook, and we -- It's going to  
34 happen, but it's just getting it all -- It's just getting us all  
35 in the same room for years to be innovative and make it happen.

36  
37 **MR. GILL:** Thank you.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.

40  
41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Ms. Lynckner, for being here. It's great  
42 to meet you in-person, and I appreciate all the coordination you've  
43 had with my office. I was going to ask a similar question to Bob  
44 Gill, and so I won't ask that, but I just want to, I guess, use  
45 the time to say thank you. You know, going forward, obviously,  
46 we're interested in working very closely with you on the Gulf Wind  
47 2 wind energy areas and lease siting, and we had provided,  
48 obviously, a comment letter, and we appreciate all the coordination

1 that's going on with the shrimp industry in particular, and it's  
2 great to know that they've been really onboard, and you've been  
3 engaging them heavily, and certainly the marine spatial planning  
4 process has been super helpful in deconflicting things.

5  
6 Obviously, from the Fisheries Service, kind of the trust resources  
7 that we manage, we see better and worse areas for lease sites, and  
8 so we'll, obviously, want to weigh-in and look at, obviously, the  
9 next steps, but I look forward to continued collaboration. Thank  
10 you.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Last question, Dr. Porch.

13  
14 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you. Well, I wanted to reiterate Mr.  
15 Strelcheck's comment commending BOEM for adopting the marine  
16 spatial planning approach and the habitat suitability modeling  
17 that NCOS spearheaded, and, just in case any of you don't know,  
18 both the Southeast Regional Office and the Southeast Center, you  
19 know, worked very hard to construct several of the data layers  
20 that were included in there, including working with the  
21 stakeholder, and so I think it's an extremely powerful tool, and  
22 it's one of the best examples of proactive deconfliction we have,  
23 and so great job on that one.

24  
25 Then I also wanted to thank BOEM, and one of those data layers was  
26 a protected resources data layer, and BOEM is interested in  
27 continuing the funding for the aerial survey, and other surveys,  
28 for large whales, Rice's whale, et cetera, and so that's going to  
29 be very important, since these are sited in areas where we see a  
30 variety of whales, and so we need that baseline, and so thank you  
31 for your interest there.

32  
33 I did want to ask you kind of a follow-up question on the potential  
34 for unsolicited lease requests, and whether that will follow some  
35 similar marine spatial planning process, and if you could elaborate  
36 on that a little bit, and what's the process for evaluating  
37 suitability of these unsolicited proposals?

38  
39 **MS. LYNCKNER:** Thank you for bringing that up. That's one thing  
40 that I didn't touch on, and so there's two avenues to obtain a  
41 lease, and one is through our formal leasing process, where we  
42 actually have a lease auction, and then there is the ability to  
43 come in and put a proposal in for an unsolicited lease.

44  
45 I think that we've heard there's a perspective that this looks  
46 like it's going around, and I can see how that sounds, or it could  
47 sound like that, but it's important that I communicate that we  
48 would absolutely use the NCOS model for every unsolicited proposal

1 that comes in, and so that's our plan at this point. It is not a  
2 go-round, and it becomes its own individual formal process, and so  
3 there are some ways of -- If it's within areas that we've already  
4 done NEPA, and we've already done consultations, that could  
5 shortcut some things, because we can do determinations of NEPA  
6 adequacy and things like that, but, if it's in its own area,  
7 outside of what we've already studied, it's going to get the full-  
8 blown analysis.

9  
10 We have a few that have come in, and we have looked at -- We have  
11 actually worked with the NCOS team to analyze -- They were actually  
12 east of our current call area, and we have worked with them,  
13 through the NCOS process, and we actually reported back to the  
14 company that you wanted this big area, and we find this area most  
15 suitable, based on the model output, and so we absolutely find  
16 working with the team beneficial, and we look forward to continuing  
17 that, even on these unsolicited proposals.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you again, Ms. Lynckner, for being here and  
20 giving the information today. We really appreciate it.

21  
22 **MS. LYNCKNER:** Thank you.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We are scheduled for a break at 12:15, and we  
25 have an hour-and-fifteen-minute break for lunch. We're currently,  
26 or at least as of a little while ago, we have enough people  
27 registered to go through to five o'clock, and so I'm anticipating  
28 that maybe a few more will trickle in, and so I'm trying to keep  
29 our time schedule for lunch, to make sure we start on time, but we  
30 do have two agenda items before we get to lunch at 12:15, and so,  
31 Andy, I'm guessing -- Looking to you, do you want to try to do  
32 both, and do you think you have time? I think there is something  
33 under the exempted fishing permit applications, and so I don't  
34 know if that needs to be done first, before public comment.

35  
36 **MR. STRELCHECK:** My concern is that we really want to spend some  
37 time talking to you about the equity and environmental justice  
38 presentation, and I feel like we would be rushed if we try to cram  
39 that in, but we also have staff here that have come in to give the  
40 presentation in-person, and I don't know their schedules and where  
41 we can move that to on the agenda, and so we need to factor that  
42 in. I think we could certainly talk about the exempted fishing  
43 permit.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Then we will proceed with the next  
46 agenda item, and that is Opportunities to Advance Equity and  
47 Environmental Justice in the Gulf of Mexico Fisheries through the  
48 Southeast EEJ Implementation Plan, Tab A, Number 9. Mr.

1 Strelcheck.

2  
3 **OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EEJ)**  
4 **IN GULF OF MEXICO FISHERIES THROUGH THE SOUTHEAST EEJ**  
5 **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**  
6

7 **DR. SUZANNA BLAKE:** Good morning, everyone. My name is Suzanna  
8 Blake, and I am an anthropologist with the Southeast Fisheries  
9 Science Center. This project is a collaboration between the  
10 Southeast Fisheries Science Center and the Regional Office, and so  
11 I co-presenting today with Dr. Christina Package-Ward, and so I'm  
12 going to go right in, because we are pressed for time.  
13

14 As a reminder, NOAA Fisheries released its first national equity  
15 and environmental justice strategy last May. This strategy  
16 establishes a national framework for advancing EEJ across all  
17 facets of our mission-related work. While the framework helps to  
18 promote consistency and clarity in our objectives and approaches  
19 across the nation, it also emphasizes a regional approach, and so  
20 it specifically asks each region to develop a joint Regional Office  
21 and Science Center implementation plan, and this plan is due this  
22 coming April.  
23

24 The emphasis on the regional approach is meant to recognize the  
25 particular circumstances and challenges, as well as opportunities,  
26 that each region faces. For the Southeast, it's essential to  
27 tailor our approach to our communities and their particular  
28 circumstances. Last year, in August and October, Andy updated you  
29 on our efforts to engage the Southeast communities and to develop  
30 our regional implementation plan, and he also talked about some of  
31 the key insights and takeaways from our first engagements.  
32

33 Here is a brief recap of the several different strategies we have  
34 employed to engage communities. We conducted twenty focus group  
35 meetings with underserved community members and liaisons across  
36 the region, including eight focus groups around the Gulf of Mexico.  
37 In Panama City, Florida, Hurricane Idalia disrupted our plans for  
38 a focus group, and so we conducted an informal scoping meeting  
39 there.  
40

41 In addition to focus groups and scoping meetings, we also solicited  
42 broader stakeholder input through public requests for information,  
43 which was published in the Federal Register on July 21 and closed  
44 on September 30, and we also organized a virtual multilingual  
45 listening session that was conducted in English, Spanish, and  
46 Vietnamese, and this was the first engagement of this kind in the  
47 Southeast, and our goal was to ensure that nobody had barriers in  
48 terms of attending and listening to our information.



1  
2 I will briefly present on some of the key things we've learned  
3 through this effort. First of all, I want to mention that  
4 organizing these initial conversations with underserved  
5 communities was extremely challenging, and this was mainly because  
6 we didn't have much information on these communities, and we didn't  
7 know who they were, and we have learned that we need to learn more  
8 about the challenges they face, and we need to learn about their  
9 culture and history, to be able to better engage them.

10  
11 Some of the things we've heard are that we need to further  
12 diversify our communications and outreach platform. We should  
13 think about things like where they live, their language, their  
14 education, and how they use technology is very important. We heard  
15 that communities would like us to be more present, by working with  
16 people they already trust, like port agents, field staff, Sea  
17 Grant, and community NGOs. This is to share information better,  
18 to build trust, and, most importantly, to ensure that the work we  
19 do at NOAA Fisheries is grounded in the realities that these  
20 communities face.

21  
22 We also learned that we have to act fast, and we've heard some of  
23 that conversation today in relation to the shrimp situation, and  
24 some of the issues, like those affecting fishing community  
25 survival, are urgent, like the IFQ and other infrastructure-  
26 related challenges, and the message was clear that, if we don't  
27 act fast, there might be no fisheries, or communities, left to  
28 save.

29  
30 We also heard that many underserved communities don't feel their  
31 perspectives, and their viewpoints, are understood, considered, or  
32 presented, because they don't see themselves, or someone like them,  
33 at the decision-making table. They also feel that big industries  
34 and federal projects harm their communities and the resources they  
35 depend on, and, lastly, we learned that they want us to focus on  
36 solutions. They are counting on us to work together, and not just  
37 within our group, but also with other state and federal agencies.

38  
39 Now I will turn my focus to some of the steps we have been taking  
40 to formulate our original implementation plan. We heard many,  
41 many ideas from our communities across the Gulf, and across the  
42 Southeast region, about the things we could do to help address and  
43 identify barriers and advance our national EEJ objectives. I want  
44 to pause for a second to acknowledge our SERO colleague, Heather  
45 Blough, who has coordinated this massive effort, and she's done a  
46 tremendous job.

47  
48 Since Andy briefed you last fall, a small team of Regional Office

1 and Science Center staff has been working to compile this  
2 information into a list of potential items, action items, that we  
3 could incorporate into our regional implementation plan. We also  
4 developed some corresponding metrics.

5  
6 To organize this information, we decided to bin the items by  
7 national objectives, and also to incorporate several sorting and  
8 ranking criteria to support efforts to prioritize inclusion of  
9 these action items, and we color-coded them to distinguish several  
10 different types of categories of issues that were identified from  
11 the process.

12  
13 For example, some action items, like translating more information,  
14 are seemingly straightforward, things that we can do right away to  
15 increase access and opportunities to decision processes. Other  
16 action items, like addressing market challenges in shrimp and IFQ  
17 fisheries, and to create a more level playing field, would require  
18 partnerships to accomplish them. We adopted, from our national  
19 strategy, several action items that seemed appropriate to include  
20 in our plan, considering our regional context, and we also  
21 highlighted other actions, and issues, that we have commonly heard  
22 throughout this process, but that we don't believe are best  
23 addressed in an EEJ implementation plan.

24  
25 The result of this work was more than 300 specific action items,  
26 which we then consolidated to about 170, and the substantive items  
27 we've included in our briefing book for feedback are those that  
28 are most relevant to the work that we do, that you do, and they  
29 might include some items that communities asked us to consider  
30 that we may determine to be inappropriate or unfeasible, for  
31 reasons like the fact that they are outside of the scope of this  
32 effort, or they're not really in our purview to address, or because  
33 they require resources that are not readily available.

34  
35 Many of the items we've included are not funded, but are being  
36 retained at this point so that we don't lose sight of them. If we  
37 determine that work is needed, and additional funds become  
38 available, then we have the list there. We can also use this  
39 information to leverage resources, if we need to make it happen.

40  
41 We understand that there is a lot there to review and provide  
42 feedback on. Dr. Package-Ward will provide a preview of the types  
43 of things that we are considering under each objective on the  
44 remaining slides, and we will be asking for your feedback, at the  
45 end, on the more specific items on the list we've provided, and,  
46 just to guide some of the feedback, some of the questions, that  
47 she is going to be asking, is are you seeing things there that  
48 resonate with you, that you would like to support if you had the

1 funding to do so? Have we identified any actions that you feel  
2 you could support with existing funding? Are we considering  
3 anything that concerns you or that you would like to discuss in  
4 more detail, and are you already doing work in a particular area  
5 that you want to make sure we capture and acknowledge in our plan?  
6

7 Now I will let Dr. Package-Ward go through some of the action items  
8 that we've identified in our region under each national strategy  
9 objective.

10  
11 **DR. CHRISTINA PACKAGE-WARD:** The research and monitoring objective  
12 in the national strategy aims to broaden the research and  
13 monitoring work that we do to identify and characterize underserved  
14 communities, so that we can better understand and address the  
15 impacts of our decisions on their livelihood and culture.

16  
17 These are some of the types of actions that we're considering under  
18 that topic, and our first area of focus is the identification and  
19 assessment of the needs of these communities. This includes a  
20 thorough analysis of the barriers and challenges that they  
21 encounter in engaging in both fishing and aquaculture. Another  
22 item is to assess equity across the entire fisheries value chain,  
23 which means examining equity issues from seafood consumers to  
24 commercial fishermen.

25  
26 Also included were a number of topics regarding impact assessments,  
27 such as the projected versus actual outcomes of management actions  
28 and the effects of climate change, offshore wind developments, and  
29 seafood imports. We have action items focused on better  
30 integrating local and traditional ecological knowledge into the  
31 decision-making process, including the coproduction, and co-  
32 development, of stock assessments, and then we have identified  
33 additional research topics, like diversification, literacy issues,  
34 and addiction.

35  
36 The national outreach and engagement objective aims to ensure our  
37 communication platform, and languages and outreach activities,  
38 effectively reach underserved communities. For example, that we  
39 write and speak in plain language, that our documents are  
40 translated into appropriate primary languages, and that we share  
41 information about the work that we do in a way that is  
42 understandable and clear, and the council is already doing some  
43 really commendable work in this area, including offering  
44 constituents the ability to provide public testimony virtually and  
45 recording council meetings and public hearings for those who aren't  
46 able to join at the scheduled time, and those are just a few  
47 examples.

48

1 Throughout the engagement process, we heard a lot of kudos from  
2 people that we spoke with in the Gulf about Emily's great work  
3 engaging with and communicating information to stakeholders, such  
4 as the work that she and Carly described yesterday and today during  
5 the Outreach and Education Committee.

6  
7 Additional action items we're considering under this topic would  
8 explore additional approaches and strategies that could be  
9 employed to reach communities with language, technology, and other  
10 communication barriers. For example, we heard that some  
11 communities could benefit from more traditional communication  
12 mechanisms, such as paper, rather than Fishery Bulletins, as their  
13 access to digital resources is limited, and that we have more work  
14 to do to improve our ability to use simple, plain language.

15  
16 There are some action items that focus on developing proactive and  
17 tailored approach outreach strategies for rural areas and target  
18 underserved populations, such as women, and on establishing or  
19 better using existing community liaisons for direct interaction.  
20 We'll be organizing a Sea Grant workshop on this topic later this  
21 year.

22  
23 We were also called to review our approaches to adapt to all  
24 education levels, and leveraging local insights for more effective  
25 outreach is a key focus area here, based on community suggestions,  
26 and probably one of the most simplest, and most effective, ways to  
27 better reach some of these communities, if we had the funding to  
28 so, is to translate more of our information products into  
29 appropriate primary languages and incorporate in-house  
30 multilingual liaisons to ensure seamless communication, and then,  
31 lastly, under this topic, we have also included actions to expand  
32 educational opportunities and the use of language that emphasizes  
33 that we're listening to you and considering community challenges  
34 and issues. Moreover, we're looking into forming partnerships for  
35 addiction and mental health support, acknowledging the significant  
36 role that these play in community wellbeing.

37  
38 The national policies and plans objective aims to incorporate EEJ  
39 into our policies in a way that helps us better serve communities  
40 that have been under or unserved in the past. Specific topics  
41 related, that were identified through engagement activities,  
42 focused on ensuring equitable access to offshore aquaculture and  
43 cooperative research opportunities, as well as fishery disaster  
44 assistance, seafood and permit markets, and fishery management  
45 decisions.

46  
47 So, for example, you will see several action items aimed to address  
48 market inequities in the shrimp and IFQ fisheries through the

1 national seafood strategy for shrimp, supporting your ongoing work  
2 on Reef Fish Amendments 59 and 60 for IFQ, and then other related  
3 activities. The Gulf Futures Project that John Walter briefed you  
4 about on Monday, and then Mike Rubino talked about today, would be  
5 a key component of this.

6  
7 We included several actions that we would like to explore with our  
8 observer program to improve cultural awareness in fishery  
9 observers. For example, developing new policies on training,  
10 perhaps address the feasibility of taking cultural issues into  
11 account when assigning observers to vessels, things like that, and  
12 then, finally, other policy-related actions focus on enabling us  
13 to better incorporate community feedback into our data collection,  
14 science and management processes, and simplifying survey and  
15 fishery permit requirements.

16  
17 The national benefits objective aims to more equitably distribute  
18 benefits among stakeholders by increasing opportunities and  
19 services to underserved communities and identifying and addressing  
20 any systemic barriers, for example complicated grants processes,  
21 that make it challenging for those with limited capacity to apply  
22 for funds.

23  
24 The types of actions we identify to achieve this focus on  
25 supporting communities include identifying staff, or partners, who  
26 can provide technical assistance with applications for grants,  
27 fishing permits, and fishery disaster assistance, establishing or  
28 supporting existing vocational training programs, as well as  
29 scholarship, internship, and mentorship programs, providing  
30 financial assistance through grants, or possibly by collaborating  
31 with our Fisheries Finance Office to explore options for increasing  
32 access to capital, and then there are several other action items  
33 under this objective focused on infrastructure, wind, and more  
34 general access barriers.

35  
36 The national inclusive governance objective aims to ensure that  
37 all stakeholders are equally welcomed and encouraged to  
38 participate in the decisions that affect them. The action items  
39 that we're considering to advance this objective would explore new  
40 strategies for increasing access for public meetings and input  
41 processes, including both feasibility of collaborating with  
42 partners to establish local hubs to support community  
43 participation and virtual meetings and the potential to provide  
44 financial assistance to support engagement efforts.

45  
46 Other action items aim to further diversify our various advisory  
47 bodies and committees, to ensure a broad range of perspectives are  
48 considered in decision processes, and we're considering the

1 feasibility of working with educational programs, like MREP, to  
2 address some of the educational needs we identify through this  
3 process.

4  
5 The empowering environment objective of the national strategy  
6 essentially directs us to create the support structure for all of  
7 this work that we talked about previously, and so action items  
8 intended to achieve this in the Southeast include providing  
9 specialized training for observers, port agents, and grant  
10 reviewers that is specific to their job duties, plain language  
11 training for all staff, and training all regional NMFS and council  
12 staff, as well as the various advisory panels and committees, on  
13 our regional EEJ objectives and implementation plan.

14  
15 Organizing interagency workshops to facilitate information  
16 sharing, leveraging resources, and forging partnerships to address  
17 more complex cross-jurisdictional challenges, like the imports  
18 challenge reported by shrimp fishers, and, finally, pursuing the  
19 resources that would be critical to support this work, including  
20 additional social scientists and EEJ coordinators throughout the  
21 region.

22  
23 How can you help? We're currently completing a series of internal  
24 staff-level conversations designed to help us review and refine  
25 the consolidated list of funded and unfunded actions and related  
26 performance metrics that we've developed, and then, most  
27 importantly, identify those actions that we have or can create the  
28 bandwidth to take on to demonstrate our commitment to this effort.  
29 These are also the issues that we would appreciate your feedback  
30 on related to the items that we've included in Tab A, Number 9(a)  
31 of your briefing book.

32  
33 Because our implementation plan is due to Headquarters on April 5,  
34 we're looking to receive your input by March 15. Specifically,  
35 we're looking to receive information about what the council already  
36 does to support EEJ efforts, and we did hear a lot, you know, of  
37 the great work that Emily is doing, Emily and Carly, and feedback  
38 about whether the additional actions identified are realistic or  
39 achievable if adequately funded, how you would like to prioritize  
40 the actions, and anything else the council could do to support EEJ  
41 efforts.

42  
43 We'll do our best to integrate and address any feedback you provide  
44 into the plan by our April 5 deadline, but it's important to note  
45 that this is a living document, and we'll continue to adapt and  
46 modify it in response to new information and lessons learned along  
47 the way, and we look forward to continued collaboration with you  
48 on this initiative. We would like to say thank you, thank you for

1 listening, and thank you for any feedback that you might provide  
2 on our action items.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Do we have any comments or initial  
5 feedback? It's a little tight for us to provide some comments,  
6 but does anyone have any initial thoughts on this? Mr. Schieble.

7  
8 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Well, since the timeline is not ideal for us to do  
9 this, but I was thinking we could come back in April, and we could  
10 provide a motion with a list, a prioritized list, or something  
11 like that, but how do you see this going forward now, now that we  
12 can't do that, and do we just give you a list?

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** They mentioned they have an April 5 deadline, and  
15 I don't know if that can be moved, or pushed back.

16  
17 **DR. PACKAGE-WARD:** It's a national deadline, and so I think it's  
18 pretty set, but I'm sure we could incorporate things later on too,  
19 if that --

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Go ahead, Chris.

22  
23 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I will just throw two things out and see if they  
24 stick to the wall here somehow, and, obviously, the IFQ situation,  
25 as you mentioned, and I think that would be a top priority for  
26 equity and justice within that system that we're working on  
27 currently, and also the shrimp situation, with imports, and those  
28 would be my top two priorities that I would suggest, if anybody  
29 else has any input.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.

32  
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just to make a few comments, first, thank you for  
34 the presentation, and the whole EEJ team for the work they've done,  
35 and it's been a monumental effort. It really has, and they've  
36 taken well over 300 ideas, concepts, issues and reduced them down  
37 to about 170 priority activities, which is still a tremendous  
38 amount.

39  
40 I hear the concerns about providing detailed input, given the short  
41 time schedule, and they're correct that there is a national  
42 deadline, but I would still encourage the council, if you want to  
43 provide input, that we could discuss this in April, and we'll  
44 continue to, obviously, use this plan as kind of a living document  
45 going forward.

46  
47 Carrie and I spoke earlier in the week, and I know, Carrie, you  
48 spoke with some of the EEJ team about some of thoughts and

1 reactions that you had, and we are very open to also having phone  
2 calls, you know, verbal conversations, to just get your input in  
3 this shorter period of time, and so I think there's a number of  
4 mechanisms and opportunities to provide feedback going forward.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I briefly talked with Dr. Simmons, and it sounds  
7 like it's a living document, as it was described, and so certainly,  
8 you know, these are important issues, and there's been a lot of  
9 work that's been put in, and so we really want to give it the  
10 appropriate amount of time, you know, for council members to really  
11 be able to digest this and think about these things and offer some  
12 information to answer the questions that have been asked of us  
13 today, and so I think that's what we'll shoot for, is to put it on  
14 the agenda for the April meeting, and then provide those comments,  
15 but certainly, you know, I guess, if you have an individual  
16 comments, you know, to help them, you can go ahead and do that,  
17 but I think it would be best maybe if we wait until April and have  
18 more of a unified message, potentially. Anyone else have any  
19 comments? All right. Well, thank you again for being here. We  
20 appreciate it.

21  
22 That will then take us to our next agenda item, and I'm looking at  
23 the time here, but we'll try to get the exempted fishing permit in  
24 as quick as we can, and so, Andy.

25  
26 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't know if Jenny -- Jenny Lee is going to  
27 present on this, and I'm not sure it will take very long, and so  
28 hopefully it can be a short discussion, as we're standing between  
29 lunch.

30  
31 **DISCUSSION OF EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT APPLICATION**

32  
33 **MS. JENNIFER LEE:** Good afternoon. NOAA Fisheries received an  
34 application for an exempted fishing permit from LGL Associates.  
35 Dr. Peter Mudrak is in the room, if you have questions after I  
36 share a brief summary. The EFP would allow LGL to test post-  
37 release mortality of bycatch in the Louisiana menhaden purse seine  
38 fishery, by retaining up to 400 individuals per species of  
39 federally-managed red drum, Spanish mackerel, and king mackerel.  
40 The research would start in mid-April, and the EFP, if approved,  
41 would be valid through December 31.

42  
43 LGL's goal, in conducting the activity under the EFP, is to assess  
44 the impacts of Louisiana commercial menhaden fishery and what it  
45 may have on management of federally-managed species in the Gulf.  
46 The research is funded by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries  
47 Commission. State commercial menhaden purse seine fisheries  
48 target menhaden and other clupeids, and previous studies indicate



1 that the federally-managed species of red drum, Spanish mackerel,  
2 and king mackerel have been incidentally caught.

3  
4 If you're not familiar with the fishery, it uses three techniques  
5 to remove bycatch, a roller bycatch reduction device, which is a  
6 hose cage designed for excluding very large species, an excluder  
7 grate that sorts menhaden and bycatch that passes through the hose  
8 onboard the vessel, and then a dewatering screen bycatch incidental  
9 -- Bycatch for incidental catch.

10  
11 The proposed research would evaluate the short-term condition of  
12 fish bycatch when they occur in the purse seine fish excluder  
13 grates, dewatering screens, and release chutes, with the goal of  
14 quantifying the survival of bycatch by species after quantifying  
15 the fish bycatch occurring in each exclusion method. LGL  
16 scientists would serve as observers on selected fishing trips  
17 throughout the course of the 2024 LA menhaden fishing season,  
18 characterizing the bycatch.

19  
20 Again, bycatch fish, including red drum, Spanish mackerel, and  
21 king mackerel, would be tagged and held in large flow-through tanks  
22 onboard boats used in the commercial sector for twenty-four hours,  
23 to assess the survival rates before being released, and the EFP  
24 would also allow LGL to lethally sample up to 200 individuals per  
25 species, to determine the sex of those captured federally-managed  
26 species and determine if the purse seine menhaden fishery may  
27 selectively catch one sex more than the other and what are the  
28 potential management implications.

29  
30 The fish that have already died during normal fishing operations,  
31 or that die in the survival study would be preferentially sexed,  
32 to minimize any additional mortality attributed to the study, and  
33 then additional fish would be lethally sampled, only as needed, to  
34 provide adequate sample sizes, and, if issued, the EFP would exempt  
35 the applicant from the following prohibitions: holding within a  
36 twenty-four-hour limit condition, the harvest of king mackerel and  
37 Spanish mackerel by purse seine, vessel limits of king mackerel  
38 less than twenty-four inches fork length exceeding 5 percent, and  
39 hopefully you know all your regs, possession limits of Spanish  
40 mackerel less than twelve inches fork length exceeding 5 percent,  
41 and then it would authorize the applicant to basically use the  
42 prohibited gear for harvest otherwise prohibited, and then, again,  
43 harvest, possess, offload, sale, or purchase of red drum, king  
44 mackerel, or Spanish mackerel in excess of the seasonal harvest  
45 limitations, but they're not planning to sell any of the catch.  
46 That is a very brief summary of the EFP that we're looking at.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any questions? I understand -- I don't see the

1 applicant, or is Dr. Mudrak -- He's raising his hand. Okay. Do  
2 we have any questions? Dr. Sweetman.

3  
4 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just one real quick one, and so the menhaden fishery  
5 -- Is this -- I'm curious the amount of time that will be spent  
6 potentially interacting with the offshore reproductive stock of  
7 red drum out there, and I'm just curious along those lines, how  
8 much the menhaden fishery interacts with that between state and  
9 federal waters.

10  
11 **MS. LEE:** I do not know the answer to that question. Would it be  
12 all right if I asked, or would we want to -- Is it okay to ask Dr.  
13 Mudrak to answer it?

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes. Welcome, Dr. Mudrak. We appreciate it.

16  
17 **DR. PETER MUDRAK:** The primary goal is just to quantify the total  
18 number of fish caught by season, and we're going to sample 400 net  
19 sets, split up by month, and so, when they do interact with those  
20 fish, they should show up in the study, and we'll get a better  
21 picture of when that's occurring, but I suspect they're going to  
22 catch red drum throughout the whole fishing season. I believe  
23 it's October, towards the end of the season, when the fish are  
24 actually in the spawning condition.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Geeslin.

27  
28 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've got a couple of questions.  
29 I presume we're identifying some data gap here, and what I heard  
30 you say is we're wanting to quantify the numbers that are caught  
31 during this fishing activity. If that's the case, I question why  
32 we're doing all this survivability kind of post-catch  
33 experimentation, and I also note that we're excluding both -- No  
34 reef fish or sharks, and is there a reason we're excluding sharks  
35 and reef fish?

36  
37 **DR. MUDRAK:** Well, reef fish are -- About once a decade, there  
38 have previously been bycatch studies, and there have not been,  
39 previously documented, any reef fish inshore, in the shallow, muddy  
40 water, and so, if we do happen to come across a reef fish, we'll  
41 -- We don't think we'll have enough sample size to assess survival,  
42 and we'll just weigh and measure and release that fish.

43  
44 Sharks, the original RFP did request that we assess survival, and  
45 so fish that go through those bycatch excluding devices are  
46 released alive, and, based on my limited experience on these boats,  
47 the first step -- If they don't go through the hose, like those  
48 fish at first glance appear like they could have very high

1 survival, and so that is very important, the management, if say 99  
2 or -- If 90 or 100 percent of those fish are surviving, versus 5  
3 percent.  
4  
5 The intention is to hold them in some large flow-through tanks for  
6 twenty-four hours. We did not request sharks, because they are  
7 large, ram-ventilating species, and we figured that trying to keep  
8 them alive in a tank for twenty-four hours was not going to be --  
9 It was not going to give us an accurate survival estimate, and you  
10 can sex them externally, and so we don't have to lethally sample  
11 any to determine sex ratios on sharks.  
12  
13 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Gill.  
14  
15 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I may have missed it, but I  
16 presume that the result of this work under this EFP will be  
17 provided to the Science Center?  
18  
19 **DR. MUDRAK:** I believe so. The study is being directed by the  
20 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, and we are supposed to  
21 try and actually produce some publications out of the results when  
22 it's over.  
23  
24 **MR. GILL:** Thank you.  
25  
26 **DR. MUDRAK:** Peer-reviewed publications.  
27  
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.  
29  
30 **MS. BOGGS:** So I want to clarify the Gulf States Marine Fisheries  
31 Commission is the one that has -- I mean, you're doing this study  
32 for them?  
33  
34 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dave.  
35  
36 **MR. DONALDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so this was actually a  
37 request by the Louisiana State Legislature, and we worked with  
38 LDWF and said that, on their behalf, we would send out an RFP and  
39 conduct this study, and so the funding actually came from the State  
40 of Louisiana, and we sent out RFPs, and we reviewed the proposals,  
41 and then LGL was selected as the organization to conduct it, and  
42 so that's kind of the background of this.  
43  
44 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.  
45  
46 **MS. BOGGS:** My understanding, because it's hard for me to read, is  
47 this is to determine the post-release mortality rate of these fish?  
48

1 **MR. DONALDSON:** Correct.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Gill.

4  
5 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the council  
6 recommends approval of the LGL EFP.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Maybe let's wait until Full Council, in case  
9 there's any public comment, and we can take that into consideration  
10 before we make the motion. I mean until after public testimony.  
11 Then we'll take it up. Thank you. All right, and so I think that  
12 will do it. Thank you very much. I appreciate it, and we are  
13 just -- We're fifteen minutes behind schedule. We're going to  
14 probably need an hour-and-fifteen minutes, but we will start  
15 promptly at 1:45.

16  
17 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on January 31, 2024.)

18  
19 - - -

20  
21 January 31, 2024

22  
23 WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

24  
25 - - -

26  
27 The Full Council of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council  
28 reconvened at the Hyatt Centric French Quarter in New Orleans,  
29 Louisiana on Wednesday afternoon, January 31, 2024, and was called  
30 to order by Chairman Kevin Anson.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Good afternoon, everyone. Public input is a vital  
33 part of the council's deliberative process, and comments, both  
34 oral and written, are accepted and considered by the council  
35 throughout the process.

36  
37 The Sustainable Fisheries Act requires that all statements include  
38 a brief description of the background and interest of the persons  
39 in the subject of the statement. All written information shall  
40 include a statement of the source and the date of such information.

41  
42 Oral or written communications provided to the council, its  
43 members, or its staff that relate to matters within the council's  
44 purview are public in nature. Please give any written comments to  
45 the staff, as all written comments will be posted on the council's  
46 website for viewing by council members and the public and will be  
47 maintained by the council as part of the permanent record.

1 Knowingly and willfully submitting false information to the  
2 council is a violation of federal law. We will welcome public  
3 comment from in-person and virtual attendees. Anyone joining us  
4 virtually that wishes to speak during public comment should have  
5 already registered online. Virtual participants that are  
6 registered to comment should ensure that they are registered for  
7 the webinar under the same name they used to register to speak.  
8 In-person attendees wishing to speak during public comment should  
9 sign-in at the registration kiosk located in the back of the  
10 meeting room. We accept only one registration per person.

11  
12 Each speaker is allowed three minutes for their public testimony.  
13 Please note the timer lights on the podium or on the webinar. They  
14 will be green for the first two minutes and yellow for the final  
15 minute of testimony. At three minutes, a red light will blink,  
16 and a buzzer may be enacted. Time allowed to dignitaries providing  
17 testimony is extended at the discretion of the Chair.

18  
19 If you have a cellphone or similar device, we ask that you keep  
20 them on silent or vibrating mode during the meeting. Also, in  
21 order for all to be able to hear the proceedings, we ask that you  
22 have any private conversations outside, and please be advised that  
23 alcoholic beverages are not permitted in the room. Please note  
24 that public comment may end before the published agenda time, and  
25 that won't happy today, and so we will go ahead and start, and I'm  
26 going to rotate. We've got, of course, two groups of people.  
27 We've got virtual, and we have in-person, and so I'm going to start  
28 with the in-person list, and then I'm going to go next to the first  
29 person, or the next person, on the virtual list, and then I will  
30 come back to the in-person list. First up then for the audience,  
31 or the public folks here in the audience, is Patrick Neukam.

32

### 33 PUBLIC COMMENT

34  
35 **MR. PATRICK NEUKAM:** Good afternoon. My name is Pat Neukam from  
36 Madeira Beach. I'm a charter fisherman, and I'm a recreational  
37 fisherman, and I'm a commercial fisherman with my son. My son has  
38 entered the commercial industry, and I wrote all of you an email,  
39 and I finished it with "a fisherman and a concerned father". If  
40 you have any questions about that, please ask me at the end, or  
41 email me or call me at another time.

42  
43 Right now, I want to -- I'm not going to yell at you, like everybody  
44 else is, about MRIP, and we know it's wrong. Everybody in this  
45 room knows it's wrong, and what I am going to talk about is SEFHIER.  
46 You want to make a system that you can have real-time knowledge of  
47 how the fishery is doing, the health of the fishery, and you will  
48 see it by SEFHIER.

1  
2 The reason I say that is you're going to have a group of fishermen,  
3 after it's established, that you will know the biomass of what the  
4 fishery is with this set of numbers, and, unlike the commercial  
5 guys, a charter trip is a segment of time, and so a commercial  
6 trip goes out there, and he catches 5,000 pounds of red grouper in  
7 a small period of time, or a large period of time, and that may  
8 not be caught as well, and documented as well.

9  
10 With the SEFHIER program, if you set it up right, you will know  
11 that he left there, and he caught fifty-seven red grouper, and he  
12 caught it in eight hours, seven, eight, ten, whatever the limit  
13 was, but they were legal-sized fish. You take that year over year,  
14 and, analytically, you should be able to tell what the recreational  
15 fishermen are doing and what the commercial fish are doing with  
16 the age comparison. That will give you -- With the right tool,  
17 and the right equation, it will give you an exact condition of the  
18 health of your fishery at the time.

19  
20 Okay. The biggest thing you've got to remember is these guys are  
21 experienced. They know what they're doing, and they know the  
22 fishery, and so, when you utilize that tool to reference it, it's  
23 the same people, year after year, and so, when you see a decrease  
24 in gag grouper -- For example, if you would have had this system  
25 up, and you would have seen that, look, half of our charter guys  
26 aren't limiting out, and they're not catching forty-seven gag on  
27 a trip, and they're catching thirty-two on a trip, that information  
28 is going to be there, and you will see that within months.

29  
30 You will be able to break it down week after week, year over year,  
31 compared to -- On October 1 through November 1, year after year,  
32 and we cannot -- We cannot dilute the system, but we have to make  
33 it simple, so that you get all their involvement, and they want to  
34 do this, because our side wants this fishery to be there. I want  
35 this to be here, and I want it here for my grandson, and I want it  
36 here for my great-grandson, and so this tool needs to be  
37 implemented correctly, and we need to do it quickly. Thank you.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Neukam. We have a couple of  
40 questions. Mr. Dugas.

41  
42 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Patrick. You did not mention the word  
43 "economics", and what is your opinion on that portion?

44  
45 **MR. NEUKAM:** I believe, if you want to know economics -- I'm  
46 worried that that is going to be your biggest nemesis, and so do  
47 we do commercial? Do we do the economics on everybody every year?  
48 Why not do an annual select group, and you get drawn, just like

1 you do in commercial, and, in my mind, I think that would work,  
2 because, if it's voluntary, it's skewed, right, and everybody  
3 agrees that voluntary information is skewed, but, if it's required  
4 by a certain percentage, on annual basis, it's not a continuous  
5 issue.

6  
7 The other option would be to do an annual report at the end of the  
8 year, because, if you look at economical, and I'm going to use the  
9 guy down in the Keys that's running a Freeman, my boat, and my  
10 boat cost a tenth of what his does, and so, if we look at this for  
11 economic disaster relief, his cost to keep his business running is  
12 going to be \$10,000 a month more than it is my business running,  
13 and so I believe -- I believe we need to really watch how we look  
14 at economics.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.

17  
18 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So, in your letter you sent to all of us, it was  
19 discussing what you felt were the best alternatives for the IFQ  
20 program, and you listed your four priorities, or goals, in there,  
21 and could I ask you a question about that? Do you feel like doing  
22 that? I know you only get three minutes.

23  
24 **MR. NEUKAM:** Yes. Go ahead.

25  
26 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So you listed cheaper access to the fishermen,  
27 remove public investment, reduce cost for the next generation,  
28 assist in removing outside industry influence, but you didn't  
29 mention the permit requirement. Any particular reason?

30  
31 **MR. NEUKAM:** So I didn't. We currently do not have a permit, and  
32 what I was saying our goals should be -- That is what our goals  
33 should be, and a permit -- I agree 100 percent that a permit should  
34 be required. To make that clear, a permit should be required,  
35 yes, but those were the things. The goal for the fishery, those  
36 were what I saw as most important, but, yes, a permit is --

37  
38 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you. It stuck out to me that it wasn't  
39 included, and so that's why I wanted to ask.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Neukam, thank you.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Next up, we have Donald Veasey.

44  
45 **MR. DONALD VEASEY:** Good afternoon, council. My name is Donald  
46 Veasey, and I am going to yell a little bit about MRIP, or not  
47 really yell, but anyway. I reside in west-central Florida, and  
48 I'm a recreational fisherman, and I fish primarily from headboats

1 and charters in the Gulf of Mexico. My comments today are  
2 concerning the suspect MRIP data that came out for both red grouper  
3 and gag grouper in 2023.

4  
5 There are glaring inconsistencies that need explanation from NOAA  
6 science before the entire industry sees job-killing restrictions  
7 and limited recreational opportunities to target these species. I  
8 was going to go into the actual data, but, after listening to  
9 yesterday's reef fishery presentation, it was apparent that the  
10 council is aware that there are glaring inconsistencies in the  
11 data being received from NOAA.

12  
13 We have to have better data, and we have to stop basing catch on  
14 such small numbers of intercepts. I personally would like to see  
15 NOAA also somehow figure out how weather affects the effort, as  
16 the high wave numbers occurred at the same time that the  
17 recreational fishery was experiencing bad weather last year,  
18 especially in west-central Florida.

19  
20 It's obvious, to the fishing community, that our access to the  
21 resource is in danger of being limited based on erroneous data,  
22 and it's unfortunate, because it reinforces narratives that  
23 agencies have agendas that aren't in the public's interest. I  
24 don't personally fall into that camp, but I do recognize how those  
25 narratives come about, based on issues like this.

26  
27 I call on the council to push back on NOAA's data, to make them  
28 accountable for how they came by these numbers, before we deny  
29 fishermen access to the resource and hurt jobs in the industry.  
30 Do not harm should be our overall guiding principle, and those are  
31 my comments for today.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, sir. I don't see any questions, but  
34 thank you. Next, we have Ken Haddad.

35  
36 **MR. KEN HADDAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman and council members. My  
37 name is Ken Haddad, American Sportfishing Association, and from  
38 the Big Bend area of Florida. First, we want to make you aware  
39 that, for the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, staff have  
40 indicated that a final rule will be released soon. You all made  
41 comments to the sanctuary on the proposed rule, and the council  
42 expressed concern about the implications on the protocol and the  
43 council's charge to manage fishery resources.

44  
45 We're concerned that the final rule, being imminent, is still  
46 unclear how the protocol for cooperative fisheries management may  
47 change and affect fisheries management, because no -- There is no  
48 opportunity for public review or comment.



1  
2 Because the council was a signee to the protocol, we ask the  
3 council to discuss the status of this document, perhaps at this  
4 meeting, and, if necessary, agenda in an in-depth public reviewed  
5 protocol for this -- For looking at this issue, and I have provided  
6 some information to several of you.

7  
8 We are okay with halting work on gag grouper. We're anxious to  
9 see the landings data for gag and red grouper and how that is  
10 resolved. Emily, we support the submission of the framework action  
11 on lane snapper, and the glass is half full, but we do recognize  
12 that, since MRIP-FES data are used, it will likely mean a revisit,  
13 if MRIP is ever sorted out.

14  
15 On MRIP, you have the FES survey issues that are undergoing a  
16 multiyear look, with a possible 30 to 40 percent overestimate in  
17 landings, and you have the red and gag grouper anomalies that made  
18 it out of S&T, and the red snapper SEDAR has sent the assessment  
19 back to the drawing board, because of the incomprehensible  
20 variables in the model, and there's probably things that we don't  
21 know about, and we can only conclude there is a systemic problem  
22 in the system, and it's failing your management, and so we hope  
23 that the council, and NOAA leadership at the highest levels,  
24 realize how serious this really is at this point and take action  
25 to understand that there is, at this point, a total lack in  
26 confidence in MRIP-FES.

27  
28 We did send you a letter asking to rescind the motion that was  
29 discussed yesterday in Assane's presentation. We do, based on  
30 what Mr. Strelcheck said, and I think confirmed by staff, that  
31 there are not going to be any FES conversions for OFL and ACLs,  
32 but we still think you should look at that motion and make sure  
33 it's relevant. Thank you.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Ken. Any questions? No questions.  
36 Thank you. Next, we have Ben Choi.

37  
38 **MR. BEN CHOI:** Good afternoon, council members. My name is Ben  
39 Choi, and I'm a recreational and commercial spear fisherman out of  
40 the Tampa Bay area. I've been fishing, and spearfishing, offshore  
41 for over twenty years, and the comments I'm making today are  
42 regarding the recent data used to make regulatory decisions in red  
43 grouper, gag grouper, and other reef fish fisheries.

44  
45 Council members, I believe we've come to a tipping point in the  
46 management of the Gulf fishery, at which you have the power to  
47 decide which way the decision is made. Do we continue to accept  
48 a, quote, unquote, best available science, such as MRIP, when we

1 know that it's categorically false, or do we use some common sense  
2 and put our foot down and throw out this flawed data? It's clear,  
3 to anyone, that MRIP is broken.

4  
5 The fact that members of the Office and Science and Technology can  
6 stand in front of the council yesterday and defend such a broken  
7 model goes to show how out of touch those who model our fishery  
8 are with the actual numbers that are out there. We have to move  
9 away from MRIP. We have to find a better solution. I'm here today  
10 to ask you two things, number one that you do not use MRIP data  
11 for management decisions until it's fixed, and number two that you  
12 hold the scientists who continue to put forth this flawed data  
13 accountable for the failure to provide accurate data.

14  
15 I have been involved in listening to fisheries meetings since I  
16 was high school, and I'm thirty-four years old now, and one trend  
17 that has always carried through is that fishermen are always  
18 complaining that the science is wrong, and the scientists are  
19 always saying that it's the best available data. However, we have  
20 finally come to a point where the science is so egregiously wrong  
21 that the scientists can no longer defend it.

22  
23 I'm just a simple fisherman, and I have no experience in coding or  
24 scientific models. However, anyone can see that this is  
25 categorically wrong. Now, I may come across as angry and hostile,  
26 but it's because the data that these scientists have put forth  
27 have had a large negative impact on myself, my friends, and the  
28 people in my community.

29  
30 Before last year's commercial gag quota reduction, 65 percent of  
31 our commercial spearfishing revenue was based off of gag grouper.  
32 65 percent. Imagine losing 65 percent of your income. We've had  
33 to scrounge around and change the way we dive and fish in order to  
34 replace this lost income with revenue from other species. It's  
35 been a struggle for my friends and myself to keep a profitable and  
36 viable commercial spearfishing business afloat.

37  
38 My friends who are charter captains booked all of their gag season  
39 out with their best clients. Last year, when the season closed  
40 early, based on flawed data from the scientists, those clients no  
41 longer had a reason to pay for a charter, and they cancelled.  
42 Hundreds of charter captains along the west coast of Florida lost  
43 tens of thousands of dollars of revenue due to flawed science, and  
44 I'm asking the Gulf Council not to rest until these scientists are  
45 held accountable. Until we have good, solid science, no one's job  
46 should be safe.

47  
48 Dr. Cody's presentation yesterday really struck a nerve with me,

1 because he asked everyone to be patient with the changes with MRIP,  
2 but I'm not sure he understands that people's livelihoods cannot  
3 wait. People's families cannot wait. I'm not sure if these  
4 scientists realize that they are literally taking food off the  
5 tables of hardworking fishermen of the Gulf coast. Our families,  
6 who rely on our income, do not have any time for patience.

7  
8 I can tell you that, if I had messed up this badly at my job, that  
9 I would no longer have a job. In any other career, this would be  
10 -- There would be professional consequences for being so  
11 categorically wrong. Where are these professional consequences  
12 for the scientists in the Office of Science and Technology? When  
13 was the last time a high-level scientist in NOAA was formally  
14 reprimanded, or fired, for underperforming and putting out data  
15 that is seven-times higher than the, quote, unquote, more precise  
16 SRFS data?

17  
18 Did anyone lose their jobs when MRIP-FES was determined to be  
19 overestimated by 30 percent? No, and we will continue to have  
20 flawed science, and egregious errors, until something is done to  
21 hold scientists accountable for the subpar product that they  
22 produce. Throughout MRIP-FES, hold scientists accountable.  
23 People's livelihoods, and their families, are counting on you.  
24 Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, sir. Any questions? No questions.  
27 All right. Next, we have Eric Schmidt.

28  
29 **MR. ERIC SCHMIDT:** Good afternoon. Don't worry. I am not going  
30 to talk about African pompano. On July 24, I received this email  
31 from NOAA Fisheries. It is titled "Fishery Announces Recreational  
32 Fishing Data Collection Priorities for 2024". It's a four-page  
33 email. In the spirit of the National Paperwork Reduction Act, you  
34 could have sent one sentence, fix the damn problem.

35  
36 I sent this email to Mr. Strelcheck, and to Ms. Simmons, and I  
37 believe to Mr. Anson and a few other members, after the Wave 5  
38 data was released on November 11. Just let this sink in for just  
39 a minute. It was 1.475 million pounds of fish. If you extrapolate  
40 that to forty-one days, that is 70,465 pounds of fish per day. On  
41 a six-pound average, that's 11,744 fish per day.

42  
43 This includes recreational landings. Recreational fishermen do  
44 not fish every single day, and I know for a fact, from friends of  
45 mine that are fulltime charter fishermen, there were four days in  
46 the month of July that they weren't able to fish, plus they're  
47 fishing for red snapper during that time of the year, and red  
48 grouper is kind of a bycatch, and now we have the situation with

1 gag grouper and the one intercept and the 106,000 pounds from  
2 shore.

3  
4 The numbers have always been the problem. I have been coming here  
5 a long time, and we dealt with MRFSS, and then MRIP, and now MRIP-  
6 FES, and now there's a new pilot program, and so we just keep  
7 kicking the can down the road here, and nothing ever really gets  
8 solved. We move from one problem to another problem to another  
9 problem, and the next problem you're going to have, if you look at  
10 the landings numbers, because nobody is really paying any attention  
11 to the deepwater snappers, and, if you look at the recreational  
12 landings numbers on those fish, from the years 2015 to 2021, they  
13 are astronomically low. You're going to have a serious problem  
14 with those fish.

15  
16 We've got to do something here. This industry is hanging on by a  
17 thread. In southwest Florida, we had to deal with a hurricane,  
18 and I've moved, and I'm no longer in the fishery, and people are  
19 really, really struggling, and I don't think we've got another  
20 three or four years to rectify this situation, because this entire  
21 process works at such a snail's pace, and so I hope that something  
22 can be done soon, and I hope this pilot program is somehow going  
23 to be beneficial, because we can't continue at this rate. Have a  
24 good afternoon.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Eric. Next, we have Andrew Smith  
27 online. Skip? Okay. Then we'll stay in the virtual world, and  
28 we'll go with William Callis. Moi Van. Let's go to the room then.  
29 Richard Warren.

30  
31 **MR. RICHARD WARREN:** Good afternoon, council. My name is Rick  
32 Warren, and I've been fishing the Gulf of Mexico, from Sarasota to  
33 Fort Myers, for about the last twenty years. I've spent some time  
34 on a bandit boat, a grouper boat, commercial fishing, but, for the  
35 last thirteen years, I've been the owner-operator of a federally-  
36 permitted offshore fishing charter business.

37  
38 I flew here today from southwest Florida to urge you to reconsider  
39 this MRIP-FES catch data collected regarding red grouper and gag  
40 grouper. I believe these numbers are unbelievably high, and  
41 absolutely inaccurate, and I would like to explain to you a few  
42 reasons why, in my opinion, that they are.

43  
44 In September of the year 2022, we had a massive hurricane that  
45 affected Charlotte Harbor and Naples, one of the most damaging  
46 hurricanes in our history, and lives and families were ripped apart  
47 from the storm surge. Myself, like many others in my profession,  
48 were found jobless in the coming weeks and months, and we were

1 fortunate to find some -- I was fortunate to find some work running  
2 a boat that monitored storm debris removal in the waterways  
3 surrounding Fort Myers, from Bonita Springs to Pine Island.

4  
5 During that time that I was there, I worked seven days a week,  
6 twelve hours a day, and I saw commercial boats, and I saw charter  
7 boats, and I saw recreational -- Places where recreational  
8 fishermen would fish from, like boat ramps and marinas, and these  
9 places were all closed. They weren't just closed to them, but  
10 they were closed to the public. You would see news crews there,  
11 but that was about it. We worked from those locations.

12  
13 I believe there was no way that intercepts, and surveys, really  
14 could have been conducted in these areas like they had been done  
15 in years past, and I think that this skewed the data. Let's see.  
16 Where were the efforts -- Where did it come from from these  
17 surveys? What parts of Lee County and Charlotte County and Collier  
18 County -- Where did they come from?

19  
20 Before the break, I met with a young man who showed me some of the  
21 information on where some of these intercepts were done, and he  
22 kind of gave me some numbers on the location and how many were  
23 done, and Lee County had something like forty-nine intercepts done  
24 over an eight-month period, whereas, in the St. Pete area, there  
25 was over 600, and I don't believe that that's normal. If you look  
26 at previous years, I don't believe that that would be something  
27 you would see as normal.

28  
29 Last year was the first year in the last thirteen years that I  
30 really didn't operate, and I only operated about four months out  
31 of the year, and I normally run 160 trips out of the year, and I  
32 ran about twenty, and so that should show you, and tell you, that  
33 -- There's many other people like me, that have very similar  
34 stories, and so that should you that the numbers should be a whole  
35 lot less than what they actually were.

36  
37 While I'm here, I also would like to take a second to let you know  
38 that I was in favor of the SEFHIER program and that we're really  
39 looking forward to it, and a lot of the captains around us are  
40 looking forward to giving you better data on our catch, so we stop  
41 this guess-and-check, so we can give you better data, so we can  
42 have better catch and better fishing days.

43  
44 I will finish with I'm sure that I'm not telling you anything that  
45 you haven't heard from other people, and other people in this room,  
46 but --

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Warren, could you wrap it up, please?

1  
2 **MR. WARREN:** Yes, and I just wanted to let you know that I flew  
3 here for about eight hours, just to tell you guys how important it  
4 is to me and my family and other fishermen in my area, and I will  
5 leave it at that. Thank you, guys.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you for being here. Next, we have Bill  
8 Dantuono. Bill, are you there?

9  
10 **MR. BERNADINE ROY:** You will have to unmute your line, Bill.

11  
12 **MR. WILLIAM DANTUONO:** There we go. Good afternoon. Thank you  
13 for having me and giving me the opportunity to talk. I'm a dual-  
14 permitted federal for-hire reef fish commercial -- I'm a MREP  
15 graduate and a recent Gulf states panelist.

16  
17 My business relies on red grouper being available for harvest. In  
18 the last five years, I've seen my business, since being a new  
19 entrant, gutted due to inaccurate data. NOAA, and FWC, requires  
20 us, as commercial fishermen, to be accountable on our offloads, to  
21 the pound or number of fish caught on the recreational side. The  
22 consequences of that are criminal or civil fines, but NOAA can be  
23 off by a million pounds and it's okay. This double-standard has  
24 to end, and NOAA must be held accountable for their actions and  
25 inactions. The American people deserve better. Is this the best  
26 data we have, as the United States of America? Ask yourself that,  
27 because it's not.

28  
29 On red grouper, NOAA claims we caught an absurd amount in twenty  
30 days, and we had a short season, with bad weather, not to mention  
31 southwest Florida, where I'm sitting right now, was under three  
32 feet of water, and we are still recovering from the hurricane,  
33 which, also, we were denied funds from the federal government,  
34 because -- We just didn't get any funding from that, on the  
35 commercial relief.

36  
37 Half of our marinas, if they didn't close down altogether, are  
38 still closed, and there are multiple boat launches that aren't  
39 even open yet, and I can think of four that didn't reopen, or are  
40 still closed, just in Naples alone. Marco Boat Ramp won't open  
41 until 2025, and so where were these intercepts done? It sure  
42 wasn't in southwest Florida, and I know -- Actually, Rick Warren,  
43 who just spoke, his business just restarted within the last two  
44 months.

45  
46 When I thought the red grouper numbers were bad, then the gag  
47 grouper numbers come out, for that short forty-nine-day season,  
48 and that season was even worse with storms. I mean, it started

1 with Hurricane Idalia, and so when were these 1.3 million pounds  
2 caught? They weren't.

3  
4 NOAA can't have their cake and eat it too. They can't tell us  
5 that gag and red grouper stocks are down, and then they tell us an  
6 unfathomable amount of fish were caught in a short amount of time,  
7 and it's bad weather. These numbers are either deliberate or it's  
8 due to incompetence, and there's no other answer. Not a single  
9 person in that room believes in these numbers, and so where do we  
10 go from here?

11  
12 We need to find a way to get away from MRIP, and we cannot move  
13 forward with these numbers until sound science is completed. We  
14 need NOAA to be held accountable. We've been waiting for years to  
15 fix this mess, and the time is now. As a federal charter operator,  
16 I would love to move away from any flawed recreational data and to  
17 use SEFHIER, and that needs to be more palatable for the next  
18 phase.

19  
20 With the recent lawsuit, and, you know, NOAA was trying to get our  
21 financial information, and they're just overstepping their bounds.  
22 We need to start demanding accountability, and it's putting  
23 hardworking Americans out of work, and it also forces pressure on  
24 other species, which is what I call total mismanagement. It takes  
25 focus away from other important issues which we could be tackling,  
26 and my sentiments are representing thousands of other anglers who  
27 could not make it to this meeting.

28  
29 Lastly, I want to mention these weather forecasts are also wildly  
30 inaccurate. I specifically remember, during gag grouper season,  
31 a forecast saying the waves were fair, when it was not a fishable  
32 day. I'm not sure you have the right datapoints, but, if you're  
33 basing fishable days off of NOAA's weather forecasts, then that is  
34 something to look at. Thank you.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Next, we have Ted Venker.

37  
38 **MR. TED VENKER:** Good afternoon. My name is Ted Venker, and I'm  
39 with the Coastal Conservation Association. At my very first time  
40 at a Gulf Council meeting, I naively signed-up to give public  
41 comment on something not at all controversial, like red snapper  
42 probably, and I went to introduce myself to Dr. Bob Shipp, who was  
43 the chairman of the council at that time, and I told him who I  
44 was, and what I was planning to say, and he looked me up and down,  
45 as Bob did, and said -- All he said was "gird your loins", and one  
46 of the very first and wise pieces of advice that Dr. Shipp gave me  
47 back then, and I think of it every time I come to this podium, and  
48 so he was a great man, and I'm going to miss him.

1  
2 I had a feeling that we were all going to be saying roughly the  
3 same thing today, and so I tried to give a little thought to being  
4 creative, and I kept coming back to a movie that I watched on a  
5 flight recently, and it was a bad movie about the rise and fall of  
6 Blackberry, and what struck me, in that movie, was how difficult  
7 it must be to pour your time and resources and heart and soul into  
8 a product, or a system, and come to realize that it's on the wrong  
9 track, that it needs to be radically redesigned to survive.

10  
11 It's a painful admission, and it's apparently so painful that it's  
12 difficult to recognize. Blackberry was huge. It was on the  
13 cutting edge, and it had a huge market share, and people called  
14 them crackberries, if you remember, because everybody was addicted  
15 to them, and they had to have one, and, just a few years later, it  
16 was on the dust heap, because iPhone showed up and blew them out  
17 of the water, and it was largely because Blackberry executives  
18 were a little too arrogant, and they were a little too attached to  
19 their technology to see that it was becoming obsolete until it was  
20 too late.

21  
22 It's not a perfect analogy, but it seems that we may have reached  
23 that same place with MRIP, and it may have been the best of its  
24 kind at one time, at some point, but, for this time, for what we  
25 need it to do now, it isn't up to the task, and it's not up to the  
26 task when you keep trying to make new fixes, and you patch it with  
27 band-aids, and it's not working.

28  
29 There are a lot of people angry about these grouper numbers, and  
30 being mad doesn't seem to get us anywhere. Honestly, I bet we're  
31 all tired of being mad about this, and you can see that even Andy  
32 is not happy where we are, and, to his credit, he's pointing out  
33 where the flaws are and how we can try to fix it this time.

34  
35 Rich Cody, Clay Porch, John Walter, all the council staff, all the  
36 very smart people, all reduced to grappling with things that don't  
37 make sense because MRIP keeps kicking out things that don't make  
38 sense. You shouldn't have to do that. This has been a problem  
39 for a long time, too long, and we absolutely fully, 100 percent,  
40 agree with what Ed Walker said yesterday, that this isn't working.  
41 We need a new system, and the most promising thing out there is  
42 state-based system that can operate in a common currency across  
43 all states.

44  
45 Probably most importantly, we have to stop trying to perfectly  
46 align state data with past MRIP data, because we don't know if the  
47 past data was ever right, and most likely it was not. We may be  
48 standing here trying to get a broken Blackberry to communicate



1 with an iPhone 12, and it's just not going to happen, and the  
2 Blackberry thing, I understand, is a really tortured analogy, and  
3 I appreciate you bearing with me, but the bottom line is our MRIP  
4 data is a mess, and a fix is easier said than done, and I don't  
5 think you can get from where we are now to where we need to be  
6 without admitting you're on the wrong track, and, if we can't  
7 adapt, or innovate, and go in a new direction, then this whole  
8 process is I think just going to keep crashing and crashing and  
9 crashing.

10  
11 That was my comments on MRIP, and I just have one more comment,  
12 and that is that the management timeline tool, that was in the  
13 Outreach and Education Committee report earlier, that thing is  
14 really cool, and it's going to be super useful, and so thank you  
15 for putting that out there.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Ted.

18  
19 **MR. VENKER:** Thank you.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Next we have -- Online, we have Evan  
22 Rexrout. Sorry. It's been updated. Richard Ryan.

23  
24 **MR. RICHARD RYAN:** Hi, council members. How are you doing? Can  
25 you hear me all right?

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Good, and, yes, we can hear you.

28  
29 **MR. RYAN:** All right. So I'm not a technical guy, and I'm a  
30 fisherman. I own a boat called The Paladin, and it's been in Port  
31 Ritchie for years, and I don't have a year. I don't have two  
32 years. This closure last year cost me -- I lost \$21,000 of  
33 business, not to mention \$10,800 of refunds, and where these  
34 numbers are coming from, you already know, they make no sense,  
35 but, when you look at the economic impact that this is having, not  
36 only on me, and I don't have a year.

37  
38 My insurance for my boat is \$13,000, and it's a forty-three-foot  
39 Jersey Dawn, and it's been in Port Ritchie for close to thirty  
40 years, and my insurance -- You know, that has to be paid. My hard  
41 costs, they have to be paid, and I simply can't afford to be in  
42 this business and be expected to pay bills when there is nothing  
43 that people want to go fish for on a charter boat that they can do  
44 for, you know, eighty or ninety bucks on a headboat, and so, I  
45 mean, if you're going to do something -- My thought would be, and  
46 I don't know if this is out of line or not, but my thought would  
47 be to maybe make a recommendation that at least the charter boats  
48 and the headboats get an exclusive gag season this year, but don't

1 take it all away. I'm telling you that we don't have a year. I  
2 certainly don't, and I'm done. Have a good day.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, sir. Next, we have Chris Horton.

5  
6 **MR. CHRIS HORTON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the  
7 council. My name is Chris Horton, and I'm with the Congressional  
8 Sportsmen's Foundation, and like a lot of folks that you're hearing  
9 from today, and will continue to hear from, we're frustrated with  
10 this latest example of the inability of MRIP to meet the needs of  
11 federal fisheries management.

12  
13 It's a good survey for what it was intended to do, but it was never  
14 intended to manage in-season, and it never will be, no matter how  
15 much money we throw at it. I had the privilege of testifying to  
16 Congress to that effect over ten years ago, and we're still here  
17 today.

18  
19 Replacing MRIP with state data collection programs is probably the  
20 only viable option that we have. We're very encouraged that NOAA  
21 is working with the states and headed in that direction. However,  
22 we're just a little bit concerned with the lack of urgency that  
23 NOAA seems to have to get us to a point where we can reach a  
24 resolution and move forward.

25  
26 Likewise, we're frustrated with the entire SEDAR 74 process, and  
27 this red snapper research track assessment came on the heels of  
28 the Great Red Snapper Count, which was the most comprehensive  
29 fishery-independent study that's ever been done, and it was the  
30 perfect opportunity to hit reset and develop a model that could  
31 actually predict what's going on on the water today, but, instead,  
32 we used -- Instead, we looked this \$12 million gift horse in the  
33 mouth, and it provided us with an absolute abundance study like  
34 we've never had before, and an opportunity to build that new model,  
35 and to show us what's actually out in the water, or estimate it,  
36 but, instead, SEDAR 74 seems to have tried to simply increase the  
37 complexity of the single thing that we've always done, which, by  
38 the way, underestimates red snapper abundance by, according to the  
39 Great Red Snapper Count, around 300 percent.

40  
41 At the end of the day, we're just discarding the Great Red Snapper  
42 Count altogether. It just seems -- It's baffling, to me, how we  
43 could ignore the best dataset we've ever had, and, finally, I want  
44 to mention one other thing, and you'll probably hear it from some  
45 others, but there's a real issue, a real concern, with the sale  
46 rate, the decommissioning, of oil and gas platforms in the Gulf of  
47 Mexico.

1 The last time the council considered an essential fish habitat  
2 designation for oil and gas platforms in the Gulf, there was around  
3 2,200 to 2,500 oil and gas platforms left out there. As of today,  
4 this morning, we have 1,101, and 266 of those already have a  
5 decommissioning application submitted. Of those, seventy-five are  
6 going to the Rigs to Reef program, roughly 28 percent, and so we're  
7 losing 72 percent, and so roughly -- We're losing three-quarters  
8 of every one that is being decommissioned.

9  
10 There was a 2020 study by LGL Associates for BOEM that estimated  
11 as much as 45 percent of the amberjack biomass is located on the  
12 oil and gas platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. With the problems  
13 that we're having with managing greater amberjack, it seems like  
14 now is the right time to reevaluate if the council should pursue  
15 essential fish habitat for this species. Thank you.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Chris. Next, we have Chris Smalley.

18  
19 **MR. CHRIS SMALLEY:** Hi. Thanks for letting me speak today. My  
20 name is Chris Smalley, and I've been a Florida resident, and a  
21 recreational fisherman, here for the past twenty years, and I'm  
22 going to beat a dead horse and talk about the grouper assessment.

23  
24 The season closed early, you know, in October, and, for most of us  
25 recreational guys, you know, that don't have huge boats, that's  
26 when all of my gag grouper fishing mainly occurs, because, if  
27 anyone knows, gag grouper come in closer from October through  
28 December, and so I don't see how like these numbers could come out  
29 and be that skewed, when anyone that knows anything about fishing  
30 knows, you know, when primetime is for gag grouper fishing.

31  
32 When those assessment numbers were posted, at first, I thought it  
33 was a joke, because, I mean, you know, with the technology that we  
34 have available today, I can't understand, or fathom, how, you  
35 know, we closed the season early, estimating that we would reach  
36 our quota, but then we crush it by that much, when, like other  
37 people have stated, you know, there wasn't even a lot of good  
38 fishing time during that period, and so something needs to be done.

39  
40 I have never, ever got on one of these before, but now I'm at a  
41 point where, you know, I'm getting pretty pissed off that, you  
42 know, you can't even enjoy like one of the best things to do in  
43 this state, and so it needs to be fixed, and that's all I've got  
44 to say.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, sir. Next, we have Mike Colby.

47  
48 **MR. MIKE COLBY:** Thank you, council. Mike Colby, and I'm a charter

1 owner-operator out of Clearwater, Florida, and I'm still President  
2 of the Clearwater Marine Association. The ad hoc AP for the  
3 SEFHIER program -- It's off on the right foot, and it got started  
4 really well, and I made a couple of observations about that.

5  
6 The first one is, in the fifteen-some-odd years I've followed the  
7 council process, I have never seen an eleven-member panel pass  
8 thirteen motions unopposed. I found that peculiarly interesting.  
9 The second observation is the last motion on not using SEFHIER  
10 data for an argument for or against a quota fishery for federally-  
11 permitted charter boats -- That -- When I thought about that,  
12 whether a fisherman wants a quota fishery or not, they can come to  
13 this council, and the council can seat another AP, and you can  
14 have that discussion, but I thought that that motion probably  
15 should have been left out of that discussion, since they weren't  
16 tasked to look at that.

17  
18 The middle ground that I am looking at, and thinking about one of  
19 the motions for -- I remember that everyone collectively agreed  
20 that they wanted this SEFHIER program to get up and running as  
21 fast as it could, and obviously we need that. We need that enhanced  
22 data collection. To me, the middle ground is where we want to end  
23 up, and I've looked at a product like NEMO, and there's Boat  
24 Command, and there is different already type-approved systems out  
25 there, cellular, that can be put on the vessel and can be  
26 geofenced.

27  
28 Yesterday, I had a conversation with the Vice President of  
29 Sustainable Fisheries at Woods Hole, and he said that I can program  
30 NEMO right now to geofence anywhere you want, characterized by  
31 where the fisherman fishes, and I said, great, and, all right, so  
32 you have that, and the fisherman still has a mobile device, and  
33 they're using eTRIPS, or they're using VESL, and NEMO is great.  
34 It can be solar-powered, and you can plug it into 120 if you  
35 trailer your boat, but that, to me, is something you might sell as  
36 a buy-in from Texas to Florida.

37  
38 The biggest argument was we don't want twenty-four-seven tracking.  
39 Then fine. We can geofence those cellular platforms, stick them  
40 on the boat, take your cellphone, and you're off and running. To  
41 me, that is the perfect middle ground that you can probably get a  
42 buy-in from most fishermen, I think, throughout the Gulf. Thank  
43 you.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Mike. Mike, we have a question from  
46 Ms. Boggs.

47  
48 **MS. BOGGS:** So, Mike, one of the other things, other than the VMS

1 tracking, was the conversation about the economic questions, and  
2 what are your thoughts on that?

3  
4 **MR. COLBY:** Well, I was always in favor of producing some kind of  
5 information so that, you know -- Certainly for disaster relief and  
6 BP oil spills and things like that, and I know there's a lot of  
7 consternation about it. I don't have a problem with putting down  
8 how much I paid for fuel, or what I even charged for the trip, and  
9 I don't have a problem with that. Some folks may, but I think, in  
10 order for the council to wrap their arms around that, you're  
11 probably going to need a lot more public testimony on how other  
12 fishermen feel about that before a decision can be made.

13  
14 I know the AP wasn't particularly in favor of that, but,  
15 personally, for me, and I've been fishing for forty-some-odd years,  
16 and I will probably stop fishing when the Coast Guard tells me to  
17 stop, but, right now, I don't have a problem with that.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Next, we have Justin Visconti.

20  
21 **MR. JUSTIN VISCONTI:** I'm a recreational fisherman down here in  
22 Naples, Florida, and I've been fishing for about seven years. I  
23 know that we get out probably every two weeks, and you guys are  
24 crushing us with these quota numbers that keep coming in. We don't  
25 really know how the numbers are calculated, and we don't  
26 understand, but we just know that our resource is getting taken  
27 away.

28  
29 This is an equal resource for everybody, and, you know, we just  
30 want to make sure that there's accountability, and, when there's  
31 numbers that are as skewed as they are, we just want to make sure  
32 that you guys are looking into them, because this is everybody's  
33 resource. Not commercial, and not recreational, but it's  
34 everyone's, and so that's all I've got to say.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, sir. Next, we have Richard Fischer.

37  
38 **MR. RICHARD FISCHER:** All right. Good afternoon, council, and  
39 welcome back to the great City of New Orleans and the great State  
40 of Louisiana. I am Richard Fischer, and I represent the Louisiana  
41 federally-permitted charter-for-hire fleet. I was very proud to  
42 serve on the data collection electronic reporting AP, and I think  
43 it was a very productive meeting, and I was happy to participate  
44 in the process. Despite the fact that about 80 percent of our  
45 captains, in our polling, are against moving forward with  
46 electronic reporting, I still feel that it's very important to  
47 kind of read the room, and participate the process, and make the  
48 best of it, and I really appreciate the opportunity to be able to

1 do that.

2

3 I want to explain the rationale behind the permit motion, and I  
4 believe there was a question yesterday about that, and about that  
5 motion kind of purposely being vague, and so there have been  
6 situations in the past, which I've been through here at this podium  
7 before, about how we've got a captain who lost his vessel in a  
8 hurricane, and he didn't have a vessel to put his logbook on.  
9 Therefore, he wasn't able to renew his permit, and, yes, you've  
10 always had permits affiliated with the vessels, but, in the past,  
11 you could just put it on some vessel you've got in the side yard,  
12 and that will be your vessel until you get your actual vessel later  
13 on.

14

15 When you lose your vessel in a hurricane, you're not thinking about  
16 getting another center console immediately, but, with logbooks,  
17 you had to. That was one of the issues, and another issue was a  
18 captain lost his cellular signal in his boatshed over the winter,  
19 and he got a not-so-nice letter from NOAA Fisheries saying that  
20 we're not going to let you renew your permit until you fix this,  
21 and the wording wasn't great, and both of those situations were  
22 addressed, but the issue that we were looking at was to try to  
23 work well-intentioned issues with the logbook program and not have  
24 permits being on the table for being lost because of that, and, by  
25 keeping it vague, we weren't limiting what you guys, as a council,  
26 could talk about.

27

28 Also, I wanted to talk about the IFQ motion, and provide some  
29 rationale on that too, because that was also my motion in the AP,  
30 and so it was originally saying let's not use the data from this  
31 program toward IFQs, to work toward that program, and the first  
32 part of that got removed from the motion during the conversation,  
33 as we went along, and we can maybe address that at a future AP  
34 meeting, because, you know, some of you all have the opinion that  
35 it does not fit within the charge of the AP, and we can address  
36 that in the future, and we had our reasons for doing that, but  
37 we'll continue talking about it, and I want to thank the AP for  
38 making that vote as well, because I think it's very important to  
39 make the statement that this data is not going to be used for that,  
40 for all the reasons that I went through in the AP.

41

42 On economic data, our guys are very against using it as part of  
43 the electronic reporting program, and we think there are other  
44 ways to do it. Maybe an annual survey based on itemized  
45 expenditures, or you could let the Science Center draw a  
46 statistically-valid sample of captains.

47

48 Reimbursement, it's important that we get the reimbursement

1 program back up and running, and that it's fully funded, and I  
2 also want to quickly switch gears and change the subject on --  
3  
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** You're out of time. Sorry.  
5  
6 **MR. FISCHER:** Okay.  
7  
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Go ahead, Ms. Boggs.  
9  
10 **MS. BOGGS:** So two things, and so did I understand you to say that  
11 80 percent of your fleet does not want data collection?  
12  
13 **MR. FISCHER:** That is the polling that we've gotten from the  
14 polling that we've put out, yes.  
15  
16 **MS. BOGGS:** So, if the Science Center did a statistical amount of  
17 drawing the economic data for people to report, I'm assuming they  
18 would not want to be part of those statistics?  
19  
20 **MR. FISCHER:** They might not want to, but, you know, we all do a  
21 lot of things in life that we don't want to do, but we've got to  
22 do, you know, and I think that, while they -- I think they would  
23 be much happier having a separate survey that they don't have to  
24 do on a daily basis, separate from the electronic reporting itself,  
25 but, when push comes to shove, yes, they will probably do it.  
26  
27 **MS. BOGGS:** Are you telling me that Louisiana wants to secede from  
28 the data collection system?  
29  
30 **MR. FISCHER:** I am not saying that, and I'm not not saying that.  
31  
32 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Richard, we have a couple more questions for you.  
33 Mr. Gill.  
34  
35 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Richard, for your  
36 testimony, and so 80 percent means how many numbers? What is the  
37 number that is associated with that?  
38  
39 **MR. FISCHER:** So we're a pretty small sample, and we only had about  
40 ten captains respond, which is roughly 10 percent of our federal  
41 fleet out of Louisiana. So 10 percent of our federal fleet  
42 responded to the survey.  
43  
44 **MR. GILL:** And 80 percent of that said no, and so that's eight  
45 people?  
46  
47 **MR. FISCHER:** Yes.  
48

1 **MR. GILL:** All right. Thank you.  
2  
3 **MR. FISCHER:** Hey, I'm just providing you the facts.  
4  
5 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Richard, thank you. We appreciate it.  
6  
7 **MR. FISCHER:** All right. Thank you.  
8  
9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Next up, we have Ryan Balsinger. Ryan, are you  
10 online?  
11  
12 **MS. ROY:** Mr. Balsinger, go ahead and unmute your line. Mr.  
13 Balsinger, you will have to unmute your line to speak.  
14  
15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Next, we'll go to then William Callis.  
16 William, are you online?  
17  
18 **MS. ROY:** William, go ahead and unmute your line to speak.  
19  
20 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We'll go then next to the audience.  
21 Scott Daggett.  
22  
23 **MR. SCOTT DAGGETT:** Good afternoon. My name is Scott Daggett, and  
24 I'm an owner-operator out of Madeira Beach. I've been fishing  
25 thirty-seven years, and I just wanted to talk about the IFQ system  
26 for a little bit, because, looking at you guys' numbers yesterday  
27 -- You know, when you guys opened it up to the public, you kind of  
28 ruined the whole system.  
29  
30 I mean, I'm looking at 662 accounts with shares, and then, down at  
31 the bottom there, it's shares and landings are 201, and so, in  
32 essence, one-third of the fishery is fishing, and two-thirds is  
33 leasing their shares out. Now, when I got sold this bill of goods,  
34 years ago, when it first started, it empowered the fishermen, and  
35 they weren't for dealers, and they weren't for Joe Blow sitting on  
36 the couch, and it was for the fishermen to have their own future  
37 in their hands.  
38  
39 Over the years, since it's gone public, it's gotten further and  
40 further away from the fishermen. You don't have to be a genius to  
41 figure out that it's a 10 percent return on your money, and you  
42 guys have pretty much turned it into an Amazon stock, and that's  
43 where we're at these days.  
44  
45 As far as the restrictions that I had seen yesterday, you know,  
46 the account, I'm all for it. Every one of these boxes that you  
47 check, if you're a commercial fisherman, and you have a permit,  
48 and you have a boat, and you have a VMS, and you go fishing, and,



1 I mean, you should have to land at least, I would say, at least 51  
2 percent of your shares, and you know what I'm saying? Instead of  
3 sitting at home and leasing them away, and I just -- I just feel  
4 like you should be all-in or all-out, and that's pretty much all  
5 I've got to say.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, sir. We have a question from Mr. Gill.

8  
9 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your testimony,  
10 and so my advice to you is we're just getting started in that whole  
11 discussion, and continue to participate and weigh-in, and then we  
12 can hear your suggestions, and they may or may not get  
13 incorporated, but at least you've been part of that process to get  
14 to the endpoint. Thank you.

15  
16 **MR. DAGGETT:** All right.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Next, we have C.J. Peppe.

19  
20 **MR. C. J. PEPPE:** Hi, guys. I will keep it pretty short and simple,  
21 you know, and you guys have heard it plenty, and I disagree with  
22 both the gag and red grouper numbers that NOAA has put out, and so  
23 I won't spend too much time on that, and I just wanted to -- I  
24 have another -- I'm a recreational fisherman from the Tampa area,  
25 and I do want to just point out one thing.

26  
27 I'm only twenty-eight years old, and, in my short lifetime as a  
28 fisherman -- I mean, I've fished my entire life, since I was born  
29 here, all twenty-eight years, but, you know, I've seen it go from  
30 five per person at twenty-two inches, to twenty-four for half the  
31 year, and now we're here, and so, you know, I don't have much  
32 belief in, you know, really much of anything that the system has  
33 to provide for us going forward, that, you know, we see a light at  
34 the end of this tunnel here, and so I don't know what the solution  
35 is.

36  
37 That's not my job, and I work a normal nine-to-five job, but I'm  
38 hoping that you guys can figure it out, and so I have belief in  
39 the council, and I don't have belief in NOAA, and I don't even  
40 really trust them for weather, let alone counting fish, and so, if  
41 you guys have any questions, and, you know, I'm a young  
42 recreational fisherman that has committed my whole life to fishing  
43 in these waters, and so I'm hoping to see it change. Thank you.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you for your comments. All right. Next,  
46 we have Dylan Hubbard.

47  
48 **MR. DYLAN HUBBARD:** All right. Thank you for the opportunity to

1 speak. I have a lot to say today MRIP, and so you're going to  
2 have to be a little patient with me. For gag grouper, thirty-two  
3 intercepts is just simply unacceptable. We need a bigger sample  
4 size, especially when you look at the shore mode to illustrate  
5 varying landing numbers and an unacceptably high PSE.

6  
7 These estimates for gag landings are simply impossible to be in  
8 the realm of realistic. The fact that we've been accepting MRIP  
9 landings consistently about three-times higher than state numbers,  
10 and now it's an issue at seven-times higher, and it seems a little  
11 crazy.

12  
13 Another glaring reason that we need to take some steps forward on  
14 our approaches to recreational data collection is the headboat  
15 numbers, which are the only numbers in the landings that use a  
16 census-based data collection approach, while avoiding estimation  
17 and extrapolation, show only 1 percent of the landings, or about  
18 8,664. This is a clear sign that we need to expedite moving  
19 forward, standing up a new electronic reporting system for the  
20 federal for-hire fleet in the Gulf. This will help us improve a  
21 portion of the recreational landings and exponentially provide yet  
22 another ground-truthing metric, like the state data has been, for  
23 MRIP.

24  
25 The MRIP for the red grouper data was another failure of the data  
26 collection process currently. There is no possible way that 1.2  
27 million pounds of red grouper we caught in just a few weeks,  
28 especially with the bad weather during the period and Waves 1  
29 through 3 only averaged about 400,000 pounds apiece, and why would  
30 we be able to land 70 percent of the quota in less than three  
31 weeks, when it took us six months to land 60 percent of the quota?  
32 Keep in mind that 30 percent of our fleet is out of operation, due  
33 to Hurricane Ian.

34  
35 Captain Rick Warren mentioned it before, and a lot of those guys  
36 down there, a huge portion of the red grouper fleet, didn't fish  
37 during 2023, and so it's unfathomable that we landed that amount  
38 of red grouper in that short amount of time.

39  
40 While there are many things on the horizon that may help MRIP and  
41 this glaring data issue, and the agency seems to be amenable to  
42 working hard on this, we, as the stakeholders, demand more  
43 immediate and expedited action. We have been patient for way too  
44 long. We cannot continue to be asked to be patient. This is the  
45 way that many of us feed our families, and, for others, it's a  
46 lifestyle and a part of the way of life. We need to explore this  
47 multiyear ACL approach, and we need more communications between  
48 states and NOAA OST more frequently, and we need to pay closer

1 attention to data outliers and investigate them earlier in the  
2 process.

3  
4 Gag grouper management measures, I support the committee's motion  
5 to stop work on the gag grouper management measures document. A  
6 50 percent reduction for a 10 percent gain doesn't make sense.

7  
8 For SEFHIER data, please move forward on standing up a new program  
9 as quickly as possible, based on the ad hoc ELB discussions and  
10 motions. We need a new program with buy-in, with as little  
11 information required as possible, while still being validated,  
12 able to pass peer review and plugged into assessments. We need to  
13 lower scientific and management uncertainty, while making the  
14 burden on the fleet as small as possible, and I'm out of time, but  
15 I will email you the rest of my comments.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dylan, we have a question from Ms. Boggs.

18  
19 **MS. BOGGS:** So not as the chair of the ad hoc -- Yes, you are the  
20 chair, or, no, you weren't there. Never mind.

21  
22 **MR. HUBBARD:** I was not. The chair was Jim Green.

23  
24 **MS. BOGGS:** So, in your opinion about the economic questions with  
25 the --

26  
27 **MR. HUBBARD:** My personal opinion on the economic questions is I  
28 support it, and I would like to see our fleet evaluation as  
29 important. Evaluating the impact, economic impact, of our fleet  
30 is important, for many different reasons, from disasters to Chapter  
31 3 in amendments, and we have to have a number on our impact,  
32 economic impact, but my personal opinion in that -- The opinion of  
33 the fleet is there's not a lot of buy-in there for the economic  
34 questions, and so, for me, I think it needs to be a different  
35 survey.

36  
37 I think doing something like the commercial fleet does already,  
38 where a portion of the industry is polled quarterly, and it's  
39 acceptable in the commercial fleet, and we're trying to get up a  
40 similar style of lowering uncertainty and lowering scientific and  
41 management uncertainty, and so, if we can follow their lead -- If  
42 it works in the commercial fleet, it should work for us, and I  
43 think that would have more buy-in from the industry, and so I'm  
44 supportive of whatever gets us through that goal of lowering  
45 scientific and management uncertainty, lowering buffers, while  
46 keeping the burden on the fleet as small as possible and increasing  
47 buy-in.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.  
2  
3 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So, following the cheat sheet that we received,  
4 could you speak to the Reef Fish AP and lane snapper?  
5  
6 **MR. HUBBARD:** Thank you, and I appreciate it. The Reef Fish AP is  
7 getting readvertised this year, and I would like to be reseated on  
8 that, when you guys vote in April. Also, the lane snapper, I  
9 support the approval of the increase that you guys voted for in  
10 committee, and I would ask for another look at another increase,  
11 and that is a very, very healthy fishery that is continuing its  
12 expansion, and we see larger lane snapper and more area every day,  
13 and it is a very healthy fishery, and so I would like to avoid  
14 more quota closures and issues in that fishery, and so let's  
15 explore increasing it again next year. Thank you.  
16  
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** General Spraggins.  
18  
19 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I'm glad to see you all bleeding the same way  
20 that Mississippi is bleeding, because, you know, we know, we bled  
21 that way with the snapper, and maybe you all can get some attention  
22 to this.  
23  
24 **MR. HUBBARD:** Well, I think the 355 online comments, and the  
25 virtual participants today, speak to that, and so I hear what  
26 you're saying.  
27  
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you, Dylan. Next, we have Alex  
29 Spring.  
30  
31 **MS. ALEX SPRING:** Good afternoon, council members. My name is  
32 Alexandra Spring, and I'm a recreational fisherman in the greater  
33 Tampa Bay area, and I've been fishing for the past twenty-five  
34 years. I'm here to pretty much echo what's already been said and  
35 what will continue to be said long after I'm done, and that is to  
36 complain about these red and gag grouper numbers that have recently  
37 been released, such as a single gag intercept on the Skyway, a  
38 single intercept, led to a shore model estimate of over 100,000  
39 pounds, whereas, the year before, there was no intercepts, and so  
40 the catch was estimated to be zero.  
41  
42 These numbers simply don't make sense. They are astronomically  
43 high, and they indicate an even larger problem from within, and  
44 I'm hoping the council realizes this above catch estimate is  
45 gathered from flawed data, something has to be done, and it needs  
46 to be done quickly, and it's simply embarrassing. Thank you for  
47 your time, and good luck today.  
48

1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you for the words of encouragement. Next,  
2 we have Josh Murphy.

3  
4 **MR. JOSH MURPHY:** Good morning. I'm Josh Murphy, and I run a  
5 longline boat out of Madeira Beach, Florida, and, basically, I  
6 just wanted to get up here and say that, the way that the IFQ  
7 system is set up, it's really hard for somebody, and this doesn't  
8 get talked about a lot, is somebody trying to get into the  
9 commercial industry, buy a boat, and start from the bottom and get  
10 somewhere.

11  
12 It's hard to want to keep going at something when you know you're  
13 never going to be able to get at the top. When you're, you know,  
14 trying to get into the industry now, you can buy the boat, and you  
15 can buy the permits, but you're not going to be able to have the  
16 fish to catch, to be able to work, you know, the business, and I  
17 just wanted to say something needs to be done about that.

18  
19 The black grouper, we're seeing more black grouper than we've seen  
20 in the last ten years this year, and, you know, try and get some  
21 of those fish back to us, and use real science, and I appreciate  
22 it.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Josh. Next, we have Taylor Coke.  
25 Taylor, are you there?

26  
27 **MR. TAYLOR COKE:** Good afternoon. My name is Taylor Coke, and I'm  
28 a recreational fisherman, and I fish out of Biloxi, Mississippi.  
29 Today, I would like to address you with my concern for the  
30 inaccurate MRIP data being used to manage our fisheries. First,  
31 it was a calibration ratio that basically cut our snapper quota by  
32 60 percent, and then it was the May amberjack season, and now the  
33 push to close gag grouper for 2024, and, at this point, I do not  
34 believe that NOAA's data is very credible, especially when it comes  
35 to their numbers on effort and catch estimates.

36  
37 We have seen multiple occasions where these numbers have been  
38 overestimated, and nothing has changed, and, in Mississippi, MRIP  
39 has reported harvest levels that exceed the state's allocation  
40 during times that the season was not even open. In my opinion,  
41 nobody knows our fishery like we do. Tails 'n Scales is a data  
42 collection system that is 95 percent compliant, and why are we  
43 having to take our factual catch data and multiply it by a  
44 calibration ratio to align with NOAA's inflated MRIP data?

45  
46 I am hopeful, with the implementation of Mississippi Creel, that  
47 the additional data will reinforce the Tails 'n Scales data showing  
48 that we aren't overfishing like they say we are. No two states

1 are the same. Therefore, they cannot be managed the same. In my  
2 opinion, the only way to fix this is to implement something like  
3 Amendment 50 for all reef fish, so that it can be managed at a  
4 state level.

5  
6 I feel like the data collected on the state level is much more  
7 accurate than what NOAA is doing. If NOAA's input is necessary,  
8 have them make their recommendation on a state-to-state basis with  
9 data provided by the state. I truly do want what's best for this  
10 fishery in the Gulf. I want the fishery to be around for my kids,  
11 and grandkids, in the future. If the shortening and closed seasons  
12 were justified, I wouldn't have a problem with it, but, based off  
13 of what I have seen, NOAA has overestimated -- With NOAA's  
14 overestimated data on multiple occasions, I do not feel it's  
15 justified. Thanks.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Taylor. Next, we have Charlie Renier.

18  
19 **MR. CHARLIE RENIER:** My name is Charlie Renier, and I'm a  
20 multigenerational fisherman, and I grew up in the Keys. My  
21 daughter is now third-generation. I own two seafood companies, a  
22 dozen fishing boats, and lots of quota. My whole life, we've  
23 battled, and I have spent our life savings buying quota, buying  
24 boats, and buying permits to stay in this industry.

25  
26 We feed millions of people around the country, time and time again.  
27 The sports fishermen, they have their fish, and the charter  
28 fishermen are losing a fortune, because they can't go out and catch  
29 these gags. 20 percent of our money that we make off of our boats  
30 was taken when you all hit us with the 80 percent reduction. If  
31 our gags are hurt, we want a reduction, but you all were telling  
32 us, at one time, that the gags were hurt, and then the greatest  
33 thing happened. One guy caught a fish off of the bridge, the  
34 Skyway Bridge, and, all of a sudden, all you all's numbers turned  
35 crazy, and you had 200 intercepts that turned your numbers upside  
36 down.

37  
38 How can you tell us there is no gags out there, but 1.4 million  
39 pounds the sports caught in forty-five days? I wonder how you all  
40 can tell us that. If there is no gags, where did they come up  
41 with 1.4 million? That's more than the commercial boats caught in  
42 two years. That's impossible. You all know the numbers are wrong,  
43 and you all have got to fix this. Our lives depend on it.

44  
45 There is hundreds of boats, and I have a hundred commercial boats  
46 that fish for me between Key West and Madeira Beach, all over the  
47 Gulf, and we're counting on you all. We need you all to look at  
48 this and say something is wrong, and we've got to get it fixed.

1  
2 If you want people in Florida to continue eating Florida seafood,  
3 you all have got to step up and help us out. I mean, we're here.  
4 We're spending the money, and we're coming to the meetings, and  
5 we've got to fish. We've been fishing in twenty and thirty-knot  
6 winds, that we usually don't, because we're trying to survive.

7  
8 Our snappers, we had two-dollars a pound, and so we're out catching  
9 snappers, and our gags are gone. We can't even catch them, and  
10 we've got to throw them back. Our red grouper is what we survive  
11 on now, and I'm scared to death that you all are going to take  
12 something. If you do, we're done. If you all want seafood to  
13 remain in Florida, and this country, think about it, and we feed  
14 millions of people, millions, and not 30,000 sport boats, or not  
15 40,000, but millions of people eat our seafood, and, if you all  
16 want that to continue, you've got to help us out. Thanks.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Walker.

19  
20 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Renier. I was just curious, as a guy  
21 that owns a bunch of quota, and a bunch of, I'm assuming, dealer  
22 licenses and all that, first off, what do you think about the  
23 suggestion of requiring a permit and participating in the fishery  
24 and all these things we're talking about?

25  
26 **MR. RENIER:** I absolutely love it.

27  
28 **MR. WALKER:** You do?

29  
30 **MR. RENIER:** I mean, yesterday, I heard about the dealers, and  
31 every fish dealer that I know of has quota and permits, whether  
32 it's a fish dealing permit, boats, and we all have millions of  
33 dollars tied in it. Every fish buyer I know has millions of  
34 dollars tied up in this whole thing.

35  
36 You know, just to say that somebody is a fish dealer -- If a fish  
37 dealer owns quota, and is getting the fish for his place, what's  
38 the difference of him having three or four boats? As long as he  
39 is in the fishery, he's in the fishery.

40  
41 **MR. WALKER:** Okay. Along that same line, you recognize the  
42 loophole that the dealer license might leave open to people just  
43 grabbing one of those to get around the regs, and what do you think  
44 about that?

45  
46 **MR. RENIER:** Absolutely, and, like I said, there's a difference  
47 between somebody going to buy a dealer's license and being able to  
48 own quota. You all know what a real fish house is, and you all

1 know who has got a dealer's license. That is very easy to look  
2 at.

3  
4 I mean, a fish house is usually somebody on the water, somebody  
5 that's got a company, and they've got trucks, and they've got  
6 employees, and it's very easy for you all to see who is what. If  
7 you're vested in this industry, and I don't care if you own a boat  
8 or you own a fish house or you own fifty seafood restaurants or  
9 two seafood restaurants, but, if you're vested in this fishery,  
10 you need the seafood, and we need the seafood, and we need to catch  
11 it, and we need to feed people. We don't need somebody that is  
12 going to take their 401K and cash it out, and they're making 6  
13 percent, and put it into quota and make 10 percent. That's what  
14 we don't need.

15  
16 We need people that are willing to come to this room and fight for  
17 what they've got, and everybody I know that's in this industry is  
18 willing to do that, and the only chance we've got is you guys. If  
19 you all won't stick up for us, we're done, absolutely done. Thank  
20 you.

21  
22 **MR. WALKER:** That's great. Thanks for your input.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Next, we have Steve Papen, followed by Randy  
25 Lauser.

26  
27 **MR. STEVE PAPEN:** Hi, everybody. Well, thank you for giving us  
28 this opportunity to speak on our issues today. I know that MRIP  
29 data has been beaten to death, and we'll continue to do so, but  
30 I'm going to add to it and pile on, and so my name is Captain Steve  
31 Papen. I'm owner and operator of Fantastic Fishing Charters here  
32 in Madeira Beach, Florida, which is the grouper capital of the  
33 world.

34  
35 I have got almost thirty years in this fishery, and so I kind of  
36 feel like I have a PhD in everything that's going on here. The  
37 MRIP numbers are -- I know they're a real hard topic of everything  
38 we're looking at today, and I totally understand that counting  
39 fish that we cannot see is a very difficult task. That being said,  
40 looking at the new data, the one glaring outlier that I noticed,  
41 that concerns me the most, is the gag landings, per sector.

42  
43 The headboats, which is the only real data that comes in, and I  
44 think they've been recording since the 1980s, they have the  
45 smallest number of anybody. Every other estimate that we have is  
46 all estimated, which is kind of a big red flag to me, because  
47 everything that we look at -- We want real data, and so we have it  
48 from one of them, and that is the smallest -- They account for the



1 smallest amount of gags than anybody else, and so that was kind of  
2 a big red flag for me.

3  
4 I've seen the management of this fish go from five per person,  
5 open year-round at twenty inches, to what we see now, which is --  
6 You know, now we're looking at nothing, and nothing has worked,  
7 and so it's time to rethink how we manage these species.

8  
9 I would also like to touch on the red grouper, the idea that we  
10 caught 1.1 million pounds in six months, and then caught 1.4  
11 million in twenty days, which basically equates to around 13,500  
12 fish per day, or 6,750 limits per day, with at least five of those  
13 twenty days being unfishable, looking back at my calendar, and  
14 it's completely unrealistic.

15  
16 We need better data, because a lot of livelihoods and families  
17 depend on this data being accurate. We want what's best for our  
18 fishery, and we always have, and we always will, but these numbers  
19 are simply unrealistic. We really, really need you guys to, you  
20 know, step up and fight for this. I know a lot of the people on  
21 the council kind of feel the way we do, especially after seeing a  
22 lot of these numbers, and, you know, it's pretty scary. You know,  
23 the future kind of scares me.

24  
25 I just got a second boat here, and I got, you know, charter permits  
26 and commercial permits, and, I mean, I'm fully involved in this  
27 fishery, and I'm totally open to help in any way possible with  
28 giving you boots-on-the-ground data that we can give you on a daily  
29 basis.

30  
31 The SEFHIER program, I'm on that panel, and I'm really just trying  
32 to help out as much as I can, but we need you guys, and so please  
33 help us out. That's all I have.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Next, we have Randy Lauser. I'm  
36 sorry. Steve, are you still on?

37  
38 **MR. PAPAN:** Yes, I'm still here.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We have a question for you from Mr.  
41 Strelcheck.

42  
43 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Steve, for your public testimony. I am  
44 curious, and you made a comment that it's time to rethink how we  
45 manage these species, and are you making that statement in light  
46 of needing better data, or are you talking about more of the  
47 management and regulations, and, if so, what ideas do you have?  
48

1 **MR. PAPAN:** Well, I mean, better data is always one thing. I mean,  
2 I've been doing this for, you know, a really long time, and so, to  
3 me, I understand that, since the IFQ came out in 2010, you know,  
4 there's been more demand, more people, more technology and  
5 everything, but, pre-2010, and I'm sure that everybody remembers,  
6 we had a complete closure of all grouper during the spawning  
7 months, which was February and March. It started off February 15  
8 to March 15, and then it went all of February and all of March,  
9 and then the IFQ system came out, and then those fish were being  
10 caught again during their spawn.

11  
12 I've done a lot of research with FWRI in the last six or seven  
13 years, and I have learned a lot about the gags in general, and how  
14 many eggs that each individual female carries, and, to me,  
15 harvesting those fish, when they're full of 50,000 or 60,000 eggs  
16 apiece, is just kind of crazy. I feel like, you know, a spawning  
17 closure is not a bad idea, and I've been yelling about it for a  
18 long time now, and, you know, I've talked to Sue, and a few other  
19 people, about it, from FWRI, and, you know, there's, you know,  
20 pros and cons to it, I guess, but I feel like harvesting these  
21 fish while they're spawning is a bad idea, whether it's red or gag  
22 grouper.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thanks again, Steve.

25  
26 **MR. PAPAN:** No problem. Thank you.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Next, we have Randy Lauser, and then there was a  
29 glitch in the system, and next up, after Randy, will be Bob Zales.  
30 He's not on the list, but there was a glitch in the system, and  
31 so, Randy, go ahead, sir.

32  
33 **MR. RANDY LAUSER:** Good afternoon. I'm Randy Lauser, Southern  
34 Offshore Fishing Association. On the IFQ program there, I've been  
35 here for the whole system. It was working fine, and everything  
36 was going great, and we could fish year-round with what we had,  
37 and then, once it went public, we just threw a monkey-wrench in  
38 the whole thing. It ruined everything, and it got out of the  
39 fishermen's hands. It should have stayed in the fishermen's hands,  
40 where it belonged to be, and that's where it was supposed to be,  
41 you know, and now, after, you know, getting some of our quota taken  
42 away from us, it's hard to find. If you don't know somebody,  
43 you're not getting the quota.

44  
45 Then, on the gag groupers, fishing is off the chain. I've been  
46 fishing -- I've been longlining the Gulf for thirty-nine years,  
47 and I've seen fishing slow, good, and slow, and, my last three  
48 years of fishing, it's just off the chain. I mean, we're throwing

1 back -- I'm having a record number sets that, in thirty-nine years  
2 -- In the last year, record number sets of gag groupers, and it's  
3 just -- I'm throwing them all back, and it's making me sick to my  
4 stomach.

5  
6 I move ten miles away, to try to get away from them, and there  
7 they are again. They're everywhere, and it's just -- I've never  
8 seen gag grouper fishing so good, and, with today's economics,  
9 it's costing us double to fish, for everything, fuel, groceries,  
10 everything, and we're losing \$10,000 to \$15,000 per trip, because  
11 we don't have the gag groupers to catch, and so thank you very  
12 much.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, and sorry for mispronouncing your name.  
15 Mr. Zales.

16  
17 **MR. BOB ZALES, II:** Bob Zales, II, Executive Director of  
18 Southeastern Fisheries Association. Thank you, Kevin. For a  
19 minute, I was thinking that MRIP was taking over your system up  
20 here, and it was a glitch, but I'm not going to continue to beat  
21 you all up on all this stuff.

22  
23 I mean, this is not new. I've been involved in these fisheries  
24 since the late 1980s, and MRIP, MRFSS, FES, has been a consistent  
25 problem the whole time. The only new thing here is the massive  
26 number of people that are talking about it here and online and  
27 emails you've got, which that's kind of encouraging, and so maybe  
28 something can finally get done here, because clearly there's a  
29 massive problem that everybody sees.

30  
31 Working with SFA, shrimp is a big part of our organization, and so  
32 we would hope that you all support that shrimp initiative that  
33 John Walter and Mike Rubino are talking about, and try to expedite  
34 that, because the shrimp industry, kind of like this industry, is  
35 in serious trouble. Imports, which I'm just now learning about  
36 the connection between international trade and commerce, but  
37 clearly the imports are a driving force, and something has got to  
38 be done, or this industry won't be here. Somebody said, the other  
39 day, talking about the cultural part of shrimpers, and it's big,  
40 and so we need to keep that.

41  
42 Clay mentioned about working waterfronts, and we clearly need  
43 working waterfronts throughout the region, and throughout the  
44 area, because, without working waterfronts, you've got no place to  
45 unload, and you've got no place to get ice, bait, tackle, or  
46 anything, and so, you know, hopefully you all would support that.

47  
48 When it comes to the data, you've got the emails, and it's relative

1 to the MRIP thing, and, when we're talking about rec discards, and  
2 rec discard mortality, they're directly related to the efforts  
3 that are out there that you're putting on the rec side. The higher  
4 that is, the more discard mortality you -- We know, through FES,  
5 that 40 percent of that effort was too high, which means that,  
6 whatever discard mortality was there, it's higher than what it  
7 should be, and so we've got to get a handle and get this data as  
8 correct as possible, and so I will stop there. Any questions,  
9 I'll be glad to try and answer them.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Captain Zales. I don't see anybody.  
12 We appreciate it.

13  
14 **MR. ZALES:** Okay. Thank you again.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Next, we have Stephanie Lockhart, followed by  
17 Clay Shidler.

18  
19 **MS. STEPHANIE LOCKHART:** Good afternoon, council. My name is  
20 Stephanie Lockhart, and I live in Las Vegas, Nevada. I'm a  
21 recreational fisherwoman, and I am landlocked, and so I do travel  
22 to fish on charter boats and partyboats, primarily out of the  
23 Madeira Beach area in the Gulf, but I actually learned how to fish  
24 in New Orleans, and so Gulf waters, and the fisheries, are near  
25 and dear to my heart.

26  
27 I did recently review, and, as many others, I have a huge concern  
28 with the gag grouper MRIP Wave 5 data, and, as others have  
29 mentioned, I do think that the recreational numbers are way too  
30 high, and it's actually leaning toward mathematically unrealistic.  
31 It's impossible that recreational fishermen, and women, landed the  
32 numbers that are being stated, and, when you look at the headboat  
33 numbers, it only correlates to 1 percent of the landings.

34  
35 You know, these are the folks that we've passionately heard from,  
36 and they fish for a living, and they put us on those fish for a  
37 living, and they're the only real data that we have, and we only  
38 are attributing 1 percent to them? I really feel strongly that  
39 you all need to look at other approaches to helping recreational  
40 anglers, such as myself, to have better access to the gag grouper  
41 fishery, and I also feel that we need a new stock assessment before  
42 decisions are made for potentially years to come, regarding  
43 seasons, openings, and closings.

44  
45 I have also sent my viewpoints to your email address, and Pat  
46 Neukam, Dylan Hubbard, and many others have given much better  
47 suggestions than I could, and so I won't try to even delve into  
48 that, in the interest of time, but I really do appreciate you

1 giving myself, and my peers, the opportunity to speak to you today.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you for taking the time to speak to us  
4 today, Ms. Lockhart. We appreciate it. Clay Shidler, followed by  
5 Brian Lewis. Clay, welcome.

6  
7 **MR. CLAY SHIDLER:** Good afternoon, and thank you, Mr. Chairman,  
8 and thank you to the Gulf Council. My name is Clay Shidler, and  
9 I fish out of Crystal River, Florida. I own thirteen federally-  
10 permitted charterboats, and I am thirty years old, and I've been  
11 doing this since I was eighteen years old, and I started in the  
12 commercial fishing industry, and, actually, Mr. Bob Gill -- I own  
13 Shrimp Landing now, and I commercial fished when he owned it, and  
14 I was a young man when he saw me there.

15  
16 I'm here to speak, of course, about the MRIP data, and I believe  
17 that everybody in this room understands how skewed it is. As a  
18 gag grouper fishermen, in what is arguably the heart of gag grouper  
19 country, and I've been doing it my entire life, from fishing with  
20 my father to fishing professionally for the last twelve years and  
21 watching my guys learn how to do it, and come up with innovative  
22 ways to do it, and become better at it. That being said, of  
23 course, there's no possible way that we caught the fish that the  
24 MRIP-FES data shows that we caught.

25  
26 I'm also on the ad hoc AP council for the rebuilding of the SEFHIER  
27 program, and I think that's going to be a huge implementation, a  
28 huge step for the charter fishery to get back on the right track,  
29 whether you're talking about red grouper or gag grouper, and pick  
30 your species, but that's going to be a massive piece of the puzzle,  
31 because, in my opinion, in the past year, as we've seen maybe the  
32 economy slow down a little bit, we're going back to a time where  
33 we're seeing more charter boats on the water than we're seeing  
34 recreational boats on the water, where, through COVID, I would say  
35 that that's not something that we saw.

36  
37 That being said, standing up the SEFHIER program again is an  
38 incredibly important puzzle piece, and especially for all of us  
39 that do this on a daily basis and do it for a living.

40  
41 I would like to urge the council to adopt the SRFs data, in lieu  
42 of the MRIP-FES data, and I've been a part of every survey that  
43 I've ever been asked to do, from eleven years ago and working with  
44 Daryl and Deb at UF, doing grouper tagging, all the way until now,  
45 and working with Hayden Melendez and working with MRIP daily at  
46 our marina, and allowing MRIP to be at our marina on a daily basis,  
47 and asking my guys to participate, even if they didn't necessarily  
48 believe that the MRIP data was going to help us.

1  
2 We asked the guys that fish out of our marina to participate,  
3 because it's the right thing to do, but what has gone on has not  
4 helped any sort of public trust in the system, and we all  
5 understand that, but I appreciate you guys doing what you can to  
6 get us pointed back in the right direction, and I appreciate you  
7 guys looking at how to stand the SEFHIER program back up, and I'm  
8 very honored to be a part of that, and thank you very much for  
9 your time.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Clay, we have a question from Ms.  
12 Boggs.

13  
14 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Clay, and thank you for serving on the ad  
15 hoc advisory panel. Aside from what the advisory panel sent to  
16 the council, what is your opinion on the economic questions? Would  
17 you be willing to answer those, or no?

18  
19 **MR. SHIDLER:** I was absolutely willing to answer them in the first  
20 round of the SEFHIER reporting program, and to say this, and I was  
21 a part of the commercial fishery in the IFQ era, and there was  
22 never a question in my mind of should I do this or shouldn't I do  
23 this, and this is what you do, and I will be honest with you, and  
24 maybe that's just the way my mind worked on the subject, but there  
25 was no idea of I don't want twenty-four-hour reporting, and did I  
26 necessarily enjoy it, and do I think the fleet wants it?

27  
28 No, we don't, but I think that using the commercial program for  
29 the economic data of a random selection, and whether it's quarterly  
30 or you're drawn to do your economic data for certain months, I  
31 think that's a very easy way to do it, and I think that, as a  
32 fleet, you can't expect 1,300 permit holders to come together and  
33 all put the stamp of approval on the exact same thing, but we can  
34 come up with something that is simple, that's easy for guys like  
35 myself, that are thirty years old, as well as guys that are  
36 seventy-five years old, to use a program and make it to where,  
37 first and foremost, the data works for the purpose that it's made  
38 to work for.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Walker.

41  
42 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Clay. I had a -- You made an interesting  
43 point there about volunteering to help with sampling, and perhaps  
44 having your data that you helped gather improperly extrapolated,  
45 and what do your guys think about, going forward, voluntarily  
46 giving up data, and access, to their catch, based on the current  
47 scenario?

48

1 **MR. SHIDLER:** I will be honest with you that I am the owner of  
2 Shrimp Landing Marina, and we have nineteen charter boats out of  
3 Shrimp Landing Marina, and, out of nineteen charter boats, sixteen  
4 have federal permits on them, and I cannot force anybody to do  
5 anything, but you can ask Hayden, and you can ask Deb, and I did  
6 really pressure guys to allow them to sample gonads this year, and  
7 that was something very specific that they needed to come to us  
8 for, because we have shallow-water grouper, and they needed  
9 shallow-water grouper gonad samples.

10  
11 I pressured the guys, and everybody participated, whether they  
12 really wanted to or not, but we believed in what was going on,  
13 and, that being said, there is an MRIP survey that is scheduled to  
14 take place at our marina this Saturday, and I am aware of it, and  
15 I know that most of the guys will have absolutely zero interest in  
16 participating, and I cannot ask these guys to do it, and that is  
17 just the absolute truth of it.

18  
19 Granted, I still believe that we're on the right track, and we're  
20 doing the right thing, and we're standing here in front of you  
21 guys today, and I can't imagine anybody in this room that thinks  
22 that that data is actually accurate, and I believe that we needed  
23 to get to this point to prove that it was inaccurate, so that we  
24 can make things go in the right direction.

25  
26 If it was off by 20 percent every year, there's no way to prove  
27 that it was ever wrong, but we needed this, and so I am happy that  
28 we're here. It is frustrating, but it is the job of this council,  
29 and it's the job of the stakeholders standing behind me, to stand  
30 here and find a way moving forward for a fishery that I plan to  
31 spend the next forty years in.

32  
33 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.

36  
37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I don't normally do this, because it's not  
38 a question, and it's going to be a comment that, based on what we  
39 are looking at with the MRIP data, the challenge is not with the  
40 dockside intercept collection, right, because that gives us the  
41 catch rate information, and it's with the effort survey that gets  
42 mailed, right, and then, for charter, you guys get, obviously, the  
43 10 percent weekly phone call sampling, and so I just wanted to  
44 acknowledge that, and I know that people are angry about MRIP, and  
45 they don't want to contribute data, but, on the intercept side,  
46 what our data shows with MRIP is very consistent with what the  
47 State Reef Fish Survey shows, with what they're collecting.

48

1 **MR. SHIDLER:** I know I'm out of time, but I will say that Pat Busby  
2 calls all of us, correct, and we all field phone calls from her,  
3 and I will tell you that there is a lot of guys -- I only deal  
4 with people from Hernando Beach to Cedar Key, about forty-one  
5 permit holders, and I deal with them, to try to keep everybody  
6 pointed in the right direction, and that's why I applied for the  
7 AP, and that's why I'm standing here in front of you today.

8  
9 I'm not saying that I'm officially anybody's voice, but I am my  
10 own, and I understand what the guys in my area want, and most of  
11 these guys are not fielding Pat's phone calls, because they have  
12 just lost the trust, and whether it is rightfully so, or their  
13 frustration is placed in the right avenues, that's -- I thank you  
14 guys for your time, and I appreciate it.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Clay, we've got a couple more questions for you.  
17 Hold on. Mr. Schieble.

18  
19 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** It's a quick one, and you know you don't have to  
20 answer it if you don't want to, but I'm curious, and how do you  
21 know when an MRIP assignment is going to be at your marina before  
22 it happens?

23  
24 **MR. SHIDLER:** One more time?

25  
26 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** How do you know that an MRIP assignment is going to  
27 be at your marina before it takes place? You mentioned, a minute  
28 ago, that you know you have an MRIP assignment coming up at the  
29 marina this weekend, or something like that, and how do you know  
30 that? How did you figure that out, that you have the assignment  
31 before it takes place, or did I misunderstand you?

32  
33 **MR. SHIDLER:** I own a private marina, and, therefore, we don't  
34 have to allow people there, and I will say that for one thing, and  
35 I am very friendly with all of the biologists, and not just at the  
36 MRIP collectors that come to the dock, but up above, because, in  
37 the past, I've had a lot of communications with all of these  
38 people, to make sure we do the right thing, and I just said, look,  
39 everybody at my marina has asked me to tell MRIP to not show up,  
40 just so you know, and I made a phone call, as the owner of the  
41 marina, and I said, look, these people do not want MRIP to show  
42 up, and they said, well, what is your thoughts on it, as the owner?

43  
44 I said that I'm not kicking anybody out, but, if you have anything  
45 coming in the near future, table it, if possible, and let me get  
46 back from this meeting and talk to these guys, and that's honestly  
47 the truth, and that's what I did, is I made a phone call, and that  
48 is how I know -- They said there was one coming soon, and I pretty



1 much deduced it down to that is, and, that being said, we don't  
2 have to have them there, but I have every confidence that everybody  
3 in this room wants to use this data appropriately, and wants to  
4 use it the right way.

5  
6 There was two MRIP surveys taken at my marina during gag season,  
7 and both of those surveys showed a perfect score. When I say a  
8 perfect score, we had perfect weather, and we had eighteen boats  
9 charter fish, and every single customer that stepped foot on Shrimp  
10 Landing property went home with a limit of gags.

11  
12 Now, that was not always the norm, but those were the two days,  
13 just so you know. Does it have the ability to skew data? Possibly,  
14 and I'm not here to decide how the data got misconstrued, but I  
15 can tell you what I saw. When every single person that shows up  
16 goes fishing and catches a limit of gag grouper, and everybody  
17 reports their data accurately, and we did have an issue, and I  
18 can't speak for many marinas, but there's not a lot in our area  
19 that have sixteen federally-permitted vessels, and there's not a  
20 lot of places in the world where you can walk up to a marina with  
21 that many people going fishing and everybody walks back home with  
22 a limit of gags, and that's all that I will say.

23  
24 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I appreciate the answer. Thank you.

25  
26 **MR. SHIDLER:** Yes, sir.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Overton.

29  
30 **DR. OVERTON:** Clay, a quick question. You know the charter boat  
31 captains in your marina better than we do, and what would it take  
32 from us to have them be more willing to participate in our data,  
33 you know, capture events? What would it take?

34  
35 **MR. SHIDLER:** I will be honest with you and tell you that the  
36 people that do the very -- That do the data collection at our  
37 marina are some of the best biologists that I've ever seen, in  
38 dealing with people, dealing with the customers, dealing with us.  
39 They treat us respectfully, and they're very kind, and they're a  
40 lot of fun to be around, and they joke with us and everything else.  
41 They do a great job, but, as you have heard everybody stand behind  
42 me and say, this is all an MRIP problem, it's all an MRIP problem,  
43 and they wear the MRIP badge.

44  
45 They don't even know the difference when there's MRIP surveys and  
46 there's the bio surveys, which were two different surveys, but  
47 they were the same people, and they show up, and they have the  
48 iPad from MRIP and bio, and they're over cutting otoliths out, and

1 the guys didn't even know the difference, and that's fine. I'm  
2 not asking them to know the difference, but they have to understand  
3 that there's a lot of moving pieces and parts, and there's only so  
4 many boots on the ground, and it's a very challenging thing for  
5 the guys to separate is it the girl that's walking down to the  
6 dock to take your survey -- Is it her fault, because she put it in  
7 the iPad wrong, or is it somebody in Maryland's fault that  
8 misconstrued the data, and trying to get charter fishermen to draw  
9 that line, and understand that I need to put the data in this end  
10 and expect you guys to create the steps in the middle to get the  
11 right answer here, is the challenge.

12  
13 I will just say it like that, and that's I guess the best way that  
14 I can put it, but you have great people on the ground collecting  
15 data, and you have people like me that are working very hard to  
16 help promote the fact that we need to give the data to the people,  
17 and I do apply pressure on my guys, because I know it's the only  
18 way for you to do your job.

19  
20 **DR. OVERTON:** Thank you. Fair enough.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We're going to have two more folks  
23 ask questions, and then we're going to have to proceed. Ms. Boggs.

24  
25 **MS. BOGGS:** Sorry, Mr. Chairman. Based on what you just said about  
26 was it the person at the dock's fault, because they put in the  
27 tablet wrong, or was it something that happened in Maryland, if  
28 you -- If we had the SEFHIER program back, where you were the  
29 responsible one, or your captains were the responsible one, would  
30 they have a little more trust in what was being reported?

31  
32 **MR. SHIDLER:** Yes, I think they would. I will also say that, as  
33 a part of having the SEFHIER program back, I would like to see  
34 sector separation go through. It will make the numbers a little  
35 less muddy, I think, in guys' opinions, and, whether that's true  
36 or not, it's an important thing for the gag grouper fishery, but,  
37 yes, if we had the SEFHIER program, it would definitely help.

38  
39 Nobody liked it, the SEFHIER program, because it was change, and  
40 very few people vote to have more regulation, but you also have to  
41 understand -- They need to understand that this fishery needs it,  
42 and you've heard multiple people come up here and say that, and  
43 you didn't hear much of that before the first rollout.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Sweetman.

46  
47 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just real quick, and I appreciate everything that  
48 you've been saying here, Clay, and, obviously, your perspective on

1 this entire situation here, and so my question for you is the folks  
2 that people in your marina don't want to work with -- Are these  
3 FWC employees, or are these federal employees, along those lines?  
4

5 **MR. SHIDLER:** These are surveyors. These are people collecting  
6 data, and, when you sour a charter captain to the concept of data  
7 collection, it doesn't matter what badge they wear, or what acronym  
8 is on their shirt, and you're going to get very little good  
9 information, or very little good-hearted information, because we  
10 did deal with, during SEFHIER, with the federal side coming down  
11 and asking us questions about our trip, and, because we're  
12 federally-permitted, we had to answer those questions. The girl  
13 was very clear that you have to answer our questions, just so you  
14 know.  
15

16 Nobody wanted to deal with her, really, because it felt like you  
17 were being forced, but I can tell you that the person that does 99  
18 percent of our MRIP -- There's actually three people, and 99  
19 percent of our MRIP, whether we see them at the boat ramp when we  
20 pull our boat out or they're at our marina, and I won't give you  
21 their names, but they're easy to find, and they do all of our MRIP  
22 surveys, and they do a phenomenal job. They're young people, and  
23 they're there to do a job, and they're underpaid for the job, and  
24 they're working hard to try to get the job done correctly, and  
25 that is, in my opinion, the best way to put it.  
26

27 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I understand that completely, and the only  
28 reason why I'm saying that is because I did hear you say, you know,  
29 advocating for State Reef Fish Survey over MRIP in some of these  
30 circumstances, and this data goes directly to the State Reef Fish  
31 Survey as well, and so I just kind of wanted to throw that out  
32 there.  
33

34 **MR. SHIDLER:** Correct.  
35

36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Clay, for answering all those  
37 questions. We appreciate it.  
38

39 **MR. SHIDLER:** Thank you, guys, and I'm easy to find, if anybody  
40 has any other questions.  
41

42 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Next, we'll have Brian Lewis, followed by Brandon  
43 Branch.  
44

45 **MR. BRIAN LEWIS:** Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and  
46 members of the council. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.  
47 My name is Brian Lewis, owner of the Commercial Fishing Vessel  
48 Trip Limit out of Clearwater Beach. I commercially fish and

1 recreationally fish. I have a few things to touch base on.

2  
3 Number one, regarding the IFQ program, I was paying attention to  
4 this whole council meeting virtually, and I'm hoping that there  
5 will be some flexibility for the circumstances of leasing of our  
6 quota, because I want to talk about something.

7  
8 While I was remodeling my boat, I was leasing out our quota, and  
9 we used -- You know, we followed the whole business plan of this  
10 thing, okay, and we were able to have the flexibility to lease it  
11 or trade it or whatever, okay, and now we're talking about coming  
12 in and trying to change it, okay, and so my concerns are -- I want  
13 to make sure the council keeps this in consideration when they  
14 start wanting to try to make changes, that, you know, there is  
15 people like me out there that were in these circumstances, whether  
16 it be sick or remodeling a boat or engine failure or whatever,  
17 right, because we're able to use this quota to lease out and pay  
18 for an engine or whatever, right?

19  
20 I used some of the quota to buy more quota, to crawl my way back  
21 into this industry, because, when I first started fishing, I didn't  
22 get any gifted shares, okay, and I've been fishing for twenty  
23 years, okay, and the permit that I bought had no catch history,  
24 and so I had to start from scratch, okay, and so I'm a little bit  
25 worried about hearing some of these changes that want to try to be  
26 done, and, you know, so please keep that in mind. I do support  
27 that all quota holders must have a reef fish permit, okay, just so  
28 you know.

29  
30 All right. Secondly, I want to talk about something, because we're  
31 seeing all these glaring issues with data collection, right, and  
32 so, yesterday, in the Q&A session, I asked about what about harvest  
33 tags, and have we considered that for the private recreational  
34 fishery, okay, and, you know, I heard a comment, and I didn't get  
35 to say anything more about it, but, that being said, I challenge  
36 this council, I challenge National Marine Fisheries, and I  
37 challenge FWC to engage the fishermen.

38  
39 The fishermen are the best scientific information, and use it,  
40 okay, and create maybe a focus group, a workshop, or maybe consider  
41 this harvest tag as a solution to maybe this whole data collection,  
42 okay, and this can solve -- You know, a lot of fishermen don't  
43 like seasons, okay, and so this -- The harvest tag could actually  
44 enable them to go fishing when they want, and you can keep track  
45 of discards, and it could reduce discard mortality, which affects  
46 all the sectors, okay, and so I challenge this council, because we  
47 need your help, okay, and you heard -- I echo what Charlie Renier  
48 said, and I echo what Randy Lauser said, and I echo what Scott

1 Daggett and all these other recreational fishermen out there too,  
2 all right, and they are accountable on the management system they  
3 have right now, and they need a better system, okay? That's all  
4 I've got to say, and I'm open to any questions you may have for  
5 me. Thank you.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Captain Lewis. I don't see any  
8 questions. Thank you. Next, we have Brandon Branch, followed by  
9 Captain Brian Hansen.

10  
11 **MR. BRANDON BRANCH:** Good afternoon, guys. My name is Captain  
12 Brandon Branch, and I'm owner and operator of Crystal River Fishing  
13 Company. I fish out of the same marina or the marina that Clay  
14 owns, Shrimp Landing in Crystal River.

15  
16 I am one of those guys that was there putting the data right in  
17 front of everyone to the surveyors, and we are seeing -- My clients  
18 were cooperative, and we were all there to help, and to see these  
19 astronomical numbers coming out, seven-times over, and 106,000  
20 pounds caught from shore, and it is not possible.

21  
22 The last eighteen days of red grouper fishing, catching 72 percent  
23 over what we caught the first six months, it's not possible, and  
24 that is making each and every one of -- Myself, all the captains  
25 at the marina, all of my clients, not wanting to answer these  
26 questions. We have to get the SEFHIER program back up and running  
27 immediately. We have no other option, and that is going to give  
28 us the exact data that we need to move forward with this.

29  
30 I am for anything to make it move forward as fast as possible and  
31 give exact data on what we are catching out there. It's not just  
32 a guess, and we're out there every single day, 300 days a year,  
33 bad weather or good weather, and we are out there fishing. We can  
34 give you the numbers that you guys need to be able to make  
35 collective data and get the right numbers. We really need to see  
36 this MRIP data get thrown away and reconsidered this year. Myself,  
37 and a lot of other guys, are kind of depending on this to be able  
38 to go out and make a living, but we are going to try to work with  
39 you guys and be fishermen.

40  
41 Myself, everyone behind me, everyone that has submitted, is ready  
42 to help, ready to take action to get the correct numbers in front  
43 of you guys, and that's all I really have to say today, and I do  
44 want to say that, and I am with you guys on keeping the gags and  
45 not cutting the bag limit to one, and keeping them at two, and I  
46 think that's great, instead of a 10 percent cut, but, if you all  
47 have any questions, I would be more than happy to answer them.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Captain Branch. We do have one from  
2 Ms. Boggs.  
3  
4 **MS. BOGGS:** So I will ask you, as I've been asking everyone else,  
5 as far as the revamped SEFHIER 2.0, or however you want to refer  
6 to it, but would you be willing to answer economic questions, if  
7 not on a daily basis, on a random basis, but would you be willing  
8 to do it in some form or capacity?  
9  
10 **MR. BRANCH:** Absolutely, and I would do whatever it takes to get  
11 that to move forward as possible, just to get the real numbers in  
12 front of you guys, instead of just a complete guess, in my opinion.  
13 I will do whatever it takes, give you whatever you need, to get  
14 the numbers of fish that we're catching on a daily basis in front  
15 of you.  
16  
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you.  
18  
19 **MR. BRANCH:** Thank you.  
20  
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have Captain Brian Hansen, and then next will  
22 be Tim Dillingham. Captain Hansen.  
23  
24 **MR. BRIAN HANSEN:** Good afternoon, council. My name is Brian  
25 Hansen, and I'm a third-generation Florida native. I've been  
26 fishing the Gulf of Mexico fulltime for the last twelve years. I  
27 have two federal charter boats, and I stone crab and commercial  
28 fish, all that stuff. Obviously, everybody has touched on the  
29 MRIP, you know, discrepancies. When you have a state estimate,  
30 you know, at only a couple hundred thousand pounds for gags, and  
31 then the federal estimate comes in at, you know, over a million  
32 pounds, it's just -- It can't happen.  
33  
34 Then 106,000 pounds of shore-caught gag grouper, and that is  
35 literally impossible. There's no way that can even happen.  
36 Hooking gags from shore -- You know, probably only 1 percent of  
37 the fishermen can even hook a gag from shore, let alone land them,  
38 and, you know, you have your headboats catching 8,500 pounds,  
39 which, you know, you're saying the headboats only caught 8,500,  
40 but shore fishermen caught twelve-times as many grouper from shore,  
41 and it just -- It can't happen.  
42  
43 Then, you know, to touch base on the red grouper, obviously, in  
44 the first seven months of the year, you know, we caught X amount,  
45 and then, in three weeks in July, somehow, you know, we caught --  
46 I forget the number, but 60 to 70 percent, you know, of the quota,  
47 and it's just not possible.  
48

1 Like I said, I've been fishing out here, doing charters, for twelve  
2 years, and this is by far the slowest year of charters that me,  
3 and many other captains, have ever seen, and, you know, it's  
4 probably slightly because of the economy, but I think it's more  
5 because of the fish closures, you know, and all we have to fish  
6 for are, you know, grunts, porgies, hogfish, lane snapper, mangrove  
7 snapper, but a lot of these people are not going to spend the money  
8 to go catch a bunch of reef fish, you know, and they want to catch  
9 grouper, and we just -- We can't go catch the grouper.

10  
11 I am going to touch base on the SEFHIER program. You know, the  
12 old SEFHIER, it wanted to know how many you caught of a certain  
13 species, how many you released, but there was no differentiation  
14 between -- You know, you could have caught eight keepers, and, you  
15 know, we said we released forty fish, but those fish could have  
16 been eight inches, or they could have been twenty pounds, you know,  
17 and there's no way to know, and so I think, for the next SEFHIER  
18 program -- The commercial guys are -- You know, we have to -- We  
19 have to tell how much poundage we're bringing in, and so, you know,  
20 we're pretty good at estimating our poundages.

21  
22 Instead of asking how many head of fish we caught, you know,  
23 estimate -- Make us estimate the poundage, because we can guess it  
24 pretty close. That's all I've got to say, other than, you know,  
25 if you want to go harvest a deer, you've got to use a tag. If you  
26 want to go harvest fish -- You know, there has to be some kind of  
27 accountability for the recreational sector, and so that's all I  
28 have to say. Thank you.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. We have Tim Dillingham, followed by  
31 Derek Engle.

32  
33 **MR. TIM DILLINGHAM:** Hello, Gulf Council. Thanks for the  
34 opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Tim Dillingham, and  
35 I've been commercial fishing for about twelve years now, and I  
36 also am a dealer as well, who manages three, and about to be four,  
37 other boats.

38  
39 A lot of things, and I'm not going to repeat everything that  
40 everybody has said, and I think we understand a lot of what's going  
41 on, and so I'll start out with triggerfish. Nice job.  
42 Triggerfish, there was a lot of population of that, and it's been  
43 a big help for our company, and so I think that's a win. I think  
44 this council could probably use a win right now. Also, lane  
45 snapper, I agree completely with, and that is also a win.

46  
47 I want to welcome Ed Walker. To be honest with you, it's nice to  
48 see a fisherman, not only on the charter side, but on the

1 commercial side, representing this council, and I think it's  
2 important not only to have a bunch of intellectual people on the  
3 council, but people that are on the water, people that see it every  
4 day.

5  
6 You know, you're sitting here depending on this MRIP data, which  
7 we all know is nonsense, and we should all be embarrassed to be  
8 sitting up here talking about it right now, and so, to be honest  
9 with you, it just needs to be thrown out. There's lots of options  
10 we can come up with.

11  
12 You know, in the commercial sector, we're fully accountable, and  
13 the big word is "accountability". Commercially, we're accountable  
14 for every single pound we catch, and it looks like the charter  
15 sector, with SEFHIER, is going to be going that way, which is, I  
16 think, going to be a great thing, and I think it will be a great  
17 thing for them, because they don't want to take the chances of  
18 letting this MRIP data control our fisheries, and the same thing  
19 with the recreational guys stepping in, and have you ever seen  
20 this much involvement by the rec sector at any of your meetings?  
21 These are all good things.

22  
23 We're at war right now, all of us together, commercial, rec, and  
24 charter, and it's against the data. The data is wrong, and so  
25 accountability. When it comes to the charter fishermen, they're  
26 going to start accounting for that through SEFHIER. Commercially,  
27 we're fully accountable, and I think there could be something as  
28 easy on the rec sector as, hey, look at this, and we've all got a  
29 cellphone, right? Creating an app is super easy, and so your  
30 statistical data, because it's not science, and it's a statistical  
31 formula that is a wrong formula, and it is wrong. You can literally  
32 create an app, where every recreational fisherman, and I'm a  
33 recreational fisherman as well sometimes, could just log into the  
34 app and say, on this day, I was fishing, and, on this day, I  
35 estimated how much fish I caught.

36  
37 This will give you a lot better numbers than what we've got going  
38 on right now, and it's just one idea. The tag system is another  
39 idea, but it sounds like that tag system might be economically  
40 difficult, and so that's the first thing.

41  
42 I want to, real quick, touch on the windfarms, and I know we didn't  
43 really talk about them too much, and, obviously, I think it's out  
44 of the control of this council, but having windfarms out there, in  
45 an already fragile ecosystem, where we know they create pollution,  
46 plus with all the problems we've had with the whales, and now we  
47 have to slow down, and we're just on a slippery slope, guys, and  
48 we've got to do something.



1  
2 I know it's not your place to do it, but you know the people that  
3 can step up, and so we've got to step up for that, too. Gag  
4 grouper, to get back on that, it's nonsense. I am having my best  
5 gag years in the last three years as well, and the facts are that,  
6 you guys truly believe in this MRIP data, then gag isn't  
7 overfished, and, actually, they're overpopulated at this point,  
8 based on the data that we're seeing, right, and I think everybody  
9 can agree on that, and so why are we cutting the season down, and  
10 why are we actually dropping the commercial by 80 percent, which  
11 is now taking another 20 percent? These are completely out of  
12 whack.

13  
14 The last thing that I want to touch base on is with the IFQ shares.  
15 I am an IFQ shareholder, and I buy in small increments, as I go,  
16 and I'm pretty new to the industry, and I've only been in ten  
17 years, and I didn't know a single person. I figured out how to do  
18 all of this by reading. I didn't know a single person in the  
19 charter community or the commercial community.

20  
21 I slowly started to grow it up, and I am a shareholder, and I'm  
22 not confident. I keep buying more shares, thinking I'm going to  
23 lose my money.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Dillingham, you have to wrap it up. Your  
26 time is up.

27  
28 **MR. DILLINGHAM:** Okay. All right. Well, the last thing is I do  
29 absolutely and fully believe that we all -- If you're going to  
30 have shares, you should definitely have a permit, and you should  
31 be landing fish. If you're not a commercial fisherman, or a dealer  
32 landing fish for commercial fishermen, you've got no business in  
33 this industry, and so thank you very much for your time.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. We have a question from Mr. Walker.

36  
37 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Tim. As a dealer and a shareholder, what  
38 are your thoughts -- How could the council avoid leaving a loophole  
39 open with the dealer permits to be a shareholder and consolidate  
40 the share --

41  
42 **MR. DILLINGHAM:** That's the outside-of-the-box thinking that we're  
43 talking about here, is you don't want to take somebody that's only  
44 been a dealer for twenty years, who has been supporting say ten  
45 boats, and, you know, these fishermen -- The quota has gotten so  
46 expensive, because of all these problems, and most fishermen can't  
47 afford to get the quota, and so some of these dealers -- Like, for  
48 the boats that I manage, I get the quota for them as well, and so,

1 not only am I getting it for the boat that I'm running, but I'm  
2 getting it for three other boats, and it's extremely expensive,  
3 and so we do have to consider some of the dealers that have been  
4 in this business for twenty years.

5  
6 Maybe there is some sort of a moratorium, or a grandfather clause,  
7 that says, okay, if you've been in this industry for at least ten  
8 years, or five years landing fish, every single year, and you're  
9 putting the trip tickets in, and you're helping the fishermen, and  
10 you're involved in the fishery, and I think that would maybe be  
11 the only option, but it's something that I need to give some  
12 thought to as well, because I didn't think outside the box either  
13 when I came here.

14  
15 I came here saying, hey, if you don't have a permit, and you're  
16 not the fisherman landing the fish, you don't belong in this, and  
17 there are some outside-the-box things that we've got to start  
18 thinking about, and so it's kind of a -- I would definitely be  
19 open to have more discussions, and I will give it some thought,  
20 and I can email that to you, Ed.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Anyone else? Dr. Walter.

23  
24 **DR. WALTER:** Tim, thank you for your testimony, and I wanted to  
25 follow-up on your comment about the windfarms and your concerns  
26 related to that, because we haven't heard that many concerns about  
27 some of those impacts, and so if you could elaborate a bit on some  
28 of what you feel your concerns are about them.

29  
30 **MR. DILLINGHAM:** Well, number one, they leak oil. Number two,  
31 there is a lifespan problem with them as well, and what do you do?  
32 It's the same thing with decommissioning the oil rigs, right, and  
33 there is so much stuff out there, and what are you going to do  
34 when these turbines stop working, you know, and we're already  
35 having problems with red tide and the runoff here, and pollution  
36 is a super huge problem.

37  
38 To be honest with you, the pollution in the Gulf is taking way  
39 more fish than our entire commercial sector, and that's the  
40 reality. When a red tide event happens, which, obviously, is not  
41 directly related to wind turbines, but they have made many public  
42 posts about how the wind turbines affect seabirds, affect the  
43 whales, and you can see. You can see the plumes of oils dripping  
44 off of these turbines and things, and it's just -- Why put them in  
45 the water? Why put them in something that has no filtration? Why  
46 can't we put them next to the coast, or in areas where it's still  
47 windy, but it has soil to filter through? When you have something  
48 like this, it goes directly in the water, and it's in the water,

1 and it's not going anywhere.

2  
3 I know this isn't anything for the council to fix, but we have to  
4 collaborate together, all agencies, all people, and this isn't  
5 right. I mean, there's tons of places that they could put these  
6 turbines, and putting them in our water is not the right answer,  
7 and we sure as hell don't want them in southwest Florida, and I'm  
8 speaking for everybody I know there. Thank you.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We have Rob Murphy, followed by Dale  
11 Woodruff.

12  
13 **MR. ROB MURPHY:** My name is Rob Murphy, and I'm a passionate  
14 lifetime fisherman in the State of Florida with nothing left to  
15 lose. I put my life savings into a commercial boat in the Gulf,  
16 and the gag reduction put me out of business commercially last  
17 year. Now I just want a recreational season to fish with my son.

18  
19 Trust the science. How many times have we heard that lately, but  
20 the credibility of the scientific community is at an all-time low.  
21 Public trust is at an all-time low. NOAA is now telling us to  
22 trust the science that 106,000 pounds of gag grouper was caught  
23 from shore last season, based on a single intercept from the Skyway  
24 Pier.

25  
26 The study claims that, in nineteen days in October, 750,000 pounds  
27 of gag grouper were landed, and that's more than the entire  
28 commercial fleet catches in a good year. These are the most  
29 egregious examples, but the entire MRIP study is fatally flawed  
30 and based on wild extrapolations from extremely limited datasets.  
31 Does it not bother you that there is a million-pound discrepancy  
32 between the state study and the federal study?

33  
34 You know this study is flawed, and I ask the Gulf Council to stand  
35 with the public in calling out junk data. It undermines all of  
36 the good work that you do. NOAA should be ashamed of themselves  
37 for being so careless with people's livelihoods. This is reckless  
38 incompetence, and we're at a tipping point. People are angry,  
39 we're tired of having our rights stripped away by corrupt, lazy,  
40 unaccountable, and unelected bureaucrats.

41  
42 Fishing is a proud tradition in Florida, and we will continue to  
43 fish sustainably. If they move forward with a complete gag grouper  
44 closure, based on this junk science, it will turn honest men into  
45 criminals. You will face unprecedented public rebuke, and you  
46 will leave people no other option than mass civil disobedience.  
47 People will ignore oppressive, nonsense closures and responsibly  
48 self-regulate our fishery.

1  
2 I have spoken at many fisheries management meetings over the years,  
3 and I have never used this type of tone before, but we've tried  
4 for years to work constructively with regulators, and nothing has  
5 changed with regard to recreational data integrity. If you accept  
6 this study, you are either incompetent or complicit. You, the  
7 Gulf Council, should have immediately demanded the elimination of  
8 the jobs of anybody who tried to pass off this study. You should  
9 have thrown out this garbage data.

10  
11 Demand better. Do better. The responsibility is now on you to  
12 rebuild public trust. If this closure is forced on us, based on  
13 flawed and impossible estimates, the public has a responsibility  
14 to stop at nothing short of an absolute purge of all involved  
15 parties and to demand they be replaced with individuals who  
16 prioritize sanity, accountability, and reason. Thank you.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. We have Dale Woodruff, followed by  
19 Jesse Zuban.

20  
21 **MR. DALE WOODRUFF:** Good afternoon. I'm Captain Dale Woodruff,  
22 and I'm President of the Alabama Charter Fishing Association, and  
23 I'm also a permit holder of two charter boats. I've been doing it  
24 a little bit, before my hair turned gray, but it sounds like we  
25 need a reporting program, like the SEFHIER. We kind of had that,  
26 but 80 percent of the charter-for-hire fleet out of Louisiana  
27 didn't want it, or was that eight?

28  
29 I represent over sixty-eight charter-for-hire permit holders in  
30 the State of Alabama under our association, and I would ask the  
31 council to follow the recommendations of the advisory panel for  
32 the for-hire reporting program, so we could get back to reporting  
33 as soon as possible.

34  
35 We support final action being taken on modifications to catch  
36 limits for the lane snapper, and then no reduction in the bag limit  
37 for gag, and keep it where it is, if we're not going to gain  
38 anything really, and I would urge the council to take unprecedented  
39 action to correct the methods used in MRIP-FES.

40  
41 The thing about being a charter-for-hire permit holder is it's a  
42 privilege, and it's not a right, and the same thing with having a  
43 driver's license, and it's a privilege, and it's not a right, okay,  
44 and there's things that you have to do if it's a privilege. You  
45 have to follow the laws, and then there's laws that are added onto  
46 everything, and, you know, I can't drive sixty-five in a thirty-  
47 five, or I get a citation, and the idea of, well, I shouldn't have  
48 to do this, or I shouldn't have to do that, as a federal permit

1 holder, and I get it. I mean, I understand that people don't want  
2 to do anything, or they want to do the least possible, but you  
3 should be a good steward of your resource, and being a federally-  
4 permitted charter-for-hire captain -- You know, to report, it  
5 should be required.

6  
7 It should be required to get the people in the back room the  
8 economic and the data for the reporting, and people say that they  
9 shouldn't do economic, or they shouldn't do twenty-four-seven or  
10 whatever, and I get it, but this is a privilege. I'm sorry, but  
11 it's not a right.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. We have a question from Ms. Boggs.

14  
15 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you for being here, Dale. Of the sixty-eight  
16 charter boats in your association -- Well, let me rephrase the  
17 question. Is your association onboard with the reporting  
18 requirements of the economic data that was required in SEFHIER,  
19 and would they be onboard with it for the new data collection  
20 system?

21  
22 **MR. WOODRUFF:** Well, at one time, yes, we were all for it, and  
23 everybody was for it, because it's what we wanted, and they're  
24 still for reporting the economic data, but maybe -- You know, I'm  
25 coming to grips on maybe doing an annual survey, or something like  
26 that, and, if I step aside as an individual, I don't mind reporting  
27 my data, okay, and I speak for every person in the association.

28  
29 I know there are a few that wouldn't care to report the economic  
30 data, but I know a lot of them will, because there are benefits to  
31 reporting your economic data, such as natural disasters and  
32 anything else that may come along that happens on this Gulf coast  
33 that we've been through, between the oil spill and the major  
34 hurricanes and fish kills, you know, and COVID, and so, to me,  
35 every business should report anyway, because, if there is a  
36 disaster, there is help to get them back out of being crippled by  
37 a disaster, and, if they don't have any economic reporting, then  
38 they're stuck. They're down where they're left to burn and die.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Captain Woodruff. If people could  
41 take their conversations outside, and we're getting a lot of  
42 background noise from folks in the audience while people are  
43 providing their testimony. Next, we have Jesse Zuban, followed by  
44 Laura Chicola.

45  
46 **MR. JESSE ZUBAN:** Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Jesse,  
47 and I'm the Vice President of Dolphin Deep-Sea Fishing in Tarpon  
48 Springs, just north of Tampa Bay. I'm calling in with my concerns

1 about the MRIP, and I don't believe that the science is accurate,  
2 especially being the owner of two headboats and seeing what our  
3 numbers are from the federal headboat survey, as compared to shore  
4 landings and other landings, and it's just -- I can't put a word  
5 on it, and I guess angry, or upset, would be a good adjective.  
6

7 Also, by shutting down the grouper, it's going to put pressure on  
8 other fisheries, as it already has, and everybody has seen, and I  
9 don't think that's a good thing either, for midwater snapper and  
10 different things that weren't historically harvested at the volume  
11 they are, and, with the numbers that are being reported, it should  
12 show that conservation has worked, in my opinion, if those numbers  
13 are actually going to be taken.  
14

15 I mean, geez, we were fishing in September and October, and then,  
16 of course, the season was cut short. I mean, even Ed Walker had  
17 talked to me, at one point, and when the numbers first came out,  
18 and he goes, man, are you guys just crushing the gags all of a  
19 sudden or something, when these numbers were coming out, and I'm  
20 like, no, and some of the offshore trips and stuff were doing all  
21 right, but, between weather and it being such a hot time of year  
22 in this area, certainly not.  
23

24 Also, the red grouper is out of sight, and even the numbers from  
25 the beginning of the year -- Most of the northern Gulf, the for-  
26 hire and charter fleet, doesn't fish for the majority of the winter  
27 months, early spring and winter, and they're closed past the  
28 twenty-fathom curve, as it is anyhow, and so half the EEZ is shut  
29 down anyway, and so how those numbers add up is kind of beyond me.  
30

31 As far as egg-bearing fish during the spawn, I don't see how it  
32 really matters one way or another, and I feel like what's good for  
33 the goose should be good for the gander, and, if the commercial  
34 side is allowed to harvest their fish during the spawn, I don't  
35 understand why the recreational sector and the for-hire sector is  
36 not. You know, you can catch that fish a week before it bears  
37 eggs, or while it bears eggs, and the result is the same.  
38

39 One other point too is, with the gag grouper fishery in our area  
40 being closed, it will negatively financially -- It will negatively  
41 impact our companies financially, and my employees, not to mention  
42 the supporting industries around them, and, also, a word, and  
43 there's been a lot of talk on the dock, with some other charter  
44 boat operators and stuff, and headboat operators that weren't  
45 present at this meeting, regarding pushing for an IFQ for the for-  
46 hire sector.  
47

48 I don't believe that's a viable thing. Just because you have an

1 IFQ, it does not guarantee that your section of fish is carved  
2 out, and look what just happened in the commercial side, with over  
3 an 80 percent reduction in their fish, and one last point, before  
4 I wrap up, is, as far as the reporting is concerned for charter  
5 boats, I do believe that it doesn't need to be a detailed SEFHIER  
6 issue and all this.

7  
8 Just continue on what the headboats are doing, like with the  
9 federal headboat survey. It's very simple, and you get an accurate  
10 report every day of what we catch, and there's no VMS, and it's  
11 kind of the best of both worlds, and so thank you for your time,  
12 and, if anyone has a question, I'm happy to answer.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you. I'm not seeing any hands  
15 up. Thank you. Next, we have Laura Chicola, followed by Will  
16 Schmidt.

17  
18 **MS. LAURA CHICOLA:** Good afternoon, council. My name is Laura  
19 Chicola, commercial sector, boat and permit owner, and no shares.  
20 I am here before you because, overall, I still believe in what you  
21 are doing. The presentation yesterday on participation and permit  
22 requirements was really shocking and damning, when 30 percent of  
23 the IFQ participants catch all the quota.

24  
25 This demonstrates exploitation of our men and women on the deck,  
26 fishers that risk their lives to harvest this resource, and what  
27 a mess the Gulf Council predecessors have made of this program.  
28 It's time to see a turn in the tide in respect to access for active  
29 fishermen, and the time is now to make it right for the few active  
30 fishermen that are left, instead of the corporators and investors.  
31 Thank you, and I'm sorry about the big words, and I'm having  
32 trouble with them. Thank you.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. All right. Next, we have Robert  
35 Grable, and I'm sorry that I called Will, but he's not available.  
36 Robert Grable, are you there? He's not there either. Captain  
37 John Fidi. He's not there either. All right. We'll go back to  
38 in-person. Scott Hickman.

39  
40 **MR. SCOTT HICKMAN:** I wasn't quite prepared, but here we go.  
41 Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for hearing me today. This is  
42 Captain Scott Hickman from Galveston, Texas. I have a few things  
43 to say. Hopefully I can get it done in three minutes.

44  
45 The unused IFQ shares and the unclaimed accounts I believe should  
46 be put into a program for military veterans that want to get into  
47 the fishery. People that have given so much to our country, I  
48 think we can do that for those folks, and it would be a good

1 program.

2

3 Please forge ahead with the fishery ecosystem plan. It shows lots  
4 of promise to solve issues, and, also, let's get a good study fleet  
5 to collect environmental data, and fishery data, that would help  
6 the fishery ecosystem plan.

7

8 Please implement the South Atlantic wahoo dolphin plan to include  
9 the Gulf. I know that Andy received some information, and the  
10 Flower Garden Banks Banks Sanctuary Advisory Council passed a  
11 motion to have a bag limit for wahoo for the big aggregation inside  
12 the sanctuary, and so you could work that plan in from the South  
13 Atlantic and cover that.

14

15 The rec fishing initiative should be given a priority by the  
16 council, and there is too many problems not to expedite this plan.  
17 The Charter Fishermen's Association supports the Graves reefing  
18 bill that's working itself through Congress right now, and we would  
19 like it to include wind structures as well, and the CFA, Charter  
20 Fishermen's Association, supports the offshore wind industry in  
21 the western Gulf of Mexico. These structures are vital and  
22 essential fish habitat, just like the oil and gas structures have  
23 been in the past.

24

25 The Charter Fishermen's Association and the Shareholders Alliance  
26 held an offshore wind summit this last year in Galveston, and it  
27 was really great, and we will be holding two more this year, in  
28 Texas and Louisiana. Please use the charter-for-industry industry  
29 data AP's recommendations as a blueprint for SEFHIER 2.0, and let's  
30 use the new Starlink cellular phone technology in SEFHIER, and  
31 also for private red reporting, through Starlink's worldwide cell  
32 network that's coming online this upcoming year.

33

34 You think MRIP is questionable? My state counts empty boat slips,  
35 and empty trailers at boat ramps, to get fishery effort data, and  
36 I think we can do better, on both systems, with new technologies,  
37 as I've listed above, and not mailouts. People quit using the  
38 U.S. mail years ago and are mainly paperless now, just like when  
39 we quit using landlines and went to cellphones.

40

41 I think my wife told me the other day that all of our bills are  
42 paid directly, and we do everything via email, and so she only  
43 checks the mailbox like once every week or two weeks, and so, if  
44 you're sending out mailouts, a lot of people aren't even checking  
45 their mail anymore, and it's all electronic, and so we can do  
46 better. Let's use technology, and let's get good data, because  
47 obviously it ain't working. Thank you.

48



1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Scott. Next, we have Stephen Stang,  
2 followed by Kelia Paul.

3  
4 **MR. STEPHEN STANG:** I'm Stephen Stang, and I'm a private  
5 recreational angler in the Big Bend, and I just wanted to say, you  
6 know, that I really appreciate all this good conversation that  
7 we're having, and I think it's, hopefully, the beginnings of some  
8 really meaningful change in the right direction with how we  
9 estimate our effort for gags, and I'm hoping that it goes in a  
10 similar direction that the red snapper has gone, and it kind of  
11 goes more to the state level. Most of our landings are brought in  
12 within Florida waters anyway, and so I think that would make the  
13 most sense.

14  
15 We have a lot of good research being done by our state agency, at  
16 the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute, and they're learning a  
17 lot about gag movement and spawning and stuff like that, and so I  
18 would like to see it go more towards the state level, especially  
19 looking at the discrepancy between MRIP's effort and the state's  
20 effort.

21  
22 The other thing that I would like to bring up is I know the fishery  
23 is currently considered overfished, and I don't know how many more  
24 years the recreational sector is going to have a shortened season,  
25 but I just wanted to speak on behalf of that season length and  
26 when it started.

27  
28 The Big Bend historically had an early spring season in the four-  
29 county region of Franklin, Wakulla, Taylor, and Jefferson Counties  
30 in state waters, and I'm sure there were a lot of public meetings  
31 had to get that put into place, and my understanding is it was  
32 based a lot on the fact that it gave anglers with smaller boats  
33 the ability to target gags when they're closer to shore, and I  
34 really would like to see that come back and not fall by the wayside,  
35 when discussions to maybe lengthen the season comes back on the  
36 table.

37  
38 I also kind of question the September season, and I know, at least  
39 in the Big Bend, the fishing gets really good in October through  
40 December, and November and December are great months to fish.  
41 We're catching them in shallow water, with very minimal predation,  
42 like you see out in deep water in September, and no barotrauma,  
43 and so I would imagine that post-release mortality is very low in  
44 the shallow waters in the months of November and December, and so  
45 I would just like to get on the record that you know, the thought  
46 of going back to that early season opening in those four counties,  
47 and it meant a lot to those economies, but also considering a fall  
48 season, a late fall and winter season, when people know the gag

1 fishing is incredible, and it's what brings people to these areas.  
2  
3 You're seeing more and more people talk about catching shallow-  
4 water gags, and it makes our grouper fishery really unique, and so  
5 the September season really doesn't allow recreational anglers to  
6 capitalize on that, that epic fishing in November and December,  
7 and so that's all I wanted to say, and I'm glad we're having all  
8 these conversations, and I'm hoping that this is really the  
9 beginning of some positive change.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you for your comments, Stephen. Next, we  
12 have Kelia Paul, followed by Rondal Springston.

13  
14 **MS. KELIA PAUL:** Good afternoon, council Thank you for the  
15 opportunity to speak today. My name is Kelia Paul, and I own two  
16 dually-permitted vessels out of Panama City Beach, Florida, and  
17 I'm the President of the Panama City Boatmen's Association. My  
18 comments today will reflect that of PCBA.

19  
20 For the for-hire data collection program, we do want to see this  
21 set up as soon as possible, to properly reflect what the for-hire  
22 sector is harvesting. We want to see the inputs streamlined and  
23 usability improved, auto-populate date and time on the hail-out,  
24 area fished, and carry the overlapping information from the hail-  
25 out to the landing notification, so that it doesn't have to be  
26 entered twice.

27  
28 We do have a question around the target species field, and will  
29 this be used to calculate effort? If so, we would prefer a high  
30 or low category field, rather than a specific species, because we  
31 target multiple species on every trip we run, and we do not want  
32 to have inflated effort data. We also want to be sure that the  
33 ones that are dually-permitted, and already have VMS systems, are  
34 allowed to continue use of our tablets for reporting. We do not  
35 want different platforms and apps to manage, if possible, and it  
36 also allows our captains to submit a notification on the ride in  
37 and not have to wait for cell service.

38  
39 Validation is paramount in the success of the system, and we do  
40 not believe that a manual button is sufficient. We would like to  
41 see the geofencing option with a demarcation line that is set with  
42 the input of the local fleet. We are not in favor of daily economic  
43 data reporting, as we're trying to streamline and simplify, but we  
44 would not oppose the yearly sampling of a percentage of the fleet,  
45 like the commercial does.

46  
47 For Amendment 59, we support requiring a permit to hold IFQ shares.  
48 We do believe that, as was said yesterday, there could be some

1 unintended consequences, like to the dealers. With this amendment,  
2 the council should explore all of those properly.

3  
4 PCBA does have one more issue. We would like to see a change in  
5 the charter-for-hire red snapper season. We do not have a lot of  
6 tourism after mid-August, and we would like to see those days  
7 reallocated to May. We already have amberjack and gag in the fall,  
8 and we would like to have something to catch in May besides  
9 triggerfish and vermilion. Thank you.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Let's go to Lawrence Marino, followed  
12 by Ryan Bradley.

13  
14 **MR. LAWRENCE MARINO:** Good afternoon. My name is Larry Marino,  
15 and I'm here on behalf of Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill.  
16 Regarding MRIP, it was, obviously, disappointing yesterday to hear  
17 about the latest problems, with the huge and unexplained variances  
18 for red grouper and gag. It does sound like small sample size,  
19 with some outlier results, may be at least a part of this  
20 particular problem. Outlier results need to be eliminated, or at  
21 least taken into account as such, but, even if that's all the data  
22 there is, it's a problem to use it to calculate a number for the  
23 harvest when the data is so unreliable.

24  
25 This reminds us, once again, that MRIP wasn't designed for in-  
26 season management. This was said repeatedly, but we're still using  
27 it for in-season management, and we need to start moving away from  
28 it once and for all, and the thing to move to is the state surveys.  
29 It's encouraging that NMFS seems to want to work with the states  
30 in this regard. Particularly with the recent jolt of IRA money,  
31 now is the time to make that move.

32  
33 Regarding the IFQ programs, the presentation regarding Amendment  
34 59 was a good start, adding the actions for permits and active  
35 participation, but we already know that just requiring a permit  
36 won't do enough. This is why the objective that was addressed  
37 here was originally stated as limiting share ownership to accounts  
38 that are harvesting IFQ species. None of the options presented  
39 for determining active participation involves income requirements  
40 from fishing. Particularly given how many fishermen have raised  
41 this over the years, it seems that it should be an option that is  
42 at least considered here.

43  
44 An option was presented to require harvesting a minimum number of  
45 pounds, and that seems to be a little bit not quite the right  
46 focus. Instead of a binary trigger of hitting a certain number of  
47 pounds, or not, the focus should be on how many shares the  
48 shareholder actually fished, and one way to do this is capping

1 ownership with the greatest number of shares fished by that  
2 shareholder over say the last two or three years.

3  
4 Allowing a rolling time period to allow for health and vessel  
5 problems is appropriate, and perhaps also a hardship process to  
6 address more extreme situations, but the frame of reference should  
7 be whether the shareholder fished the shares, rather than simply  
8 whether the shareholder fished at all, or fished over some  
9 particular threshold, which can be very different, depending on  
10 the size of the operation you're talking about.

11  
12 One thing that was missing from the amendment is one of the other  
13 objectives that this council stated, evaluating the merits of  
14 limiting share ownership, including alternative mechanisms for  
15 equitably redistributing shares. Several meetings ago, we heard  
16 an extensive presentation regarding adaptive management and  
17 cyclical and periodic redistribution of shares. Amendment 59 is  
18 the appropriate time to address that, as you're already dealing  
19 with whether and how shares must be divested.

20  
21 The focus of adaptive management is equitably distributing the  
22 shares and the fish among fishermen and not just on limiting share  
23 ownership to actual fishermen. Both are important objectives, and  
24 both should be considered together in Amendment 59.

25  
26 Finally, as you consider Amendment 60 at the next meeting,  
27 regarding the redistribution of shares, please consider not  
28 redistributing the shares, but consider instead holding the shares  
29 in a quota bank and distributing the allocation each year to target  
30 whatever needs the council or the quota bank leadership identifies.  
31 This avoids recreating the problem that got us here in the first  
32 place, functionally granting ownership of the shares to private  
33 individuals, along with the public's fish that those shares  
34 represent. Thank you.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Marino. Ryan Bradley, followed by  
37 Jamie Gaspard.

38  
39 **MR. RYAN BRADLEY:** Hello. Ryan Bradley here. I'm from Long Beach,  
40 Mississippi, and I'm a commercial reef fish permit fisherman, and  
41 I also operate a Gulf and South Atlantic seafood dealership. In  
42 fact, I'm the only federally-permitted seafood dealer in the State  
43 of Mississippi, currently. I have to be, because there is no one  
44 else that can offload my fish.

45  
46 Most of the comments I'm going to have today is in regard to  
47 Amendment 59, and I oppose 59, related to the commercial sector's  
48 IFQ program, and it sounds like the council is in agreement about

1 requiring a reef fish permit to access shareholder accounts, and  
2 we've been talking about this for a while now, but we wanted to  
3 reiterate a few different considerations that are extremely  
4 important to consider as the council moves forward.

5  
6 First, it's very important to include some kind of qualifier  
7 attached to the permit. In the council's presentation, they talked  
8 a lot about active participation and tying that participation to  
9 the shareholder account. Those considerations are good, but I  
10 think those would be -- They should probably be reserved for talks  
11 on cyclical redistribution, you know, and that's fine to come up  
12 in Amendment 60. I think 59 should focus on just getting the  
13 permit requirement in place, and that would be a good start.

14  
15 You know, what we want to do with that permit income qualifier is  
16 similar to what was in place with the reef fish permit before we  
17 transitioned to an IFQ program, and so this is not a new idea, and  
18 this was in place before we went to IFQ, and, also, NOAA currently  
19 requires an income qualifier requirement for the spiny lobster  
20 fishery, and, if you are able to pull up their permit renewal  
21 application on page 6, you can see more information about how they  
22 request that information for the spiny lobster, and I think we  
23 could do the same thing for the reef fish fishery here, and that  
24 would be beneficial to us.

25  
26 This is so important, because, if we just go with a permit  
27 requirement for these shareholder accounts, the price of the  
28 permits are going to go through the roof, and we're going to  
29 further compound barriers to entry for these young fishermen, and  
30 so we don't want to do that.

31  
32 Secondly, in the document the council presented, we really need to  
33 consider language that says a reef fish permit is required to,  
34 quote, obtain quota shares or allocation, and not maintain, and  
35 the difference in "maintain" is that would require all shareholders  
36 to have a permit to keep the quota, and it would force a divestment  
37 at a drop-dead date.

38  
39 By using the word "obtain", we would simply require the  
40 shareholders to have a permit to obtain shares going forward, or  
41 facilitate new transfers into their account, and they would not be  
42 penalized for their current holdings, and they wouldn't be forced  
43 to divest, and so that's a big thing to consider there.

44  
45 There is also some other big reasons why we wouldn't want to use  
46 the word "maintain", which would force divestment, and that could  
47 create a whole bunch of unintended consequences that would be  
48 counter to what we're trying to do here, and so, by using the word

1 "obtain" over "maintain", that will also help us avoid the whole  
2 discussion about grandfathering people in, providing exemptions  
3 for certain operators, and, you know, to talk about an exemption  
4 for a dealer, and I'm a dealer, and I don't think a dealer needs  
5 an exemption for anything, especially if we change the program to  
6 make it where participants only need to have a permit to obtain  
7 the shares.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ryan, can you wrap it up? You've met your time  
10 limit. Can you go ahead and wrap it up?

11  
12 **MR. BRADLEY:** Okay. That's it, and, in closing, just let's look  
13 at those things and try to make a good move there on requiring  
14 these permits in this IFQ program, and I think there's some caveats  
15 there that we need to pay close attention to. Thank you for your  
16 time, and we appreciate your service to the USA.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. We have a question for you, Ryan,  
19 from General Spraggins.

20  
21 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Ryan, we've talked some about this, and I  
22 think, also, you know, if we look at Action 2 of the active  
23 participation in there, it talks about a minimum poundage, is what  
24 they're looking at, but, from talking, I think you're thinking we  
25 ought to put something in there like a percentage of income, and  
26 is that correct?

27  
28 **MR. BRADLEY:** That's correct, General. What I would recommend is  
29 a percentage of income from any commercial fishing activity from  
30 our region in the Gulf, and that could be a state fishery or a  
31 federal fishery, and our goal is not to exclude all commercial  
32 fishing, and we want to be able to be inclusive to as many  
33 legitimate commercial fishermen as we can, to give them access to  
34 this fishery, but it is a very limited-access fishery, and so we  
35 need to be limiting that access to bonified commercial fishermen.

36  
37 I thank you for asking that question, because I brought up  
38 Mississippi, and Mississippi has a similar income qualifier that  
39 we use for our speckled trout, and maybe you could talk more about  
40 that to the council, and tell them how that works for our state,  
41 and maybe the good or the bad or your perspective on that, and I  
42 think we could do something very similar with our Gulf reef fish  
43 permit here, and that would protect the people we're trying to  
44 protect. Thank you, sir, for the question.

45  
46 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, that's correct, and what we do is we have  
47 like a qualifier, where you have to have a certain percentage of  
48 whatever your income has to come from that, to be able to qualify

1 for a speckled trout permit, and that's something you might want  
2 to entertain when we look at that. You know, instead of just  
3 poundage, maybe we could put a percentage, like you did for spiny  
4 lobster or something.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thanks again, Ryan. All right. Next,  
7 we have Jamie Gaspard, followed by Jesse Hunt.

8  
9 **MR. JAMIE GASPARD:** How are you doing? I'm Captain Jamie Gaspard  
10 from Pure Adrenalin Fishing Charters. I'm a commercial fisherman  
11 and a charter fisherman, more charter than commercial. I don't  
12 have shares, and so I've got to lease my quota.

13  
14 I came here today to talk about the SEFHIER program, first off.  
15 I'm for it, and I've also talked to a couple of my friends that is  
16 for it too. With the past year, with the economy down, we were  
17 kind of competing against non-permitted boats, and this would be  
18 another leg to help us start eliminating some of that, like it  
19 was. I support the Starlink cellular, because it really wouldn't  
20 cost any more, and we could eliminate some equipment by using that.

21  
22 Another thing too that I would like to add is I would like to see  
23 the Gulf split into two zones. That way, I'm not getting punished  
24 for other people.

25  
26 My shrimper friends, try and help them guys out any way you all  
27 can, because they're getting beat up pretty bad, our local people,  
28 and one thing I will say is people way up north make decisions for  
29 people that live on the coast, and sometimes that ain't the right  
30 decision, and so I'm just leaving you all with that. That's about  
31 all I've got, guys, and maybe we can look into maybe adding  
32 something to the shark population that is out of control, maybe  
33 some kind of --

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Dugas.

36  
37 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Jamie. What is your opinion on the  
38 economical part of the SEFHIER program?

39  
40 **MR. GASPARD:** Keeping a part of what?

41  
42 **MR. DUGAS:** The new SEFHIER program.

43  
44 **MR. GASPARD:** I really don't have a problem with it. I mean, I  
45 guess I can go either way on it, really, and I guess it's what  
46 it's used for. You know, as long as it's used for the good of it,  
47 I guess we can work with it, and I signed up -- Especially for  
48 SEFHIER, I signed up for the pilot program when they started this,

1 and it wasn't a real big deal to us. It really wasn't, and we  
2 like giving the data, and we want to give accurate data, and it's  
3 going to transpire to more days on the water. That's how I see  
4 it, and a couple of my friends see it. You know, other people  
5 have got different opinions of it, but we're good with it. We  
6 really are.

7  
8 One thing that I would like to say though is like we were allowed  
9 a power-down exemption, and we had like a couple of instances where  
10 we would power-down, and it's seventy-two-hour power-down. Well,  
11 they don't want you to power-up, and so, like if a friend's boat  
12 breaks down, or you're going to take his trip, and you're in power-  
13 down, well, they don't want you to power-up, and so I would like  
14 to see that worked on some kind of way, and maybe going to a  
15 twelve-hour power-down or something, you know, and that's about  
16 it.

17  
18 **MR. DUGAS:** One more. When you talk about splitting the Gulf east  
19 and west, are you pertaining to the charter fleet?

20  
21 **MR. GASPARD:** Well, I think it would be everybody. The charter  
22 fleet would be fine too, but I would really like to see it split,  
23 because I don't want to be punished for what other people do. I  
24 mean, if we have a big biomass of fish here, and other people are  
25 catching theirs, we get punished for them, and I would like to see  
26 it split, and a lot of other people would like to see it split,  
27 for that reason.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, sir. Next, we have Jesse Hunt,  
30 followed by Johnny Williams.

31  
32 **MR. JESSE HUNT:** Good afternoon. My name is Jesse Hunt, and I'm  
33 a passionate recreational angler from west-central Florida. I'm  
34 here today to address the inaccuracies in the MRIP-FES data for  
35 the 2023 gag grouper. We all understand the critical importance  
36 of accurate data in managing our fisheries. Decisions based on  
37 flawed data not only misrepresent the reality, but it can lead to  
38 consequences that can affect every stakeholder involved.

39  
40 Let me draw your attention to the specific issues with the data.  
41 This year, we faced substantial challenges with severe weather  
42 conditions, significantly reducing the number of fishable days,  
43 yet the MRIP-FES reports a total of 1.6 million pounds of gag  
44 grouper landed in 2023, a figure that seems implausible under these  
45 circumstances. The core of this discrepancy lies in the data  
46 sample size, and the total count of intercepts was only thirty-  
47 two. How can such a limited sample size yield reliable data for  
48 an entire fishery?



1  
2 To put this into perspective, the Gulf Council is responsible for  
3 preparing fishery management plans for an exclusive economic zone  
4 encompassing 182,752 square nautical miles, as per  
5 fisherycouncil.org. With only thirty-two intercepts, this equates  
6 to one intercept per 5,711 square nautical miles. Such a sparse  
7 distribution of data points is hardly robust, or meaningful, for  
8 such a vast area.

9  
10 Moreover, the extrapolation of shore landings is deeply  
11 concerning. Based on just one shore intercept, the MRIP-FES  
12 estimated over 106,000 pounds of gag grouper caught. This is in  
13 stark contrast to the 2022 data, where no shore intercepts resulted  
14 in zero pounds reported. The inconsistency is glaring.

15  
16 It's common knowledge among us that gag grouper thrive in deeper  
17 waters, particularly during the months when the fishing season is  
18 open. The idea that shore anglers could out-fish headboats, let  
19 alone by a factor of ten, defies logic and our understanding of  
20 the species. If these flawed numbers are accepted as fact, the  
21 consequences are dire. We risk the closure of the gag grouper  
22 fishery for years. This would not only affect recreational  
23 fishermen, but also charter captains, headboat operators, and the  
24 tourism industry that depends on this fishery.

25  
26 We're looking at a chain reaction of economic and environmental  
27 repercussions. I urge the council to reconsider the data  
28 collection and management methodologies. Our fishery, and all  
29 those who depend on it, deserve accurate, reliable data. It's  
30 essential for the sustainable management of our resources and the  
31 livelihood of our community.

32  
33 In conclusion, the future of our gag grouper fishery hinges on the  
34 decisions made by this esteemed body. Let those decisions be  
35 informed by data that is accurate and as robust as possible. Thank  
36 you for your attention and for the opportunity to speak today. I  
37 am hopeful that, together, we can work towards a more sustainable  
38 and prosperous future for our fishery.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Jesse. Next, we have Johnny Williams,  
41 followed by Anthony Angello. Anthony Anderson, are you on the  
42 phone? All right. Kindra Arneson, and then, after Kindra, we'll  
43 have Jessica Essig.

44  
45 **MS. KINDRA ARNESON:** Good afternoon, council members and guests.  
46 Welcome back to Louisiana. The presentation yesterday answered a  
47 question that I've had for some time. It should rock the public  
48 to its core to know that small family fishers are forced to lease

1 70 percent of the Gulf red snapper quota from folks whose feet  
2 never touch the deck of a boat to harvest these fish.

3  
4 The boots-on-deck fishers in our coastal communities have been  
5 exploited to the breaking point because of this program. Seeing  
6 the current action being taken by this council is encouraging, and  
7 it gives a renewed hope for the boots-on-deck fishermen, fishers  
8 that have been negatively impacted by this IFQ program. Today, I  
9 ask -- I have one ask, catch share reform sooner rather than later.  
10 Please do not kick the can any further down the road. Please move  
11 forward with overhauling the IFQ program, and our hope is that  
12 you, the current Gulf Council, works hard, and swiftly, to put the  
13 fish back in the hands of fishermen, and their crew, and finally  
14 put a cease to the exploitation of fishers and our coastal  
15 communities.

16  
17 On the phone, Mr. Bradley talked about requirements to be in this  
18 program, and I understand that we're moving forward with a permit  
19 requirement. I would be in agreement with an active income  
20 requirement, for the participant to have an active VMS, and active  
21 participation in harvesting fish.

22  
23 My question for you is how many times can you cut up a resource?  
24 How many times should someone be permitted to make money off of  
25 the catch that is harvested by our fishermen? You know, when I go  
26 catch shrimp, I don't pay the dock to go catch that. I go harvest  
27 my shrimp, and I bring it back in, and I unload it to my dealer,  
28 and then it's up to them to market the shrimp to their buyer, to  
29 make their profit margin on it, but, in this program, we have  
30 dealers, and, look, the dealers didn't do this themselves, and  
31 this was done for them by this program, but we have dealers that  
32 are making money on two sides of this, and so where is the equity  
33 in that?

34  
35 You know, where is it where my husband goes out, and can lose an  
36 arm, or I could lose a leg, or our life, on the boat for someone  
37 that is sitting on land that gets to double-dip into this resource?

38  
39 On the windmills, I heard someone early say put them in the western  
40 Gulf, and let's split the Gulf in half. Well, why should I have  
41 windmills in my backyard, and they shouldn't have them in theirs?  
42 You know, we can't keep trading one off for the other, and I don't  
43 think that the windmills should be in the ocean, period. We're  
44 already seeing these large investors back out on the east coast.  
45 What's going to happen in the Gulf coast, and not if, but when we  
46 have a massive hurricane and it mows them down? Who is going to  
47 be there to clean up that mess? They're not oil and gas.

1 You know, for Katrina, we have massive infrastructure come down in  
2 the Gulf of Mexico, and a lot of it still lays on the bottom.  
3 You've got trawlers out here trying to trawl off the coast of  
4 Louisiana, and they're going to run into the lines, and the  
5 oystermen don't want the lines across their oyster beds, and nobody  
6 wants this stuff in the Gulf of Mexico, but it's full steam forward  
7 to continue development. We've got to start drawing the line  
8 somewhere to protect the resource and coastal communities that  
9 depend upon them. Thank you, all, and I will take any questions.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Kindra. I don't see any questions.  
12 Thank you. Next, we have Kyle Varn, followed by Sonja Fordham.  
13 Kyle, are you there?

14  
15 **MR. KYLE VARN:** All right, and so I am out of west-central Florida,  
16 the Tampa Bay area, and there's a lot of stuff that people have  
17 said today that I would just be beating a dead horse, and I don't  
18 want to necessarily reiterate some of that stuff, but the  
19 inaccuracies from this MRIP number that came from some group out  
20 of Maryland -- The fact that it's such a small sample size of only,  
21 what, thirty-two, and one shore fisherman, fifteen private  
22 boaters, and sixteen charter captains, or charter angling, and  
23 somehow private boat anglers did 1.4 million pounds, which is  
24 roughly a number that equates to how many actual saltwater fishing  
25 anglers that are licensed in the State of Florida, which I find  
26 just kind of wild out there,

27  
28 As for the FES, I actually received -- I actually received that  
29 survey in the mail, and one of the things that I noticed about the  
30 survey is that it didn't ask if I had released these fish, and I  
31 thought that was a really important thing to ask during it, and I  
32 think any steps that we go forward with trying to make sure that  
33 we're getting accurate numbers, and accurate representation, is  
34 did this person -- Yes, did they catch it? Did they catch said  
35 fish? Yes.

36  
37 Did they release it, because, for me, I didn't -- I wasn't on a  
38 boat, and I was in a kayak, or I was on my SUP, or I was from land,  
39 and, on some of these days, yes, did I catch a gag? Yes, but it  
40 was seven inches, and I didn't keep it. I caught a bunch of them,  
41 and it's great. It shows me that we have an estuary and a good  
42 establishment of this fish is thriving, and still growing, and  
43 it's still there, but to kind of put forward -- You know, I kind  
44 of feel like somehow someone up there in this Maryland area, that  
45 was looking at these numbers, was not taking that consideration  
46 into effect.

47  
48 Going forward, we need to make sure that, whatever we do, whether

1 it's online, over the phone, an app, or even someone doing a  
2 survey, which that's very rare to even see, to me, and even to  
3 most captains, and we need to make sure that we are being honest  
4 and forward on the fact of what's actually being taken in and not  
5 -- Also what is also being released, and that is all I have to  
6 say.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Kyle. All right. I called on Johnny  
9 Williams earlier, and he had just stepped back in the door, and I  
10 didn't give him enough time to come to the podium, but he is here  
11 now, and so Johnny Williams, followed by Sonja Fordham.

12  
13 **MR. JOHNNY WILLIAMS:** Thank you. Johnny Williams, with Williams  
14 Partyboats, Incorporated, third-generation partyboat operator out  
15 of Galveston. This is going to sound like déjà vu all over again,  
16 but anyway, and king mackerel -- I tried to warn you all, about  
17 five years ago, that king mackerel were in bad shape. This year,  
18 I've got the data from last year, and we only caught like a little  
19 over one-third of the allowable total catch.

20  
21 You know, the fishermen have come up here and told you all that  
22 king mackerel are in bad shape, and the data shows that king  
23 mackerel are in bad shape, and you're still not doing anything  
24 about it, and why are we not? Why are we sitting on our hands?  
25 Andy, I mean, it's like one-third of the quota is being caught,  
26 the total quota is being caught, but we're still not doing anything  
27 about it. You know, we need to do something about this fishery.

28  
29 The red snapper, we had everyone pretty much from the charter boat  
30 and partyboat and commercial industry saying don't raise the quota,  
31 and the quota was increased anyway. You know, we need to have a  
32 balance between the scientific data and what the fishermen are  
33 saying, but, in the case of king mackerel, the data shows that the  
34 fish are in bad shape. The fishermen say that the fish are in bad  
35 shape, and nothing is being done. We need to do something.

36  
37 We need to -- This council needs to be proactive, and not reactive  
38 or inactive, and we need to see what's coming down the line and do  
39 something about it. As I mentioned before at the council meetings,  
40 you know, we're coming up with this new technology, and they have  
41 the bottom relief shading, and spots that were not known to folks  
42 are going to be common now, and these red snapper are going to be  
43 more vulnerable, and we need to do something about that.

44  
45 My suggestion of one thing we can do is push forward with Amendment  
46 42. Amendment 42 accomplishes pretty much all of the National  
47 Standards that are required, especially 10, safety-at-sea, and  
48 Number 9, the bycatch, and, to a lesser degree, communities, cost

1 and benefits, efficiency, allocation, optimum yield.

2  
3 I mean, I always contend that I can run my business better than  
4 the federal government can, and so let's put 42 back on the table  
5 again.

6  
7 A lot of people are going to argue that, well, we've had problems  
8 with catch share programs in the commercial industry, and one thing  
9 we need to take into consideration is, when the allocations  
10 originally came in the commercial industry, when the eastern Gulf  
11 of Mexico was not harvesting a lot of red snapper in the years  
12 that were suggested, and a lot of people that are catching red  
13 snapper now were not included, but we've had fish in the eastern  
14 Gulf for quite a while, and so I think that -- I don't think that  
15 would be a problem, and please be proactive. Let's not be  
16 inactive, and let's not be reactive, and let's be proactive. Let's  
17 try to do something for the fish and the fishermen. Thank you.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Captain Williams. We have one hand,  
20 at least. Mr. Strelcheck.

21  
22 **MR. STRELCHECK:** A comment and a question, and so the comment is,  
23 if people say we don't listen to your public testimony, we do,  
24 and, at the last council meeting, we passed a motion to begin an  
25 action looking at adjusting king mackerel catch limits, and so --  
26

27 **MR. WILLIAMS:** Thank you, Andy, and I appreciate that. It's long  
28 overdue.

29  
30 **MR. STRELCHECK:** It's not on this agenda, but it is in the queue.  
31 My question, and you didn't talk about SEFHIER, right, and what  
32 are your thoughts in terms of the AP's recommendations?  
33

34 **MR. WILLIAMS:** About what, sir?

35  
36 **MR. STRELCHECK:** The for-hire logbook program, and I know you're  
37 part of the headboat survey.

38  
39 **MR. WILLIAMS:** You know, the better data we have, the better grip  
40 we have on what's actually being caught out there in the industry,  
41 and I support anything. I was really disappointed when I heard  
42 that you all lost in court and we're able to pursue catch reports  
43 from the charter boats, and, I mean, I'm all onboard. The more  
44 data that we have, you know, the better we're able to make  
45 decisions and recommendations.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you.

1 **MR. WILLIAMS:** Thank you very much. Have a great day.  
2  
3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have Sonja Fordham, followed by Zach Zistre.  
4 No Sonja? All right. Zach Zistre, are you on the phone, online?  
5  
6 **MR. ZACH ZISTRE:** Yes, I'm here. Can you hear me?  
7  
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes, we can.  
9  
10 **MR. ZISTRE:** All right. Give me one second to pull this up. I'm  
11 Zach Zistre out of Crystal River, Florida. I'm an IFQ commercial  
12 spear fisherman, and I fish from Naples to Steinhatchee. We have  
13 zero bycatch or discards. I also provided a 2022 FWC gag study  
14 with the most gonads of all participants. We produced male gags  
15 in areas that don't exist, according to your data.  
16  
17 All these fish that are supposedly overfished, we see them  
18 underwater, I mean, every time we go out, and we can't get away  
19 from gags, red grouper, and amberjack to find other fish to shoot.  
20 Gags and amberjack are 75 percent of our annual income, typically,  
21 and imagine taking a 75 percent loss and living off of 25 percent,  
22 because of somebody's supposed data that is -- It's wrong. It's  
23 completely wrong.  
24  
25 I am just hoping that you guys can do immediate action on mandatory  
26 reporting for all sectors with an app on your phone. We do it  
27 already. The charter guys do it, and we started to do it some,  
28 and it got taken away, and that's the only way that you get actual  
29 data of what's coming out of the ocean. This needs to be mandatory,  
30 and there needs to be a heavy fine if you get caught not doing it,  
31 two or three times, and, the third time, take your license for a  
32 year. This is very important.  
33  
34 This MRIP data, you guys -- Everybody in this room listening and  
35 everywhere knows it's wrong, and are you guys -- Here's my  
36 question. Are you guys throwing this out, and I want an answer to  
37 this today, right now.  
38  
39 On the permit requirement, I own a very small portion of quota  
40 that I've bought, and I came into this about ten years ago now,  
41 and it's tough. You've got to fight and claw for quota, for any  
42 quota to make a living. You need to have a permit, and you need  
43 to have a boat, and you need to be fishing. I'm also a dealer too  
44 now, because that's the only way that sometimes I can sell my fish  
45 and make enough money to survive. Finally, we're tired of being  
46 told to be patient and waiting for our livelihood to continue to  
47 completely be extinguished. Thank you.  
48

1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Zach. Troy Frady, followed by --

2  
3 **MR. ZISTRE:** No answer to that. It makes me so mad.

4  
5 **MR. TROY FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm Troy Frady, a charter  
6 boat captain from Orange Beach, Alabama. I did actually go and  
7 attend the ad hoc SEFHIER program meeting here a couple of weeks  
8 ago, on my own dime, and I wanted to sit in there, because we've  
9 been doing this for thirteen years, and I just wanted to see what  
10 some fresh, new ideas that some new faces would come up with, and  
11 then the surprising thing is they came up with about the same thing  
12 we've come up with over the past thirteen years.

13  
14 I personally support the implementation of a new SEFHIER program  
15 as soon as possible. I would like to see you all secure funding  
16 for the validation of the program. We need to have funding set up  
17 for the development of things like the geofencing that we were  
18 talking about, and that technology, to make sure that tool can be  
19 used for validation.

20  
21 I do feel for those who depend on the gag and red grouper. It's  
22 kind of like the déjà vu that Johnny Williams was talking about,  
23 about the -- You know, that was our red snapper, and now it's  
24 happening to you all, and it is time to make some serious changes  
25 and try to get some real in-season quota monitoring. You know,  
26 but, since the MRIP is the best available science, I do understand  
27 that we must use it. However, I do believe that we can do a better  
28 job.

29  
30 I do believe that we should continue providing our economic data  
31 in the fishing industry, and not many people know about this, but  
32 each industry in the United States comes up under what's called an  
33 NAICS code, which stands for North American Industry  
34 Classification System. Right now, charter fishing comes under  
35 487110, which is scenic and sightseeing transportation, land.

36  
37 Well, that's about a \$4 billion economic driver for our nation,  
38 and so, if we had our charter-for-hire industry, our own NAICS  
39 code, it would help the federal government kind of hone-in on who  
40 we are, and, if we do have a natural disaster, or something like  
41 that, we could get funding, or help, loans, or whatever it would  
42 take to help our industry. Other than that, you all keep up the  
43 good work, and I think now we've got a lot of people so upset, all  
44 the way to the tip of Florida, that maybe we may get some folks in  
45 here to change the direction of getting better data collection.  
46 Thank you.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Captain Frady. All right. Next, we

1 have William Callis, followed by Eric Brazer.

2  
3 **DR. WILLIAM CALLIS:** Hello, council and fisher friends out there.  
4 I am a recreational fisherman, and I grew up in the St. Marks area  
5 in southwest Georgia, and I've been spearfishing my whole life.  
6 I'm currently an Army physician, and I'm in Augusta, Georgia, and  
7 I try to get down there anytime I can. Last year, I got to go  
8 fishing one time, you know, during the scalloping season out of  
9 Steinhatchee with my boys. We were able to get a weather window  
10 and go to the Florida Middle Grounds, but gag season was not in,  
11 but we caught -- We lost count of how many we caught and released  
12 that night, and so the fishery is absolutely strong, from my one  
13 anecdotal experience.

14  
15 I think -- You know, everybody has made these great comments about  
16 the MRIP data, and I think that's a no-brainer, that your data  
17 collection is broken, and I would definitely be for a better data  
18 collection system for recreational anglers. You know, we all have  
19 smartphones, and I definitely would be in favor us having an online  
20 reporting of, hey, here's what I caught, as soon as you come in.

21  
22 You know, Georgia, for deer hunting, and a lot of you Florida  
23 fishermen are hunters in Georgia, and we have that 1-800-hey-you-  
24 got-one, and it works very well, and you get real-time data  
25 collection. That's all I have to say, and I sent my other comments  
26 by email.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, sir. We have Eric Brazer, followed by  
29 Ryan Balsinger.

30  
31 **MR. ERIC BRAZER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Eric Brazer,  
32 Deputy Director, Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance.  
33 I've got to start with IFQs, right, but I do want to start by  
34 thanking staff for a really great presentation at this meeting,  
35 and at the previous meeting as well, and so now you have goals,  
36 you have some objectives, you have two actions that are moving  
37 forward.

38  
39 I don't think you have agreement on a unified vision for what  
40 you're trying to achieve, but I'm not going to harp on that. I  
41 would just ask that, from time to time, as you go through this  
42 process, kind of hit pause, take a breath, and make sure that what  
43 you're doing is actually following what you intended to do.

44  
45 So you've only just started talking about this, and you're already  
46 seeing that this could have some impacts on dealers, and this is  
47 going to be part of the process, and this is a good thing. Walking  
48 through all the different permutations, and there is so many



1 different permutations and business plans in the commercial reef  
2 fish fishery, and walking through them and figuring out how  
3 different combinations of what you're looking at are going to  
4 impact the different business plans, and how do you envision  
5 dealers operating under this new system? How do you envision  
6 allocation banks operating under this new system? How do you  
7 envision multi-fishery businesses and dual-permitted businesses  
8 operating under these new regulations?

9  
10 It's easy, and it's relatively easy, to look at this for the one  
11 boat, one permit, one account owner-operator model, but the fishery  
12 is much more diverse than that, and so, the more you can get input  
13 from the industry, the better, and we agree this is the right way  
14 to go, this is the right way to do this, and we continue to support  
15 this process, and we're really looking forward to seeing the next  
16 iteration of the document.

17  
18 FES, we need to do better. The council made the right decision  
19 that you shouldn't use FES to reallocate this fishery, and now  
20 we're asking the council, and the agency, to do the right thing  
21 and take some real, tangible steps towards a mandatory,  
22 comprehensive recreational catch and effort reporting system.

23  
24 It's going to be hard, and it's going to take some time, but,  
25 unless we get there, all we're going to keep doing is arguing over  
26 extrapolations, right, and we're tired of the extrapolations, and  
27 we need to do better, and we think you can. Speaking of doing  
28 better, we support SEFHIER, the people I know, and let's get it  
29 done.

30  
31 Then my second-to-last comment is the National Seafood Strategy  
32 Implementation Plan, and we agree with General Spraggins and the  
33 rest of the council members' comments in response to the plan, and  
34 we ask that the council do whatever it can to support this effort.  
35 The only thing we would add to the agency's presentation is that  
36 the Young Fishermen's Development Act should be considered as a  
37 strategy, or a vehicle, to help support this work, and I want to  
38 end on a sincere note, and I want to thank you, Mr. Chair, for the  
39 kind words about Dr. Shipp and Charlie Bergmann.

40  
41 These guys were larger than life, and many of you knew them better,  
42 and longer, than I did, but, despite all the fighting, and the  
43 chaos, and the stress, it's always good to kind of take a step  
44 back and remember the people that helped build the system. Thank  
45 you.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Eric. I don't see any hands up. Thank  
48 you. We're going to go to Garner Wetzels, followed by Randy.

1  
2 **MR. GARNER WETZEL:** Good afternoon, council. Thank you very much,  
3 council. I'm glad to see overestimation of effort receiving some  
4 earnest attention at this meeting. As a recreational angler in  
5 Gulfport, Mississippi, I am no stranger to the impossible effort  
6 estimation produced by MRIP, and here are some examples.

7  
8 In 2016, MRIP Wave 1, the Mississippi red snapper season is closed,  
9 but MRIP reports that Mississippi landed over 150,000 pounds of  
10 snapper. In 2017, MRIP Wave 1, Mississippi red snapper season is  
11 closed, and MRIP reports that Mississippi landed over 400,000  
12 pounds of snapper. In the 2019 Mississippi snapper season, Tails  
13 'n Scales reports that Mississippians harvested 150,000 pounds.  
14 An independent effort survey conducted in Mississippi reports  
15 176,000 pounds. The MRIP estimate of harvest exceeds one-million  
16 pounds.

17  
18 Amberjack landings in Mississippi, in the years 2015, 2017, 2018,  
19 and 2019, do not exceed 50,000 pounds for the entire year. In  
20 2016 and 2020, MRIP reports Mississippians harvested over 250,000  
21 pounds in one wave each year.

22  
23 MRIP, in these circumstances, has grossly overestimated directed  
24 effort. When this data is inputted into stock assessments and  
25 other models, discards are also overestimated. MRIP, in turn --  
26 MRIP catch estimates, in Mississippi, are, in many circumstances,  
27 wildly inflated and highly volatile. The data forces kneejerk  
28 management decisions that do not benefit stocks or stakeholders.

29  
30 It is my hope that, with more states bolstering their data  
31 collection systems this year, NOAA will replace MRIP estimations  
32 with data streams from the states that have proven to be more in  
33 sync with reality. As always, I appreciate the time to speak to  
34 the management council. Thank you very much for your time.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Garner. Next, we have Randy Sobieraj,  
37 followed by Michael Jennings, Mike Jennings.

38  
39 **MR. RANDY SOBIERAJ:** Good afternoon. My name is Randy Sobieraj,  
40 owner and operator of a commercial fishing boat, and it seems like  
41 you guys got a lot of backlash today, with all the recent comments  
42 and data, and I applaud you for dealing with all the negative  
43 feedback, but I've come to a lot of these meetings, and I am one  
44 of the very few young fishermen in the commercial industry, and,  
45 with Amendment 59, and I know it said stuff with new participants,  
46 and, you know, I do want to encourage --

47  
48 For new entrants, first-generation fishermen, it's very hard to

1 get into the fishery without a lot of backing, because it's not a  
2 cheap endeavor to go down the path, you know, with quota prices,  
3 and share prices, and whatnot, and just even building a boat is  
4 very expensive. I know, with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, it does  
5 have a clause in it with set-asides for new entrants, and I urge  
6 to push for that, and I appreciate the time for listening today.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Mike Jennings, followed by Sean  
9 Heverin.

10  
11 **MR. MIKE JENNINGS:** Chair and council members, I appreciate you  
12 all letting me testify today. I'm Mike Jennings, and I'm the owner  
13 and operator of two federally-permitted charter boats and one  
14 commercial reef fish and king mackerel boat out of Freeport, Texas.  
15 I'm also the Vice Chair of the Data Collection AP.

16  
17 I will touch on a couple of things real quick, without beating you  
18 all up over the same information on the gag grouper. You can take  
19 Captain Dylan Hubbard's testimony and just make it mine as well.  
20 I read through it, and listened to what portions of it he was able  
21 to give you all here.

22  
23 On lane snapper, I support the final action being taken on the  
24 catch limit modifications, and last, but not least, the Data  
25 Collection For-Hire AP that I was on, and I heard Captain Mike  
26 Colby make a comment today that it was unanimous, and I think where  
27 some of that came from was there was a lot of heated discussion in  
28 that room about some of those motions that we passed, especially  
29 the last one, and I was very vocal in my opposition to that, but,  
30 in the manner of bringing this council the largest suite of options  
31 to work with to replace that gold standard that we lost in that  
32 lawsuit, we were able to kind of come to these unanimous agreements  
33 and get this thing up here, and then hope this council takes all  
34 of it into consideration and makes the best decisions to get us a  
35 viable data collection system back up and running, and hopefully  
36 we can stand that thing up as quickly as possible.

37  
38 I mean, we're missing one big piece here, and that's the ability  
39 to understand that those boats actually are going fishing and  
40 returning and not just sitting at the dock making reports, and we  
41 know how important that is to that data collection system, and I  
42 think a lot of us forget that we learned that years and years ago,  
43 when the Alaska program went so awry, but, with that said, I  
44 encourage the council to move forward with that data collection  
45 program, and let's get this thing stood up as quickly as we can  
46 and start reporting again, because there was -- I think we lost  
47 this data collection system to a very few, a minority, and not a  
48 majority that was in agreement with the overall premise.

1  
2 Each person may have a little bit of heartburn with bits and pieces  
3 of it, but we understand the need for it, and we're asking you  
4 just to move forward with that, and I appreciate your time. Thank  
5 you.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Captain Jennings, we have a question from Ms.  
8 Boggs.

9  
10 **MR. JENNINGS:** Yes, ma'am.

11  
12 **MS. BOGGS:** I actually have two questions. One, you mentioned  
13 your commercial boat king mackerel fishes, and we just had Johnny  
14 Williams that stood up here and addressed the king mackerel, which  
15 no one else has, and can you tell me, very quickly, what you see  
16 in the king mackerel fishery, and then I do have a question about  
17 the charter-for-hire data collection.

18  
19 **MR. JENNINGS:** It's non-existent. I mean, every one of us pulled  
20 outriggers and planers off our boats and ignored them. We would  
21 catch a few between spots, but the numbers are so poor that it  
22 wasn't even worth targeting, and they were a total incidental catch  
23 from moving from one spot to the next, and it's collapsed, as far  
24 as I'm concerned, even with the -- On the charter boat side of  
25 things, in the western Gulf, I know -- Every region is different,  
26 and we know that every time we have these discussions, that, to me  
27 in Texas, triggerfish are irrelevant, and I could care less if I  
28 ever catch another one. They're not anything that we've ever built  
29 a business on targeting. I can't sell a trip on one fish, and, in  
30 a lot of the Gulf, the king mackerel are irrelevant, and we bank  
31 on those, especially after red snapper is closed.

32  
33 A lot of our trips are run out and get king mackerels, and catch  
34 a limit on them, and, on a normal day, an average day, you could  
35 do it in an hour-and-a-half, you know, and slower on some and  
36 faster on others, and we come back in, and we would focus on our  
37 nearshore fishery, our redfish that are starting to show up and  
38 things along those lines, and we're working on both sides of that  
39 fence to sell a trip later in the year, and, without those king  
40 mackerel, it's made it tough.

41  
42 There's been some pockets here and there, and you will catch some  
43 of the guys that -- No offense here, but you'll catch a few of the  
44 guys that fish very little, and they stumbled across a couple of  
45 solid limits this summer, which we all did, and they're, well,  
46 they're fine, and, no, you fished five days, and you just caught  
47 the right days, but, no, they're in bad shape.

48

1 **MS. BOGGS:** Then, with regard to the data collection, in your  
2 opinion, and not the AP's opinion, how do you feel about the  
3 economic questions?  
4

5 **MR. JENNINGS:** I'm perfectly fine with it, and, again, our  
6 recommendations, from the AP side, just speaking for myself and my  
7 opinion of it, is we came to a -- We worked a lot on compromise,  
8 that put suites of options in front of this council that were near-  
9 and-dear to only one or two people, and that was all the way around  
10 the board, even myself, and there was a couple of things that were  
11 near-and-dear to my heart, that I wanted from this council, that  
12 the majority of the room had spoke a little opposition to, and so  
13 I think that's where that came from. Me personally, I'm perfectly  
14 fine with it. I see the purpose and the need. Thank you.  
15

16 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. We have -- I called out Sean Heverin,  
17 followed by Kay Smith.  
18

19 **MR. SEAN HEVERIN:** Hi. How are you doing today? I'm Sean Heverin,  
20 commercial fisherman, boat owner, dealer, based out of Madeira  
21 Beach. I buy and sell fish from boats from all over the Gulf,  
22 Louisiana, Pensacola, Fort Myers, Naples.  
23

24 I really wanted to touch on the MRIP-FES surveys, which I  
25 definitely disagree with the data, along with I don't know how  
26 many exactly people have talked about that today, but I am in  
27 agreement with the majority of the people here that the data should  
28 be thrown out. I really find it unfortunate that we've used this  
29 data in the past to make different management decisions,  
30 specifically reallocation that they have taken the fish away from  
31 the commercial sector to reallocate to different sectors, using  
32 this data, and now, you know, you're using this best available  
33 science to shut down the recreational and charter seasons there  
34 for red grouper and gag, and it's unfortunate for the charter  
35 fishermen, and the recreational fishermen, here in the Gulf that  
36 they have -- Whether it's business that they are planning on to  
37 get for charter season or recreational to go out and try to harvest  
38 some red grouper and gag, for a hobby or fun, and I just find that  
39 unfortunate for them, that they're using this best available  
40 science, which is not correct.  
41

42 I know I've spoken about this, the many different times I've been  
43 up here, that, you know, I think better accountability of the  
44 recreational sector, or the charter sector, whether it's  
45 electronic reporting, giving fish tags to recreational users to  
46 harvest fish throughout the year, and you could even like an app  
47 on your phone, as recreational angler, just to hail-out and hail-  
48 in, and then just, you know, report what you caught that day, and,

1 you know, it could be -- Like I have an app on my phone to pay for  
2 parking for the day, and it could be like have an app on your phone  
3 and hail-out that you're doing a recreational fishing day, and  
4 that would give us better data to make management decisions from,  
5 and it could be something as simple as, you know, logging-in.

6  
7 If you reported that you caught four snapper that day, and two red  
8 grouper, and whatever on recreational trip, and you hail it in,  
9 you know, there could also be some enforcement measures built into  
10 that too, to help manage the fishery better and make it easier for  
11 law enforcement to enforce some of those rules and so forth.

12  
13 Really, it's not going to affect us on the commercial side as much,  
14 the dealer side, but I just -- I find it wrong that the recreational  
15 and charter side is being forced to use this data, potentially, to  
16 shut down their seasons, and maybe in the future -- Maybe  
17 reallocate from the commercial sector to give more to the  
18 recreational side, which I don't think is a fair way to do that  
19 for our side, on the commercial sector, for being accountable and  
20 VMS and IFQ and the number of factors and hoops and whatever things  
21 we have to jump through to manage our businesses.

22  
23 It's already hard enough, with business models that are working on  
24 leased fish, and, you know, your profit margins are shrunk down,  
25 and you have to overcome the lease prices by, you know, catching  
26 more volume. Longlining, you're doing longer trips, you know, and  
27 so we have a lot of challenges on our side to try to turn a profit,  
28 and so that's really all that I wanted to say today.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Kay Smith, followed by Jim Green.  
31 Kay, are you on the line?

32  
33 **MS. ROY:** Kay, you will have to unmute your line.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Then, Jim Green, you're up.

36  
37 **MR. JIM GREEN:** Hello. Captain Jim Green, President of the Destin  
38 Charter Boat Association and President of the Charter Fishermen's  
39 Association. Concerning MRIP and the preliminary estimates on the  
40 gag and the red grouper fishery, the DCBA and CFA supports today's  
41 testimony by Captain Dylan Hubbard.

42  
43 We have a tremendous problem, and we urge the council to take  
44 unprecedented corrective action. From the 100,000 pounds of shore  
45 data, and its 98 percent chance of being wrong, to the headboat  
46 survey, the only census-based data source, contributing 1 percent  
47 of the landings, it should properly display that corrections need  
48 to be made. This is not just for business and access, but also

1 for the proper biological management of the fishery in the future.  
2  
3 When it comes to lane snapper, we support the final action  
4 framework. When it comes to for-hire data collection, first, I  
5 want to say that Lisa and Carrie and all the staff at the council  
6 and agency did a great job preparing and executing the AP meeting.  
7 During the committee report, I was more worried about the motions,  
8 and making sure that they were properly understood, and I failed  
9 to give those praises, and they were very deserving. They did a  
10 really wonderful job.  
11  
12 I've heard mixed reviews, in passing, about what "all unanimously  
13 approved motions" means, or could be interpreted as, and I will  
14 say that I was surprised that it is the way that it fleshed out as  
15 well. You know, it was a surprise, but I believe it's a testament  
16 to you as a council, building an advisory panel with so much  
17 diversity, as well as our industry's willingness to take our  
18 experiences, and the direction of the ruling, and produce  
19 recommendations that are built upon just that.  
20  
21 The two major contentions in SEFHIER was the economic reporting  
22 and the twenty-four-seven tracking, and the ruling gave us a path,  
23 by removing those in a certain manner, which allowed for a far  
24 less-contentious approach to redeveloping this program. Our  
25 organizations have always strived to evaluate fairly everyone's  
26 ideas and input, no matter what their intentions are, whether  
27 expressed or not, and give them the opportunity.  
28  
29 Everyone in the meeting got to speak as many times as they wanted,  
30 as long as they wanted, about what they wanted to talk about, and,  
31 while there is always opposing views, and everyone has their  
32 perceptions, the committee report simply shows where all of the  
33 diverse participants agreed that they would like to see this  
34 fleshed out as options as the document evolves.  
35  
36 I want to speak for myself for just a minute, because I guess I  
37 injected, not intending to, controversy with this depredation data  
38 field, and I will say that I figured there would be some concern,  
39 but not to the extent that played out, and certainly not the extent  
40 that we have now. I laid in bed that night, before the AP met,  
41 the AP meeting, and I was going through my head and checking the  
42 boxes, and I realized that depredation data would address something  
43 that every sector complains about, and has for a long time, and  
44 continues to say it's getting worse, and so why would we not, and  
45 how can we expect to find a solution if we have absolutely zero  
46 scientific-collected data on it?  
47  
48 I think, with how complex our management system is, and how arduous

1 it can be, getting the ball rolling on certain things is better  
2 sooner than later. It's clear there is some reservations, for a  
3 good portion, about what it means, but we should definitely see  
4 what comes out of it being explored. With that, we request that  
5 you take all the recommendations from the AP and direct staff to  
6 move forward with the next steps, and I appreciate the time to  
7 speak today.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Captain Green. Captain Green, Ms.  
10 Boggs.

11  
12 **MS. BOGGS:** So, Captain Green, thank you for leading that AP, but,  
13 as the President of DCBA and CFA, what do those two organizations  
14 -- How do they look at the economic questions that are being  
15 debated in this?

16  
17 **MR. GREEN:** I think with CFA -- DCBA and CFA are pretty much lock-  
18 step a lot of the time, because both organizations want to flesh  
19 out what's best for whatever it is, no matter what you feel about  
20 something, and we want to flesh it out, and we were onboard with  
21 it. I think, like anything, there was people that had reservation,  
22 but still did it, and there was people that were just totally  
23 against it.

24  
25 We continue to want to see the economics explored, on different  
26 ways of collecting it, because it is -- You know, over time, and  
27 I'm not going to get into that, but there's been amendments passed  
28 where there was a hurdle, defining the economic value of our  
29 industry, and I think it's very important that we collect those.

30  
31 I've heard quarterly, like the commercial fleet does, random  
32 selection, and I've heard annual, to tie it to the permit renewal,  
33 and I think that that's kind of -- As we develop it, we kind of  
34 figure out where people want to tune-in on that, but, as far as  
35 collecting it, it's vitally important, not just for restoration  
36 and all that stuff, but also to properly manage these fisheries by  
37 the National Standards. We have to consider the economic impacts  
38 on coastal communities, and I think it's important to have that  
39 number. Sorry that I was a little long-winded. Thank you, all,  
40 very much.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Last on the list is Jason Delacruz.

43  
44 **MR. JASON DELACRUZ:** So it's been a long afternoon, and everybody  
45 is standing up. I don't really have much to say today. I am  
46 looking forward to the IFQ conversation, and let's start working  
47 down our own adventure novel here, because that's what this thing  
48 is. We're going to pick some buttons, and it's going to light



1 stuff up, and we're going to pick some more buttons and have a lot  
2 of conversations.

3  
4 Any of you guys that don't understand this system, and want to  
5 talk about it, please reach out to me as a resource, and I hope  
6 you trust me at this point, to believe that I will give you honest  
7 answers, and I will explain it to you in a way that you can kind  
8 of understand from our perspective, from other perspectives, of  
9 how this system really works. That's really it. Let's call it a  
10 day. It's been a long day. Thank you.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Jason. That concludes public  
13 testimony. I certainly appreciate everyone's comments and  
14 participation, whether they were here in-person or online, and we  
15 will start again tomorrow morning at 8:30 in the morning. See you  
16 then. Thank you.

17  
18 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed on January 31, 2024.)

19  
20 - - -

21  
22 February 1, 2024

23  
24 THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

25  
26 - - -

27  
28 The Full Council of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council  
29 reconvened at the Hyatt Centric French Quarter in New Orleans,  
30 Louisiana on Thursday morning, February 1, 2024, and was called to  
31 order by Chairman Kevin Anson.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, everybody. If council members can  
34 make their way to their seats, we're going to get started here  
35 momentarily. All right. Good morning, everyone. We will  
36 reconvene Full Council.

37  
38 I would like to make, at this time, just one change to the remainder  
39 of the agenda, if you will allow, and that is to move up the  
40 discussion on the recommendation on the exempted fishing permit  
41 application and have that now. A request was made to do that, and  
42 so, if I don't see any major dissention, we'll go ahead and do  
43 that and then proceed with the Admin and Budget Committee. Mr.  
44 Gill.

45  
46 **RECOMMENDATION ON EXEMPTED FISHING PERMIT APPLICATION**

47  
48 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, to that end, I would like

1 to make a motion that the council recommends approval of the LGL  
2 **EFF.**

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Is there a second? Is that a second, Ed? All  
5 right. It's seconded by Mr. Walker. Do we have discussion? Mr.  
6 Dugas.

7  
8 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I didn't think that there was  
9 a motion needed, and I thought that it was Andy's discretion and  
10 that it was done.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Gill.

13  
14 **MR. GILL:** That is true, and we do not make that decision, but the  
15 reason it's brought before us to provide our reaction and advice  
16 to him in making that decision.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Then, just to kind of close the loop, what's been  
19 done in the past, my understanding is that there's a letter that  
20 is formally written to the agency from the council, and so I guess  
21 we'll just assume that it's included in the motion, or if we need  
22 to add it, but that's all. Again, just as far as the communication  
23 in closing that loop. Any other discussion on the motion? **Is**  
24 **there any opposition to the motion?**

25  
26 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I am going to abstain.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We've got one abstention. **All right, and so the**  
29 **motion carries with one abstention.** That will take us to the  
30 Administrative/Budget Report. I'm sorry. For clerical -- **The**  
31 **motion carried with one abstention and one absent.** General  
32 Spraggins, are you ready for Admin?

33  
34 **COMMITTEE REPORTS**  
35 **ADMINISTRATIVE/BUDGET COMMITTEE REPORT**

36  
37 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, I am. The  
38 Administrative/Budget Committee report from January 29, 2024, the  
39 committee adopted the agenda, Tab G, Number 1, and the minutes,  
40 Tab G, Number 2, of the October 2023 committee meeting were  
41 approved as written.

42  
43 Discussion of Proposed Standing and Special Scientific &  
44 Statistical Committee Reorganization for June 2024 Appointments,  
45 Tab G, Number 4, staff provided an overview of the proposed re-  
46 organization of the Standing and Special Scientific and  
47 Statistical Committee (SSC).

1 A committee member asked if there was any concern with the ability  
2 to find enough qualified applicants for each category if the makeup  
3 of the SSC changes. Staff stated this was possible, but seemed  
4 less likely after our most recent effort to fill the vacant  
5 economist position on the SSC, as technical staff reached out to  
6 a number of colleagues, and that resulted in a high number of  
7 qualified applicants for that position.

8  
9 Another member expressed concern about the change in the proportion  
10 of biologists compared to the social scientists and economists.  
11 Staff clarified that the proposed changes are intended to integrate  
12 the existing Reef Fish, Ecosystem, and Socioeconomic Committees  
13 into the main body of the SSC, which will replace these three  
14 special SSCs. The overall goal is to improve the multidisciplinary  
15 expertise available in the primary committee.

16  
17 The proposed verbiage in Section 2.5 was edited to change the  
18 phrase "at least" to "up to" in reference to the number of proposed  
19 economists and anthropologists/social scientists. **The committee  
20 recommends, and I so move, that the council accept the proposed  
21 changes to the SOPPs in section 2.5 related to the SSC.** The motion  
22 carried with no opposition, Mr. Chairman.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We have a committee motion. Is there  
25 any discussion on the motion? **Is there any opposition to the  
26 motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.**

27  
28 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Discussion continued on the remainder  
29 of the suggested SOPPs changes. A member asked if the mention of  
30 the SSC using the best scientific information available, the BSIA,  
31 created an additional layer of decision-making for the SSC that is  
32 the purview of NOAA Fisheries. Staff explained that this verbiage  
33 is intended to bring the SOPPs to be more in line with the current  
34 language in the regional BSIA framework that was recently drafted  
35 by the Regional Office. The ultimate decision of what comprises  
36 BSIA rests with NOAA Fisheries.

37  
38 A committee member asked what would happen if the SSC disagreed  
39 with the agency's BSIA statement. NOAA Southeast Regional Office  
40 staff responded that this process is defined in the regional BSIA  
41 framework. The draft of this document will be provided to the  
42 council as background material prior to the Full Council convening  
43 on Thursday. Staff also suggested that a link to the final  
44 document eventually be included in the SOPPs for reference.

45  
46 In Section 2.5.1, under Review of FMPs, Amendments, and Framework  
47 Procedure Actions, a member suggested the removal of the verbiage  
48 "as requested", over a concern that this might limit the feedback

1 of the SSC. Staff clarified that this proposed edit was to inform  
2 SSC members and stakeholders that the council may be working on  
3 items that the SSC may not be asked to weigh-in upon.  
4

5 In section 2.5.2, a member questioned retaining the phrase "without  
6 cause" in reference to the council's right to remove members of  
7 the committee at any time. The member was concerned that retaining  
8 this phrase would have a negative effect on recruiting academics  
9 to the SSC. This concern was echoed by the Science Center  
10 representative. Staff agreed to consult with NOAA General Counsel  
11 on the origin of this clause in the SOPPs and provide additional  
12 information during Full Council.  
13

14 A member questioned the inclusion of the parentheses in Section  
15 2.5.3 and also if the SSC needed to meet concurrently with the  
16 council. NOAA General Counsel clarified that this verbiage is in  
17 Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Thus  
18 the inclusion of this language in the SOPPs was recommended.  
19

20 In section 2.7.3, at the request of a member, the phrase "with  
21 economic, social, or biological/ecological expertise" was moved  
22 within the sentence. The revised statement is "Membership includes  
23 three staff from NMFS, one of which is from the Atlantic HMS  
24 Division, five members (with economic, social, or  
25 biological/ecological expertise) from the SSC, and up to four other  
26 stakeholder representatives." **The committee recommends, and I so  
27 move, that the council accept the proposed changes to the SOPPs.**  
28 The motion carried with one opposition, Mr. Chairman.  
29

30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We have a committee motion. Is there  
31 any discussion on the motion? Mr. Gill.  
32

33 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so the next-to-last  
34 paragraph reflects there without cause discussion, and we were  
35 going to bring it back, and, before we vote on this motion, I think  
36 we ought to get that feedback, as part of this discussion, so we  
37 can incorporate it into our thinking in how we vote on that motion.  
38

39 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Hager.  
40

41 **MS. BETH HAGER:** Okay, and so I went back and did some research.  
42 When the SOPPs were being revised with the template from FALD,  
43 back in 2014 and 2015, or, well, we actually revised it the year  
44 before that, but we got the information and feedback from them,  
45 and we didn't have any language in there about how the SSCs were  
46 appointed or removed or anything, and so, in June of 2015, that  
47 language was proposed into the SOPPs and approved by the council.  
48

1 It was a in section that FALD said was up to us, and each council  
2 could write their own, and so, other than perhaps, you know, the  
3 council's input on whether or not it's appropriate, and whether  
4 the council feels like taking it in or leaving it out, and that's  
5 -- You all put it in in June of 2015.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Gill.

8  
9 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Given that, and I'm not sure  
10 how we proceed here, since we have a committee motion on the table,  
11 but I would like to make a motion that considers removing that,  
12 and, now, whether the council agrees or not, we'll find that, but  
13 we need to do that before we vote on the committee motion, and so  
14 I'm not sure how we proceed, but that's my intent.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Perhaps a substitute motion that would kind of go  
17 along those lines.

18  
19 **MS. HAGER:** Okay, and so we're going to keep that the council  
20 accepts the proposed language to the SOPPs, with the removal of  
21 those two words. **We're going to do a substitute motion to accept**  
22 **the proposed changes to the SOPPs, with the removal of the language**  
23 **"without cause".**

24  
25 **MR. GILL:** In Section 2.5.2.

26  
27 **MS. HAGER:** Yes, in Section 2.5.2, and so that's doing both things  
28 at the same time, basically.

29  
30 **MR. GILL:** So moved, Mr. Chairman.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so we have a motion. Is there a  
33 second to the motion?

34  
35 **MS. HAGER:** Yes, but put the 2.5.2 after with the "removal of the"  
36 language, because proposing -- You're accepting the proposed  
37 changes to the SOPPs and with the removal of the language in 2.5.2.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, Mr. Gill. We want to make sure --  
40 It's been changed, and so do you agree with it?

41  
42 **MR. GILL:** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Okay, and we have a second by Mr. Walker. All  
45 right, and so we have a second. Any discussion on the motion?  
46 General Spraggins.

47  
48 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I would like Ms. Levy to address this again,

1 because I think, when we did this in the meeting earlier, we talked  
2 about it, and I think that it was understanding that -- I would  
3 like her discussion on it, if I could, for legal.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Levy.

6

7 **MS. LEVY:** Sorry. I was trying to find the whole thing in context,  
8 and I haven't gotten there yet. I believe it still says that they  
9 can be removed, right, and I just -- It's a double sentence, and  
10 you're just removing the last two words. To me, it still means  
11 they can be removed at the council's discretion, and, like I said  
12 yesterday, you do your appointments, and any removals, in closed  
13 session, and so there's not going to be an articulated reason for  
14 people to review anyway, and so I'm not really sure that it makes  
15 a difference.

16

17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** General Spraggins.

18

19 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Also, I don't -- I've only been on the council  
20 for about six years or so, but I'm not sure that they have ever  
21 been done just for the fun of it, that someone has been relieved  
22 just because the chairman, or somebody else, didn't want them  
23 there, and so, I mean, personally, I don't see where it makes that  
24 much difference, and I understand Mr. Gill's thoughts, you know,  
25 and I understand the thoughts of "without cause", but, you know,  
26 I'm kind of in between on it.

27

28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other discussion on the motion? Ms. Boggs.

29

30 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, but, I mean, if it's not stated, what says we  
31 can't dismiss them without cause?

32

33 **UNIDENTIFIED:** (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

34

35 **MS. BOGGS:** Yes, and, I mean -- Well, I know, and I have to process  
36 sometimes.

37

38 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Hager.

39

40 **MS. HAGER:** I just asked staff to bring this up on the screen, so  
41 that you all could all see it in context, and so, Bernie, can you  
42 zoom-in on that section? It's the second paragraph down, and it's  
43 the last sentence in that second-to-last sentence in that  
44 paragraph, where it says consideration for appointment may include  
45 the appropriate interest, experience, and past performance, blah,  
46 blah, blah, as well as other factors, such as the record. SSC  
47 members serve at the pleasure of the council and may be removed at  
48 any time without cause. What it will retain is "SSC members serve

1 at the pleasure of the council and may be removed at any time.”

2

3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Gill.

4

5 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, as we discussed in  
6 committee, effectively, this sentence could have a period after  
7 “council”, and everything after that is redundant, and so, in  
8 essence, it’s piling on, and I would prefer it to end at “council”,  
9 but I’m fine, but “without cause” just turns the knife a little  
10 bit, and I don’t think we need to go there.

11

12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other discussion on the motion? General  
13 Spraggins.

14

15 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Also, it doesn’t say we will remove them with  
16 cause, does it?

17

18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Gill.

19

20 **MR. GILL:** They serve at the pleasure, and we can do it with or  
21 without.

22

23 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Seeing no other hands, we’ll go ahead  
24 and vote on the motion. All those in favor of the motion, please  
25 raise your hand.

26

27 **MS. HAGER:** Do you want to use the clickers?

28

29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** That’s right. We’ll use the clickers. We are  
30 voting on the substitute motion.

31

G4.3 To accept the proposed changes in the SOPPs with the removal of the language "without cause" in section 2.5.2.				
First Name	Last Name			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins			Abstain
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (15)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (1)</b>

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So we have fifteen yes's, no no's, and one abstention, and there is one absent. All right. General Spraggins.

**GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** All right. The committee reviewed the two currently appointed ad hoc committees. The Ad Hoc Charter For-hire Data Collection AP was recently appointed and has just started work, and so no update was necessary. The proposed change to the charge of the Ad Hoc Red Snapper/Grouper-Tilefish IFQ AP will be addressed by the Reef Fish Committee under Other Business. The Reef Fish and Shrimp APs are due for reappointment this year. With no objection from the committee or council, staff will proceed with advertising these panels for reappointment.

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** General Spraggins -- Yes, Mr. Diaz.

**MR. DIAZ:** While we're talking about advisory panels, I wanted to bring something up for discussion, and so I had somebody text me about this particular -- About the Ad Hoc Red Snapper/Grouper-Tilefish IFQ panel, and, anyway, just looking at it, and I didn't think about this before I got that text, and they didn't text me about this, but so we're readvertising our panels every three years, our standing panels, but our ad hocs -- We just appoint them, and they go on, but, generally, an ad hoc is set up for a specific purpose, and we don't use them for a long period of time, but this Ad Hoc Red Snapper/Grouper-Tilefish thing has been in existence 2018, and so our regular panels -- We would have done turned those over twice, and so I guess the reason I bring this up



1 is, you know, the world changes a lot in six years, and I don't  
2 even know who is on the panel, and I'm not going by that, but we've  
3 had three meetings.

4  
5 The council doesn't know who has been present and who has been  
6 absent for those meetings, if we've got good participation, and  
7 some people might not be in the fishery, and some people might not  
8 be alive, and so I'm just wondering if we need a -- If we should  
9 let this panel just go on and on without readvertising it and then  
10 redoing the panel. I'm just bringing it up for discussion,  
11 because, when I look at it, and I think about the way we treat the  
12 other panels, I thought it was worth bringing up to the council  
13 and seeing if anybody had strong feelings about it.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I wonder, Dr. Simmons, and I'm putting you a  
16 little bit on the spot, but if you have any information about maybe  
17 the last time they met, and to that issue of reviewing those  
18 applications and that process, and do you have any information  
19 about that?

20  
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so the last  
22 time they met was in June of 2021, and I believe there was one  
23 gentlemen that was deceased that we took off this panel, but I  
24 don't recall participation. I mean, I think we had most people  
25 attend, but we'll have to pull all that information together, and  
26 I don't have it right now. We can pull up the list of folks that  
27 are on that panel, and it's on our website. If you want to pull  
28 that up, we can.

29  
30 **MR. DIAZ:** I'm not personally worried about pulling up to look at  
31 who is on the panel, but I just wanted to bring up to the council  
32 that I know we've got a panel that we haven't reviewed for quite  
33 some time, and the ad hoc -- I don't think we ever intended for ad  
34 hocs to stay around for six years. I mean, generally, I think we  
35 give them a charge, and they work on that charge, and then the ad  
36 hocs are generally dissolved, but this one has been around a long  
37 time, and there is going to be IFQ work to be done, and so I just  
38 wanted to bring it up, that, you know, it's -- This ad hoc is being  
39 treated a little different than our standing panels.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

42  
43 **MS. BOGGS:** So I'm in a little unfamiliar territory, but, to  
44 something that Dale said, these ad hocs are put together for a  
45 specific reason, and we're getting ready to change the charge for  
46 the ad hocs, and so, if it's different, then why would we not look  
47 at repopulating, if you're changing the charge for the ad hoc,  
48 because these people were put there for a specific reason, and, by

1 changing the charge, maybe you need -- Because we're talking about  
2 new entrants and various things like that, and we may need to look  
3 at repopulating, and I'm not trying to create more work, Carrie,  
4 but it does seem like a valid statement, concern.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I think, obviously, we want all of our advisory  
7 panels to be fresh, fresh in the sense at least that, you know,  
8 are the folks still in the fishery for which they originally were  
9 nominated and voted in, and so we probably need to look at what  
10 their charge was for the current ad hoc panel, and it may align  
11 with what the next charge is, and we can just roll on into, but I  
12 think we ought to at least review, to, you know, see what  
13 participation is and those types of things, because you're right  
14 that they are going to be asked, I think, to do some work here,  
15 and we ought to maybe get ahead in that game, and try to get that  
16 -- If we need to, you know, kind of cancel that one and reestablish  
17 another one, and so is that something maybe we can bring up at the  
18 next meeting, potentially, Dr. Simmons, maybe some of that  
19 information?

20  
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so you're  
22 referring to attendance and deliberations from the last meeting  
23 and the proposed revised charge that we're going to go through  
24 during the Reef Fish Committee?

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** What the charge was for the current established  
27 ad hoc.

28  
29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and I think we have that to  
30 discuss at the Reef Fish Committee. We have the current charge  
31 and our proposed new charge, and, primarily, it was just text from  
32 old amendments that we are no longer working on, but we could  
33 discuss that more.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Okay. Great. All right. Dr. Frazer.

36  
37 **DR. FRAZER:** I mean, again, I agree, I think, with everything  
38 that's being said, and so, in the Reef Fish Committee, we have a  
39 motion on the table, and we'll revisit that motion, I think, and,  
40 after we vote that up or down, we can have the discussion about  
41 what we want to see in the April meeting.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** General Spraggins, do you want to continue?

44  
45 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Okay. Thank you. Review and Discuss Proposed  
46 2024 Activities, Tab G, Number 6(a) and Budget, Tab G, Number 6(b),  
47 staff provided a draft list of activities proposed for 2024. A  
48 committee member asked if staff considered reducing the number of

1 SSC meetings to three when planning the activities. Staff replied  
2 that the current reduction from five SSC meetings to four seemed  
3 to be the most likely course to balance the expected workload with  
4 the SSC resources and the anticipation of the reorganization of  
5 the SSC composition.

6  
7 The member then asked if SEDAR 97 proposed for red snapper is  
8 likely to proceed as planned. Staff reminded the committee that  
9 these activities and budget are not confirmed at this time. A  
10 member inquired if there were any indications of when the funding  
11 level would be confirmed or received for 2024. Staff stated that  
12 this will need to be before the end of March and that each council  
13 is facing challenges due to the federal system updates. Further  
14 information should be available in April and will be shared with  
15 the council as it becomes known. Any questions? Okay.

16  
17 All right, We reviewed Update to 2020-2024 Administrative Award  
18 Anticipated Carryover, Tab G, Number 7, and staff provided an  
19 informational update on the current position of the council  
20 funding. As more details of funding, and potential funding from  
21 the Inflation Reduction Act award, become known, staff will  
22 continue to update the council. No questions? All right.

23  
24 Review and Approve Proposal for Phase II Inflation Reduction Act  
25 Funding for the Regional Fishery Management Councils, Tab G, Number  
26 8, staff presented the proposed activities, project plan, and  
27 budget for Phase II of the Inflation Reduction Act funding for the  
28 regional fishery management councils in Tab G, Number 8.

29  
30 A member expressed that they felt the proposal matched well with  
31 the needs and were impressed with the proposal. Mr. Strelcheck  
32 stressed the fact that this phase of the project will be evaluated  
33 against the other regional fishery management council proposals  
34 and awarded on a competitive basis. He emphasized the need for  
35 the project to highlight direct connections between actions and  
36 tangible outcomes based on the funding priorities.

37  
38 A member asked if the approval of this funding would affect the  
39 administrative award and if the council would be charging for  
40 overhead. Staff confirmed that, if the proposal is approved,  
41 activities cannot be charged to both awards simultaneously and  
42 might need to be moved from the existing award.

43  
44 Staff informed the committee that the council does not have an  
45 approved federally-negotiated overhead rate. Thus, all staff time  
46 is directly charged to each funding source to support the actual  
47 activity. The proposal must be submitted by January 31, 2024, and  
48 so any feedback from the council should be provided for

1 incorporation into this proposal as quickly as possible.

2  
3 **The committee recommends, and I so move, that the council approve**  
4 **the proposed activities for Phase II of the Inflation Reduction**  
5 **Act.** The motion carried without any opposition. Mr. Chairman.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. There's a committee motion. We've  
8 already met the -- Ms. Hager.

9  
10 **MS. HAGER:** (Ms. Hager's comment is not audible on the recording.)

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** They received a one-day extension, and so we do  
13 need to go through this formally through the Full Council vote  
14 then, and so we have a committee motion that the council approve  
15 the proposed activities for Phase II of the Inflation Reduction  
16 Act. Is there any discussion? All right. Then we'll go ahead  
17 and dispense with the motion with your clicker, and so if you could  
18 do that, please.  
19

GB.1 To approve the proposed activities for Phase II of the Inflation Reduction Act.				
First Name	Last Name			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck			Abstain
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (15)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (1)</b>

20  
21  
22 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have fifteen yes, zero no, one abstention, and  
23 one being absent. General Spraggins.

24  
25 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to also thank Dr.  
26 Simmons and her staff for the hard work they did on this. I will  
27 tell you what, and they scrambled hard to try to get everything  
28 done, and they worked very extensively on it, and so I would just  
29 like to thank them for that.

1  
2 All right. Review and Finalize the Steering Committee Makeup for  
3 the Recreational Initiative, staff presented a summary of the  
4 anticipated makeup, scope of work, schedule of meetings, and  
5 timeline for the steering committee component of the council's  
6 recreational initiative.

7  
8 The committee discussed the proposed makeup of the steering  
9 committee and expressed a desire to ensure proper representation  
10 from both private and for-hire components of the sector. A  
11 committee member asked whether the addition of another council  
12 member would propose budgetary issues, and staff clarified that  
13 the proposed budget could be modified to include an additional  
14 member. However, staff did caution that an additional member may  
15 increase logistical challenges associated with the scheduling.

16  
17 **The committee recommends, and I so move, that the council approve**  
18 **the number of recreational council members be increased from two**  
19 **to three (two private recreational and one for-hire).** The motion  
20 carried with no opposition, Mr. Chairman.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We have a committee motion on the  
23 board. Any discussion? Mr. Diaz.

24  
25 **MR. DIAZ:** I sent Bernie a substitute motion, and I'm going to put  
26 my substitute motion out there. Bernie, can you put that on the  
27 board, please? All I'm trying to do with the substitute motion is  
28 soften it up a little bit and make sure that it's understood that  
29 the Chair has discretion in appointing the members of the  
30 recreational committee. **My motion would be that the council**  
31 **approve the number of recreational council members to be increased,**  
32 **and then I'm adding "at the Chair's discretion", from two to three**  
33 **(two private and one for-hire).** If I get a second --

34  
35 **MR. GILL:** Second for discussion.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We have a motion and a second. Any  
38 discussion on the motion? Mr. Gill.

39  
40 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so I agree with the intent  
41 here, as I expressed in committee, but, as we've gone along, it  
42 looks, to me, like we're already there, right, and you're going to  
43 announce, according to this, the choice of who these steering  
44 committee members are, immediately thereafter this, and so, in  
45 that sense, Dale, I see this motion as redundant, and we're already  
46 doing that, but I agree with the intent. I don't think we should  
47 necessarily -- Whatever the decision that has been made is made,  
48 I don't think we need to go to three if the council is willing to

1 have a charter and a private rec as the two that are already there.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Diaz.

4  
5 **MR. DIAZ:** Maybe we don't need it, and so what I was thinking is  
6 the first one was kind of descriptive, and it said that it was  
7 going from two to three, and I think what I intended to do is that,  
8 if it worked out, where that could be that, but, if it had to stay  
9 at two, it was up to the Chair's discretion, and so that's kind of  
10 why I softened it up a little bit, to where it didn't have to be  
11 three, and it could be two, and so that was what I was thinking,  
12 whether I was correct or not. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Williamson, followed by Ms. Boggs.

15  
16 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I made the motion, but I  
17 yield to the Chair's discretion.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

20  
21 **MS. BOGGS:** So I think -- Getting to I believe what Bob said, it  
22 was -- Because the way this reads, the "Chair's discretion, from  
23 two private and one for-hire", but it doesn't say that one must be  
24 private and one must be for-hire, if you only go with two, because  
25 that's kind of what we were talking about. We felt like there  
26 should at least be one charter-for-hire, and the intent of the  
27 motion prior was to leave your two recs, but just add one charter-  
28 for-hire, and this, to me, gives the Chair the discretion of two  
29 private and one for-hire, or one for one, and it doesn't state  
30 that you will have one private and at least -- At least one private  
31 and at least one recreational, and so that would be my only  
32 comment.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other comments or discussion on the motion?  
35 All right. Seeing none, the substitute motion is that the council  
36 approve the number of recreational council members to be increased,  
37 at the Chair's discretion, from two to three (two private and one  
38 for-hire). Again, clickers for this.

<b>G9.15 That the Council approve the number of recreational Council members to be increased, at the Chairs discretion, from 2 to 3</b>				
<b>( 2- private 1 for hire)</b>				
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>			
Kevin	Anson			Abstain
Susan	Boggs		No	
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (14)</b>	<b>No (1)</b>	<b>Abstain (1)</b>

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have fourteen yes, one no, one abstention, and one absent. General Spraggins.

**GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, sir. To finish my report, the committee took volunteers for the steering committee, and council membership will be announced by the council chair prior to conclusion of this committee report.

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Very good, and so, based on the motion, the selection -- I am going to select two individuals, more for just keeping it a relatively small group, as we discussed during committee, and there are benefits to doing that, and so I'm going to choose Mr. Michael McDermott and Mr. Ed Walker. Dr. Simmons.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, for the remaining members for this steering committee, I just will be asking Mr. Donaldson, here in the coming month, who he might be appointing, because remember we need a Gulf State Marine Fisheries Commission staff member involved in this exercise, and then, also, to Mr. Strelcheck, because we need at least two fisheries staff from our office to help us with this in the next month, as we start getting consultant applicants in and trying to decide who we're going to select for this effort. Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.

1 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks for that, Carrie, and so I did reach out  
2 to Russ Dunn, and he expressed interest in being on the steering  
3 committee, and I would just ask that you reach out to him directly  
4 to confirm that. For myself, I would like to be involved in the  
5 steering committee. The question I would have for the council is  
6 if it would be okay to also have me designate someone in the event  
7 I can't attend, so that would probably be Jack McGovern, as my  
8 designee, if it's okay with the council. I do a tremendous amount  
9 of travel, and so I just can't make every meeting.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any opposition to what Andy is trying to offer?  
12 I saw a lot of thumbs-up, and so I think that will be fine. Mr.  
13 Donaldson.

14  
15 **MR. DONALDSON:** For the commission, it would be myself, and, along  
16 the lines of Andy, I would like to have Gregg Bray as my designee,  
17 if I can. Thank you.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Sounds good. All right, and so that will take us  
20 to our next committee report, and that will be Law Enforcement,  
21 Tab L. Mr. Diaz.

#### 22 23 **LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

24  
25 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Law Enforcement Technical  
26 Committee Report from January 29, 2024, the committee adopted the  
27 agenda, Tab L, Number 1, and approved the minutes of the June 2023  
28 meeting, Tab L, Number 2, as written.

29  
30 Summary of Law Enforcement Technical Committee (LETC) Discussion  
31 on Red Snapper Individual Fishing Quota Advanced Landings  
32 Notifications, staff summarized the LETC discussion on red snapper  
33 individual fishing quota advanced landings notifications held  
34 during the October 2023 LETC meeting.

35  
36 Staff presented the council motion requesting the LETC evaluate  
37 2022 red snapper IFQ advanced landing notifications, the  
38 proportion of inspected to non-inspected red snapper IFQ landings,  
39 the subsequent proportion of amended landings reports, and the  
40 magnitude of adjustments, in pounds.

41  
42 LETC members indicated landings notifications do not appear to  
43 constitute a major issue and noted that data needed to fulfill the  
44 council's request would be challenging to compile and would require  
45 resources and manpower that are not currently available.

46  
47 LETC members noted that shareholders tend to underestimate  
48 landings, because it is administratively simpler to amend



1 underestimated landings reports than to have already deducted IFQ  
2 annual allocation returned to one's account.

3  
4 An LETC member asked whether the presence of an officer during  
5 offload constituted a determining factor in the poundage  
6 adjustment. The LETC replied that the same reporting pattern was  
7 noted, regardless of officer presence. The LETC unanimously  
8 approved the following resolution.

9  
10 The LETC considered the council's request and is unable to comply  
11 for various reasons, including a lack of standardization in  
12 reporting amongst the five Gulf States and the National Marine  
13 Fisheries Service and the lack of manpower to perform the manual  
14 analysis the request would entail. Further, the LETC believes the  
15 information requested is unlikely to provide any useful  
16 information to law enforcement or the council, and the information  
17 necessary for investigations is already being provided on a case-  
18 by-case basis, when requested.

19  
20 A committee member noted the importance of transparency in IFQ  
21 programs and stated that, if the data requested by the council are  
22 not available, changes may be necessary. Mr. Strelcheck replied  
23 the data exists, just not in a way that is easy to compile. He  
24 further noted that, although there are appropriate checks and  
25 balances in the IFQ system, NOAA will continue to look for  
26 improvements.

27  
28 Major Dean Aucoin, from Louisiana, noted that data they collect or  
29 request from NOAA are specific to particular cases and ongoing  
30 investigations.

31  
32 A committee member stated that the IFQ the system should encourage  
33 accurate landings reports. The committee noted that, because a  
34 dealer has up to fifteen days to amend a dealer report, enforcement  
35 should place particular attention on instances in which the dealer  
36 and the fisherman are the same entity. A committee member noted  
37 it makes sense to underestimate landings, because an overestimate  
38 could result in a transaction being flagged for insufficient  
39 allocation.

40  
41 Summary of Law Enforcement Technical Committee Discussions:  
42 Additional Topics, staff summarized the LETC discussions on the  
43 sale of recreationally-caught fish and indicated that LETC members  
44 noted that Gulf states have appropriate regulations to address the  
45 issue. Staff noted that the LETC expressed satisfaction with the  
46 current nomination process for Officer or Team of the Year. A  
47 committee member inquired about the timeline for reviewing  
48 nominations. Staff replied that the council will review LETC

1 nominations during the April 2024 council meeting. Mr. Chairman,  
2 this concludes my report.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Diaz. Any other comments or  
5 business that people want to bring up for Law Enforcement? Seeing  
6 none, that will take us into our next committee report, and that  
7 would be Data Collection and Ms. Boggs.

8  
9 **DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE REPORT**

10  
11 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee adopted the  
12 agenda, Tab F, Number 1, and approved the minutes, Tab F, Number  
13 2, of the October 2023 meeting as amended.

14  
15 Discussion on For-Hire Data Collection, Tab F, Numbers 4(a) and  
16 4(b), the committee reviewed the meeting summary of the Ad Hoc  
17 Charter-For-hire Data Collection Advisory Panel (AP). Captain Jim  
18 Green, the AP chair, presented the AP's motions and provided the  
19 AP's rationale for its recommendations.

20  
21 A committee member asked if the AP had any preferences on  
22 approaches for trip validation. Captain Green stated that the AP  
23 did not. However, the AP was opposed to a vessel monitoring system  
24 (VMS) recording twenty-four hours. He continued that the group  
25 offered possible alternatives to VMS for the purpose of trip  
26 validation, some of which had been explored when the Southeast  
27 For-hire Integrated Electronic Reporting (SEFHIER) program was  
28 operational, but the group did not want to be too prescriptive on  
29 alternatives at this point.

30  
31 The committee discussed the AP's motion regarding optional  
32 reporting of depredation events as part of the new program. A  
33 committee member stated that the AP discussion was more conflicted  
34 on depredation reporting than reflected on the voting results for  
35 the motion. While some members of the AP are not opposed to  
36 providing a voluntary report of depredation information, they  
37 contested making those data fields a standard reporting  
38 requirement.

39  
40 Several AP members contended that no one from the office of  
41 Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) has specifically asked for  
42 this type of information, nor has HMS communicated explicitly how  
43 those data may be used. Additionally, they argued adding data  
44 fields would be counter to objectives to streamline the new  
45 program.

46  
47 A committee member asked about the AP's discussions of the economic  
48 survey questions. Captain Green stated that the AP had a better

1 understanding of how the economic information is used when  
2 assessing management alternatives, but that there was still some  
3 consternation among the industry about reporting economic data.  
4 Recently, specific consideration for the for-hire industry has  
5 been included in federal law to assess disaster relief  
6 determinations, and the committee stated for-hire economic data in  
7 the Gulf could be used for those future assessments.

8  
9 Dr. Jessica Stephen, Southeast Regional Office staff, presented  
10 information collected from one year (2022) of the SEFHIER program.  
11 The committee asked why it appeared fishermen were landing species  
12 outside of the fishing season. Dr. Stephen responded that it was  
13 difficult to assign a specific reason for that observation. She  
14 stated those catches could have been incorrectly reported as  
15 retained, rather than discarded by the vessel operator, or it is  
16 possible that more outreach on management measures is needed to  
17 help educate program participants and bring them into compliance.

18  
19 She continued that investigations were underway to send an error  
20 message to program users to alert them if they marked a species as  
21 retained outside of the fishing season. Several committee members  
22 said that linking permit renewal to program compliance was an  
23 effective measure and that mechanisms are in place to help get  
24 reporting issues resolved and permits renewed.

25  
26 The committee then reviewed each AP motion one-by-one, referencing  
27 each motion by numbered order in which they appeared in the AP  
28 summary report. The committee categorized the AP motions into  
29 those that could be addressed in an initial draft document, those  
30 that would require more exploration before possibly being  
31 incorporated in a document, and those that do not pertain to  
32 document development at this time.

33  
34 When discussing AP recommendations that could be incorporated  
35 directly into an initial draft, several committee members provided  
36 comment. One committee member stated that a lot of time and  
37 resources had been dedicated to setting up the VMS portion of the  
38 SEFHIER program. He requested open-mindedness to the use of VMS  
39 when exploring approaches for effort validation.

40  
41 NOAA General Counsel cautioned that, if prescriptive data fields  
42 for the program were included in the document, progress to modify  
43 survey questions could be hampered in the future.

44  
45 The committee discussed the desire, within the document, to define  
46 a trip to avoid multiple hail-outs for non-fishing operations,  
47 which was realized during the SEFHIER program, and advised an  
48 approach to review a range of reasonable alternatives to define

1 when a hail-out would be required. A committee member reminded  
2 the group that any consideration for assessing when a trip occurred  
3 would require an associated validation measure.  
4

5 **The committee recommends, and I so move, to direct staff to include**  
6 **Motions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 11 from the January 2024 Ad Hoc Charter-**  
7 **for-Hire Data Collection Advisory Panel into the charter-for-hire**  
8 **electronic data collection document. Motion 1 to adopt the**  
9 **following objectives for a new charter-for-hire data collection**  
10 **program: increasing the timeliness of catch estimates for in-**  
11 **season monitoring; increasing the temporal (and/or spatial)**  
12 **precision of catch estimates for monitoring; reducing biases**  
13 **associated with collection of catch and effort; and increasing**  
14 **stakeholder trust and buy-in associated with data collection.**  
15 **Motion 2 to recommend the council not require twenty-four-hour**  
16 **tracking. Motion 3 to recommend to the council that trip**  
17 **declarations include the following components: vessel registration**  
18 **number, captain's name, departure date and time, estimated return**  
19 **date and time, location, trip type. Motion 4 to recommend to the**  
20 **council that Trip Declarations are only required for for-hire**  
21 **fishing trips before departure. Motion 6 to recommend to the**  
22 **council that a trip report include the following components: vessel**  
23 **registration number, captain's name, departure date and time,**  
24 **actual return date and time, location, trip type, angler count,**  
25 **passenger count, crew count, average depth fished, general area**  
26 **fished in GPS format, individual species data kept and discarded,**  
27 **fishing occurred yes or no, primary gear used, primary target**  
28 **species. Motion 11 to recommend the council maintain the component**  
29 **of the SEFHIER program that allowed safe dockage before submitting**  
30 **report and off-loading fish. That motion carried with no**  
31 **opposition. Mr. Chair.**  
32

33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We have a committee motion. Is there  
34 any discussion on the motion? Mr. Gill.  
35

36 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could we ask staff, before we  
37 consider voting on this motion, to tab the kept and discarded in  
38 to further clarify that they're part of the individual species  
39 data, and that's the intent of both the AP and the motion?  
40

41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Does staff understand the request? I am seeing  
42 a somewhat positive look that they think they can. How does that  
43 look, Mr. Gill? Is that what you're thinking, at the top of --  
44

45 **MR. GILL:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. That works fine. Thank you.  
46

47 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.  
48

1 **MS. BOGGS:** So the Number 4, to recommend to the council that trip  
2 declarations are only required for for-hire fishing trips before  
3 departure, and I didn't go back and look, but it seems like the  
4 last document that we passed, before the SEFHIER program was struck  
5 down, is we already had those discussions about what constitutes  
6 a trip, and it seems, to me, that, as I recall, it was more like  
7 you were receiving payment as a trip, and not necessarily fishing,  
8 because I think the data, and correct me if I'm wrong, Andy, but  
9 even for those non-fishing trips is important to understand,  
10 because that also builds in -- It comes into question with your  
11 economic data, because, if you're still producing income -- I mean,  
12 that's just my opinion on that, and the council may not see that,  
13 but I don't know if we need to maybe break that one out for more  
14 discussion, but I would like to maybe revisit that.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.

17  
18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, Mara can weigh-in, and I view this as we  
19 are adding these to the document, but you still have to have a  
20 range of alternatives, and so there will be additional alternatives  
21 that will be in addition to these, and what you're saying, Susan,  
22 will be exactly what I think we would have to include for  
23 consideration.

24  
25 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you for that, and I just wanted to make sure  
26 that we didn't lose sight of that, and so thank you.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other discussion on the motion? All right.  
29 We'll go then to our clickers and vote.

30

F4.1 To direct staff to include motions 1,2,3,4,6,&11 from the January 2024 Ad Hoc Charter-for-Hire Data Collection Advisory Panel into the charter-for-hire electronic...				
First Name	Last Name			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (16)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (0)</b>

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right and so we have sixteen yes, zero no, zero abstentions, and one absent. Ms. Boggs.

**MS. BOGGS:** The committee then discussed AP recommendations that would require more exploration by staff. Both the optional deprecation reporting and economic questions were the topic of focus. The committee generally agreed that more information regarding what data would be collected, and how that information would be used, needs to be communicated by NMFS to the council before considering those elements in a draft amendment.

For the economic survey, council staff provided some context on the use of those data and noted that the for-hire industry sells trips. When evaluating potential effects of management measures on the for-hire industry, changes in economic value are needed. The determination of economic value, which is the amount of money a for-hire operator earns in excess of the cost of providing a trip, requires for-hire business costs and revenues.

Staff noted that the last comprehensive economic analysis of the for-hire industry was published in 2012, and that is footnoted. The values in that report, adjusted for inflation, are still being used in current economic analyses. Several committee members expressed an interest in collecting economic data in a new for-hire data collection program, with guidance from fishery economists. However, at the time of committee discussion, no

1 guidance was provided regarding the collection of economic data  
2 for the for-hire fishery. Mr. Chair, can we pause right there and  
3 maybe have a discussion about that?  
4

5 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Sure. Any discussion? Do you want to go ahead?  
6

7 **MS. BOGGS:** I would like to request, the next time we have a Data  
8 Collection Committee meeting, that either Assane give a more in-  
9 depth presentation, or maybe from someone from the agency who can  
10 provide more detail of how this is important, how it would play  
11 out in a survey census-type situation, so that the charter-for-  
12 hire industry gets a more better understanding, and maybe this  
13 council will as well.  
14

15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Perhaps maybe -- I don't know, and it might be a  
16 good time to go ahead and then, you know, maybe also summarize  
17 where that information goes, as far as in our documents, decision-  
18 making maybe within the agency and such, you know, with previous  
19 examples or something, and that might be helpful as well to add in  
20 that presentation, and so I don't know if we necessarily need to  
21 make a motion for that, Carrie, to include that, in an as-soon-  
22 as-possible type of thing.  
23

24 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't think  
25 so, and we're making a note of it here, and we'll try to bring it  
26 back, when we can, to the next Data Collection Committee.  
27

28 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you.  
29

30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.  
31

32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I had a similar thought to Susan, and the only  
33 difference is bringing it back to the council for a presentation  
34 at a future meeting. I talked to Dr. Mike Travis on my team, and  
35 Assane, and I think they could both, obviously, present on this,  
36 and give us some good information. Dr. Travis is heavily involved  
37 in the disaster determination process, and so he could speak  
38 directly to that.  
39

40 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.  
41

42 **MS. BOGGS:** Maybe I wasn't clear, but, when I said "Data Collection  
43 Committee", I meant the council Data Collection Committee, and not  
44 necessarily the AP, if I wasn't clear on that.  
45

46 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Walker.  
47

48 **MR. WALKER:** I think continued discussion on that is worthwhile.

1 I kind of feel like the charter guys might be amenable to a very  
2 limited -- If we could identify really the most important points,  
3 that are the least intrusive, and are limited in number, because,  
4 if you get economists to put in on this, you know, they want the  
5 most -- More data is better to an economist, and more data is not  
6 better to a charter fisherman who is trying to go out and do his  
7 job.

8  
9 I kind of feel like all economic data is not necessarily off the  
10 table for the charter guys that I've talked to. Most of them don't  
11 want to tell you what they get in their paycheck. That feels  
12 intrusive, and I feel that way too, and I just -- When someone  
13 asks me how much I made in a day, I just don't really feel right  
14 giving that, and that's probably the main sticking point, and so  
15 I think we can have a discussion with the economists. If there  
16 was two or three key factors that would help them get what they  
17 need, I think it would be possible that we could get the charter  
18 community to come to an agreement, a compromise, on that, and  
19 that's just my personal thoughts.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I will just quickly add to that, and, Assane, I  
22 guess when you're developing that, relative to the type, or amount,  
23 of data, that could be asked, you know, think of it, I guess, in  
24 terms of, you know, the Cadillac versus the Escort. If you only  
25 asked two or three questions, and got that, you know, piece of  
26 information, you would be able to produce whatever analysis, which  
27 would then be helpful in management that way, but, if you asked  
28 for the Cadillac option, or suite of questions, you might be able  
29 to do something else, and so maybe that might be something helpful  
30 as well. I have Mr. Strelcheck, followed by Ms. Boggs.

31  
32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** That's exactly what I'm thinking, is kind of the  
33 benefits and tradeoffs of not only the data variables that we  
34 collected, but the different survey approaches, right, and so trip  
35 level versus some sort of survey at the end of the year, versus  
36 periodic surveying throughout the year.

37  
38 I'm also trying to think ahead, in terms of the administrative  
39 burden to do this, right, and so the simplest, most straightforward  
40 way is to somehow integrate it into the logbook program, but, you  
41 know, if industry is willing to provide some economic data  
42 periodically, could we randomly survey them through the logbook  
43 program, as an example.

44  
45 I will note that I did find a little bit of an irony in the public  
46 testimony yesterday, that people aren't willing to provide  
47 economic data, but they're willing to provide their income for  
48 qualification, and so there seems to be some willingness to provide



1 economic information, but I don't see income qualifiers as really  
2 a viable avenue for us either.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

5

6 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so one of the things that I  
7 would like to look at is look at that portion of the old SEFHIER  
8 program, because I can't even remember exactly what it is, because,  
9 personally, we report to the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey,  
10 and it's two questions, and so, unless it was more than I don't  
11 recall in SEFHIER, and I know we've seen those presentations, but  
12 I didn't recall how many questions it was, and so that might be  
13 good for the council to revisit, to see what was inclusive in the  
14 SEFHIER in its finality, and then we can kind of go through and  
15 digest that and see how it matches up with this.

16

17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other discussion on this particular topic?  
18 Seeing none, Ms. Boggs, if you can continue with your committee  
19 report.

20

21 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The other AP recommendations  
22 were considered by the committee. The recommendation for one-stop  
23 reporting was interpreted by the committee as a goal, rather than  
24 an immediate program need, and encouraged continued work towards  
25 that effort.

26

27 The lists of potential validation measures put forth by the AP  
28 would be used as guidance for the interdisciplinary planning team  
29 (IPT) while they consider development of the document. Regarding  
30 linking permit renewal with program compliance, the committee  
31 referred to their earlier discussion, where existing methods allow  
32 for program participants and the Permits Office to resolve issues  
33 as they arise. The recommendation for outreach planning, such as  
34 using port ambassadors, can be developed separately, but  
35 simultaneously, with the amendment.

36

37 For the AP's motion to avoid any consideration for any individual  
38 fishing quota, the committee noted that no such program existed,  
39 was not a charge of the AP, and would not be included in any data  
40 collection for-hire document. The committee also acknowledged the  
41 AP's request to move progress as quickly as practical in getting  
42 a new for-hire data collection system implemented.

43

44 I will say there, Mr. Chair, that I would hope that this council  
45 keeps this on their radar, moving forward, and that we don't lose  
46 interest in it.

47

48 Update on the implementation timeline status of the commercial

1 electronic logbook, council staff provided a verbal update on the  
2 implementation timeline for a joint amendment with the South  
3 Atlantic Fishery Management Council to transition the coastal  
4 commercial logbook program to electronic reporting.

5  
6 The document has been finalized by the IPT and is currently being  
7 reviewed by the South Atlantic Council chair. Formal transmission  
8 of the document to NOAA is expected before the South Atlantic  
9 Council's March 2024 meeting. Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Ms. Boggs. Any other issues to be  
12 dealt with in Data Collection? All right. That then puts us at  
13 a break in the schedule, but not in the time, and so I'm thinking  
14 we'll go ahead and try to utilize the time, and we can probably  
15 get the Shrimp report done close to kind of where we had a break,  
16 or maybe a little bit after, but, Mr. Schieble, are you ready for  
17 that?

#### 18 19 **SHRIMP COMMITTEE REPORT**

20  
21 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, Mr. Chair. I think we can get through this  
22 pretty quickly. There's only one motion in it, and so please bear  
23 with me. I think I have the French Quarter funk from this meeting  
24 here.

25  
26 The committee adopted the agenda, Tab D, Number 1, and approved  
27 the minutes, Tab D, Number 2, of the October 2023 meeting as  
28 written.

29  
30 We got an update on the Early Adopter Program for shrimp cVMS.  
31 Dr. Lowther, from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center,  
32 presented an update on the Early Adopter Program for a cellular  
33 vessel monitoring system on the Gulf of Mexico (Gulf) federal  
34 shrimp fleet.

35  
36 A council member inquired as to the location of the five vessels  
37 that signed up in the last half of January 2024 to participate in  
38 the program. Dr. Putman, from LGL Ecological Associates, responded  
39 that the vessels are located in Florida. Another committee member  
40 asked which devices had been selected by the sixteen vessels that  
41 had signed up to participate in the program. Dr. Lowther responded  
42 that he did not have that information at this time.

43  
44 A committee member stated that, on the timeline, device  
45 installation would end in July 2024 and asked if there was a  
46 deadline to participate in the program. Dr. Lowther explained  
47 that all funds have to be spent by August 2026, and so, in order  
48 to provide two years of service, that devices would have to be

1 installed no later than July 2024. However, if someone wanted to  
2 participate after July 2024, the device could potentially still be  
3 provided, but without two years of cellular data transmission costs  
4 being paid for through the program. Dr. Putman stated that the  
5 July 2024 date was more flexible than originally planned.

6  
7 The committee member then asked how many units might be provided  
8 based on the knowledge of costs so far. Dr. Lowther responded  
9 that fifty to seventy-five devices might be provided. Dr. Putman  
10 stated that the retail prices were provided to shrimpers, so that  
11 they would understand future costs if a cVMS device needed to be  
12 replaced.

13  
14 Dr. Simmons inquired where the data collected by the cVMS devices  
15 would be transmitted. Dr. Lowther responded that the data would  
16 be transmitted to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Dr.  
17 Simmons asked if side-by-side testing would be done with cVMS  
18 devices and current cellular electronic logbook (cELB) devices.  
19 Dr. Lowther responded that there was limited capacity to reprogram  
20 cELB devices that the Southeast Fisheries Science Center has in  
21 supply.

22  
23 Dr. Simmons asked if it was possible to at least check if the  
24 currently installed cELB devices were operating properly, so they  
25 could be used in side-by-side testing, particularly with any new  
26 vendors that may want to participate in the program and were not  
27 included in the pilot test. Dr. Walter responded that they could  
28 check with LGL Ecological Associates to see if that was possible,  
29 but that program funds would not go to reprogramming the old cELB  
30 devices to run side-by-side testing.

31  
32 The committee then reviewed the Shrimp Futures Project: Workshops  
33 to Address Current Challenges and Future Scenario Planning. Dr.  
34 Walter, from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, presented  
35 information on the Southeast Fisheries Science Center's Shrimp  
36 Futures Project.

37  
38 A committee member stated this information had been scheduled to  
39 be presented to the Louisiana Shrimp Taskforce on January 17, 2024,  
40 but the meeting was cancelled. The committee member noted that  
41 the Louisiana Shrimp Taskforce meeting has been rescheduled for  
42 March 6, 2024, and encouraged the presentation be given at that  
43 meeting.

44  
45 Another committee member inquired what council support could  
46 entail. Dr. Walter stated that the council letter sent to Dr.  
47 Rubino on the National Seafood Strategy was already a show of  
48 council support and added that lending council staff time to these

1 workshops would be helpful. Dr. Simmons responded that additional  
2 details on the workshops would be useful for knowing the extent of  
3 council staff time that may be requested.  
4

5 Several committee members stated that they wanted to applaud the  
6 efforts laid out in Dr. Walter's presentation. Dr. Simmons added  
7 that local leadership and Sea Grant agent assistance would be  
8 needed to encourage workshop attendance by the shrimp industry.  
9 Dr. Simmons also encouraged more information be provided to the  
10 council on how funding from the Inflation Reduction Act may assist  
11 with this project. A committee member commented that an update at  
12 the April 2024 council meeting would be informative.  
13

14 I have a committee motion here. **The committee recommends, and I**  
15 **so move, to recommend the council support the Shrimp Futures**  
16 **Project. That motion carried unanimously.** Mr. Chair.  
17

18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have a committee motion. Is there any  
19 discussion on the motion? I guess, to make it formal, or continue  
20 on, if we can go ahead and vote with our clickers, to keep it  
21 consistent.  
22

D5.1 To recommend the Council support the Shrimp Futures Project.				
First Name	Last Name			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (16)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (0)</b>

23  
24  
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so we have sixteen yes, zero no,  
26 zero abstention, and one absent. Mr. Schieble.  
27

28 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** We had one Other Business item. A committee member  
29 inquired if council staff are on-track to bring the draft shrimp  
30 document to the April 2024 council meeting. Dr. Freeman responded

1 in the affirmative. Mr. Chair, this concludes my report of the  
2 Shrimp Committee.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, sir. Let's go ahead and try to do one  
5 more. Dr. Frazer has a phone call that he needs to tend to, and  
6 he can still make the Reef Fish report at 11:00, as it is currently  
7 scheduled, and so I'm going to try to accommodate his request to  
8 be here to provide the report to the council, and try to work and  
9 change that up, and so if we can go then to Dr. Sweetman for  
10 Sustainable Fisheries as the next committee up. Dr. Sweetman.

11  
12 **SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES COMMITTEE REPORT**

13  
14 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. The Sustainable  
15 Fisheries Committee report, the committee adopted the agenda, Tab  
16 E, Number 1, and approved the meeting minutes, Tab E, Number 2, of  
17 the August 2023 meeting as written.

18  
19 Allocations and Allocation Review Policy, Tab E, Number 4, staff  
20 presented expected start dates for initial allocation reviews set  
21 by the council and discussed completed and implemented  
22 reallocation amendments that included allocation reviews.  
23 Examples include Reef Fish Amendments 53, 54, and 56, which  
24 reviewed and revised allocations between the recreational and  
25 commercial sectors for red grouper, greater amberjack, and gag  
26 grouper, respectively.

27  
28 For each of these species, the next allocation review was scheduled  
29 based on the date upon which the final rule implementing the  
30 amendment became effective and the predetermined time interval  
31 between reviews. For example, because Reef Fish Amendment 54  
32 became effective July 17, 2023, and a six-year interval between  
33 reviews was set by the council, the next review of the greater  
34 amberjack recreational and commercial allocation will begin no  
35 later than July, 17, 2029.

36  
37 Staff discussed ongoing amendments with allocation reviews and  
38 noted that state directors plan to meet to discuss the  
39 apportionment of the private angling component of the recreational  
40 red snapper annual catch limit (ACL) between Gulf states.

41  
42 Staff discussed an October 2023 council motion which stated that  
43 the council will delay commercial and recreational allocation  
44 changes for fishery resources subject to the Marine Recreational  
45 Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES) until the  
46 2024 pilot study has been completed and deemed consistent with the  
47 best scientific information available by the council's Scientific  
48 and Statistical Committee.

1  
 2 Staff then presented a revised allocation review schedule  
 3 consistent with the council motion and completed and ongoing  
 4 allocation amendments. The committee discussed the proposed  
 5 revisions to the schedule for allocations that are not between the  
 6 recreational and commercial sectors. Staff indicated that  
 7 potential adjustments to recreational data are expected to affect  
 8 several allocations. Staff also noted that the revised schedule  
 9 assumes that the 2024 MRIP pilot study and subsequent SSC  
 10 evaluation are expected to be concluded by January 2026.

11  
 12 Committee members inquired about the planned completion date for  
 13 the pilot study. Dr. Richard Cody indicated that study results  
 14 and updated recreational data should be available in 2025 and  
 15 available for use in management in 2026, respectively. **The**  
 16 **committee recommends, and I so move, to recommend the council**  
 17 **approve the updated allocation review schedule.** Mr. Chair.

18  
 19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have a committee motion. Is there any  
 20 discussion on the motion? Seeing none, again, if you would use  
 21 your clickers.  
 22

<b>E.4.1 To recommend the Council approve the updated allocation review schedule</b>				
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin			Abstain
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (15)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (1)</b>

23  
 24  
 25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have fifteen yes, zero no, one abstention, and  
 26 **one absent.** Dr. Sweetman.

27  
 28 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The committee directed staff

1 to send a letter to NOAA Fisheries detailing revisions to the  
2 allocation review schedule.

3  
4 Summary of SSC Discussion on Incorporating Social Science Theory  
5 and Methods in Ecosystem Assessments Recommendations, Tab E,  
6 Number 5, staff summarized the SSC's discussion on incorporating  
7 social science theory and methods in ecosystem assessments. The  
8 SSC received this information, presented by Dr. David Griffith,  
9 (Standing SSC) at its September 2023 meeting.

10  
11 The SSC discussion included illustrative examples related to  
12 social data and methods, including conventional methods such as  
13 interviews, focus groups and surveys, and other approaches, such  
14 as cultural consensus analysis and the conversion of qualitative  
15 data into quantitative data to create dependence and vulnerability  
16 indices.

17  
18 Of note, Dr. Griffith said that timely and systematic data  
19 collection programs and syntheses of data collected would be very  
20 informative, such as interviews with fishermen and their inputs  
21 relative to fishing effort and areas fished, and constraints  
22 relative to their ability to fish could be utilized to inform stock  
23 assessments. SSC members noted that social science data and  
24 analyses could be more prominently included in the council process,  
25 but social information is not routinely collected in some regions,  
26 and that research funding is usually reactive to present needs.  
27 Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Any other discussion  
30 topics for Sustainable Fisheries, before we move on? Okay. So we  
31 are ahead of schedule, and we've already dispensed with the  
32 exempted fishing permit item earlier, when we first started this  
33 morning, and we're going to go ahead -- We'll have a little bit  
34 longer break, and we're going to come back at 10:30, but, when we  
35 come back at 10:30, we'll be doing Education and Outreach at that  
36 time. Mr. Strelcheck.

37  
38 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't know about other people's flights, but  
39 the earliest that I could get on to get home tonight was eight  
40 o'clock. If we could move faster, I might be able to get on an  
41 earlier flight, and I don't know if people want to try to keep  
42 moving and having a shorter break.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We can do that. I'm just trying to look to see  
45 -- I think the person -- The only person -- Well, everybody that  
46 will be presenting, I think, is here, and so we just might move  
47 into the liaison reports. Again, I'm trying to accommodate Dr.  
48 Frazer's schedule here, and he'll be back at eleven o'clock, and

1 so as long as we understand that there will be some flexibility,  
2 and we might receive some liaison reports, but, yes, if you want  
3 to -- Let's do take some time now though, and let's come back at  
4 10:15 then, and that will give time -- Hopefully enough time for  
5 people to check out and do what they need to do. Thank you.

6  
7 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Folks in the audience, wrap up conversations, or  
10 take them outside, please. We're going to reconvene. All right.  
11 Just to bring everybody back up to speed, we have completed -- We  
12 have completed, so far this morning, Admin/Budget Committee  
13 report, Law Enforcement, Data Collection, Shrimp, and Sustainable  
14 Fisheries, and we've also completed the exempted fishing permit,  
15 and so that will take us then -- Again, trying to keep Reef Fish  
16 scheduled at 11:00 a.m., and that will take us to Education and  
17 Outreach with Mr. Dugas.

18  
19 **EDUCATION AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE REPORT**

20  
21 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Outreach and Education  
22 Committee report, the committee adopted the agenda, Tab O, Number  
23 1, and approved the minutes, Tab O, Number 2, from the February  
24 2023 meeting as written.

25  
26 2023 Communications Improvement Plan Progress and 2023 Analytics,  
27 Tab O, Number 4, staff provided an overview of communications  
28 analytics, along with a progress report on the 2023 Communications  
29 Improvement Plan. Staff noted some issues with Google Analytics  
30 and cumulative analytics tracking for blog articles. Staff  
31 highlighted the incredible return on investment it gets from  
32 creating short videos for social media and called out the positive  
33 reception it's received for the blog digests.

34  
35 A committee member complimented the Fish Rules commercial app and  
36 noted that the quota monitoring feature on the app is well  
37 maintained and incredibly useful.

38  
39 2024 Communications Improvement Plan, Tab O, Number 5, staff  
40 presented the 2024 Communications Improvement Plan, which was  
41 developed in response to communications analytics and using  
42 suggestions from the Outreach and Education Technical Committee.

43  
44 Staff highlighted its intent to update management area maps,  
45 publish eight blog articles, improve the aesthetic of the website,  
46 publish a paper on the council's Fisherman Feedback tool, begin  
47 sending press releases promoting comment opportunities for  
48 framework actions, and redesign the *Navigating the Council Process*



1 publication.  
2  
3 2023 In-Person Event Outreach Progress and 2024 Plan, Tab O, Number  
4 6, staff presented a summary of the 2023 in-person outreach and  
5 an outline of the proposed 2024 in-person outreach plan. Staff  
6 highlighted the goal of attending at least one event in each state  
7 and the desire to find events that allow council staff to interact  
8 with a variety of stakeholder groups. Staff will also attempt to  
9 have a booth at ICAST, if time and logistics permit.  
10  
11 Staff provided a list of potential events in each state, with the  
12 targeted event highlighted. It was suggested that staff replace  
13 the Blessing of the Fleet in Mississippi with the Mississippi  
14 Department of Marine Resources Discovery Day, because the  
15 Mississippi shrimp fleet is diminishing.  
16  
17 Committee members were supportive of continuing to collect and  
18 assess engagement metrics, and several committee members commented  
19 on the benefits of collaboration with other agencies and offered  
20 assistance with choosing appropriate events. It was also  
21 suggested, while in-person outreach is valuable, it can be cost-  
22 prohibitive and may be worth trying other outreach efforts, such  
23 as radio shows or Facebook Live.  
24  
25 Communications Guidelines Book Review, Tab O, Number 7, staff  
26 reviewed the final draft of the council Communications Guidelines  
27 Book. The committee  
28 had previously reviewed and approved communication guidelines for  
29 media, press releases, public comment, and social media. This was  
30 the first opportunity for the committee to review guidelines on  
31 the use of council products, fishing regulations, communications  
32 analytics, Fisherman Feedback, and in-person outreach events.  
33  
34 One committee member sought clarification on the process for giving  
35 quotes to the media. Staff explained that, when answering as an  
36 individual, council members may freely represent their own  
37 interest on council-related topics, but should make it clear that  
38 they are not presenting the council as a whole. However,  
39 individual council members should not act as a spokesperson to  
40 represent the council without coordination with the Public  
41 Information Officer and council leadership.  
42  
43 Fishery Ecosystem Plan Outreach, Tab O, Number 8, staff presented  
44 a draft fishery ecosystem plan and Red Tide Fishery Ecosystem Issue  
45 Communications Plan outline. The first part of the plan addresses  
46 the need to broadly communicate the fishery ecosystem plan by  
47 redesigning and maintaining the council's Fishery Ecosystem  
48 Management webpage.

1  
2 Next, the plan outlines a process for engaging the public in  
3 gathering and ranking fishery ecosystem issue ideas by developing  
4 an online tool that allows the public to suggest potential fishery  
5 ecosystem issues and asking submitters to rank potential fishery  
6 ecosystem issues on a regular basis before the council reviews and  
7 selects future issues.

8  
9 Staff then explained that there were general communications  
10 strategies that would be appropriately applied across all fishery  
11 ecosystem issues, which include creating dedicated webpages for  
12 each fishery ecosystem issue, curating a list of involved  
13 stakeholders appropriate for each individual issue, and measuring  
14 stakeholder sentiment on each issue through feedback received  
15 using an online tool.

16  
17 Staff highlighted the specific outreach plan for addressing the  
18 pilot fishery ecosystem issue of red tide. Staff suggested hosting  
19 a red tide symposium that brings together a range of affected  
20 stakeholders, extrajurisdictional agencies, media, and other  
21 groups to collaboratively address the issues holistically. Staff  
22 also suggested producing a federal fisheries red tide report that  
23 summarizes social, economic, and biological impacts that red tide  
24 has on federal fisheries and share that report with existing  
25 agencies and organizations addressing red tide.

26  
27 The committee clarified that, although the council may not be able  
28 to directly manage red tide events, the council can take action  
29 indirectly by reacting in useful ways to red tide events, including  
30 using management buffers and shifting effort in response to fish  
31 kills.

32  
33 The committee also cautioned that the symposium could easily become  
34 a huge undertaking and suggested that staff carefully define goals  
35 and manage expectations and attendance. Staff reminded the  
36 committee that a summit is proposed in the council's phase II of  
37 the funding request for the Inflation Reduction Act. It was also  
38 noted that the federal fisheries red tide report would be a very  
39 useful product that could be used to justify continued work on red  
40 tide mitigation.

41  
42 Coastal Migratory Pelagics Stakeholder Engagement, Tab O, Number  
43 9, staff presented a draft Coastal Migratory Pelagic  
44 Communications Plan that aims to gather stakeholder input on king  
45 and Spanish mackerel to compliment the South Atlantic Council's  
46 port engagement effort and inform future Gulf Council actions.

47  
48 The plan is a three-pronged approach that leverages an online tool,

1 virtual workshops, and advisory panel feedback to develop a broad  
2 understanding of the coastal migratory pelagic fisheries, their  
3 status, and their value to the fishing community.

4  
5 The committee advised the staff to include cobia in this effort  
6 and asked how biases based on different levels of fishing  
7 experience or geographic location would be addressed. Staff  
8 suggested that gathering broad feedback should allow for themes to  
9 emerge and for biases to be recognized, if sufficient numbers of  
10 representative stakeholders are engaged.

11  
12 Management Timeline Tool Review, Tab O, Number 10, staff presented  
13 the committee with a draft of its new interactive, web-based  
14 Management Timeline Tool, which uses gag grouper and greater  
15 amberjack as pilot species, allows users to view all management  
16 changes over time and sort them by action type. Numerous members  
17 of the committee remarked on the utility of the tool, and the  
18 committee suggested that staff add management histories for red  
19 grouper, gray triggerfish, and red snapper next.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Hold on, J.D. Ms. Boggs.

22  
23 **MS. BOGGS:** So I have a question for Emily, and I hope I'm not  
24 putting you on the spot, or maybe it's Dr. Hollensead, but when  
25 might the tool be available for gag grouper and amberjack for the  
26 public, or this council, to be able to view and utilize?

27  
28 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Did you like what you saw yesterday?

29  
30 **MS. BOGGS:** Absolutely.

31  
32 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Then we'll publish it next week.

33  
34 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you.

35  
36 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Sure. As soon as possible. Let me revise that.  
37 We will make sure that we give it one last spit-shine, and we will  
38 get it up as soon as we can.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

41  
42 **MS. BOGGS:** I had made that suggestion yesterday, about, when you  
43 click on amendment, if it would highlight it throughout, and, if  
44 that's not something functional, or available now, it's  
45 impossible, I'm good with that, and it was just a suggestion.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We'll need a pilot study to figure that out. All  
48 right, Mr. Dugas. If you want to continue with the report.

1  
2 **MR. DUGAS:** Return 'Em Right Best Practices Manual Update, Tab O,  
3 Number 11, staff presented the council with the newly-published  
4 Return 'Em Right Best Release Practices Manual for Reef Fish and  
5 Related Species. The manual is organized around the major decision  
6 points that anglers are likely to encounter during a fishing trip  
7 and aims to present anglers with the information necessary to make  
8 decisions, based on their individual situations, to improve  
9 survival of fish that are caught and released.

10  
11 The committee asked if hard copies are available for distribution  
12 and if it was appropriate for businesses and other entities to  
13 share this resource. Staff indicated that hard copies could be  
14 requested from Return 'Em Right staff and that the resource could  
15 and should be shared as widely as possible.

16  
17 Other Items from the December 2023 Outreach and Education Technical  
18 Committee Meeting, Tab O, Number 12, the chair of the Outreach and  
19 Education Technical Committee, Captain Dylan Hubbard, presented  
20 the remaining items from the December 2023 Outreach and Education  
21 Technical Committee meeting.

22  
23 He reviewed the technical committee's discussion on illegal sale  
24 of recreationally-caught fish and concern expressed that it's not  
25 clear that bartering fish in exchange for a free meal at a  
26 restaurant is illegal. Captain Hubbard also emphasized the desire  
27 for the Outreach and Education Technical Committee to play a major  
28 role in the roll-out and communications of the newly-formed for-  
29 hire data collection program as it's implemented. Good  
30 communications strategies may play a pivotal role in the acceptance  
31 and success of the program. Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Dugas. Any other items that need  
34 to be discussed under Education and Outreach? Mr. Schieble.

35  
36 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Not really a question or anything, or a motion, but  
37 just some comment in regard to the Return 'Em Right plan, and so  
38 can someone refresh my memory as to what the expiration date, or  
39 the terminal date, of the DESCEND Act is? I think it's next year,  
40 and is that right? Two years? It's two years from now, and so we  
41 still have that program for two more years?

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

44  
45 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I think it was two years from when it was  
46 implemented, which was 2022, if I wasn't mistaken, and so I would  
47 think it would expire at the end of this year.

1 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** That's what I was under the impression of as well,  
2 but I could be wrong, and so my comment to that is maybe, at some  
3 future council meeting this year, we could sort of get a brief  
4 technical update from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center on  
5 how that data from that program, the Return 'Em Right, is  
6 benefiting discard data, and then we can look at the potential of  
7 getting buy-in, or better buy-in, from the stakeholders that are  
8 using it to hopefully get it renewed, to get the DESCEND Act  
9 potentially renewed for another time period, or a new act, or  
10 whatever it would take to get something on the books that keeps,  
11 or continues, the use of these devices for reducing discards that  
12 are dead.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Okay. I have a couple of people here. Ms.  
15 Muehlstein.

16  
17 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I just wanted to clarify that the DESCEND Act  
18 expires January 13, 2026, and so we do have two years from now,  
19 and I did want to sort of respond and say, you know, either we  
20 could work with -- You know, I don't know if we are actually  
21 allowed to work on getting the DESCEND Act renewed, or whatever,  
22 but we certainly have the authority to consider something at the  
23 council table, if that's not a consideration.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble, to that?

26  
27 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** To that point, I guess what I'm getting at is we  
28 hear from angler that, well, what's the use of getting this stuff,  
29 if we don't see a return, and the value of it is that we are  
30 reducing dead discards, which leaves more fish in the water, more  
31 availability for them to go fish and opportunity to catch, right,  
32 but we have to make that connection, to show the anglers that this  
33 is what this is for, so that we keep going forward with that, and,  
34 you know, right now, we're sort of like in the early stages, right?

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I had Ms. Boggs and then Dr. Simmons. Dr. Simmons.

37  
38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I believe  
39 we need to get the results of the studies that were funded from  
40 this effort, and I think we'll get those towards the end of the  
41 year, or early next year.

42  
43 **MR. DONALDSON:** Correct. The plan for the Return 'Em Right  
44 research that the commission has been involved is we're going to  
45 have a general session at our October meeting presenting those  
46 results, and, maybe at the November meeting, we can present some  
47 of those findings.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Simmons.  
2  
3 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so then  
4 would the next step be to also provide some of that information to  
5 our SSC and then try to get that into the Science Center's  
6 workflow?  
7  
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Porch.  
9  
10 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, and I've actually had that conversation with some  
11 of the folks at Return 'Em Right, because, right now, I don't know  
12 that there's a clear plan to kind of quantify how usage may have  
13 increased, to make that connection that Mr. Schieble is referring  
14 to, and so, yes, we know anglers are learning about the approaches,  
15 and we don't know exactly how much more they're actually employing  
16 them, and so it's really hard to quantify what that is, and so I'm  
17 hoping that we can get that kind of information from Return 'Em  
18 Right.  
19  
20 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Donaldson.  
21  
22 **MR. DONALDSON:** To that point, I mean, ultimately, that's the goal  
23 of the program, and to be able to quantify the usage. We did a  
24 preliminary study to show what the usage is, and the ultimate goal,  
25 at the end, is to hopefully show that there's more usage and that  
26 we're reducing the amount of discards, dead discards.  
27  
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I want to get back to Ms. Boggs. Go ahead.  
29  
30 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I have other questions, but, to Mr. Donaldson's  
31 discussion about the use, I don't know, and I hope you use the  
32 Southeast Regional Headboat Survey data, because it does now  
33 require us -- If we show that we released a fish, it asks did you  
34 descend or vent, and you do have to answer that question, but I do  
35 have other questions.  
36  
37 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I have a couple of other hands that came up, and  
38 so I'll try to keep on this topic for right now. Mr. Geeslin.  
39  
40 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess this question is more  
41 directed to Andy or Clay, or maybe even Mara, but what's  
42 preventing, or what hurdles would need to be, you know, high-  
43 jumped to get a requirement to use these devices, not only rigged  
44 and ready, but actually to require anglers to use them when they  
45 observe signs of barotrauma, much like Florida and Texas have done  
46 within their state waters?  
47  
48 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.

1  
2 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I think -- I mean, adequate enforcement,  
3 enough people to actually know that that's happening on the water,  
4 right, and so that's the challenge, and, you know, we can put a  
5 regulation in place, but people are going to make decisions with  
6 regard to their fishing practices when they're out on the water,  
7 and it's not as easy as just saying you have to do it and then  
8 them actually implementing it, and so I think this has been a  
9 combination of a lot of efforts, right, and we're doing best  
10 fishing practices, and we're requiring these devices, and it's  
11 good for fisheries, you know, and it's good for the fish  
12 populations, and, ultimately, that will result in some benefit.

13  
14 The harder part, and I appreciate Chris's comment, is then how do  
15 you quantify that, and then I will add, in an environment where  
16 there's a shifting baseline, more people fishing, more boats,  
17 faster boats, better technology, right, you can't always see it as  
18 a net gain, where you're going to get more season, or more days,  
19 because there's more effort.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Geeslin.

22  
23 **MR. GEESLIN:** Andy, I understand that, and, to your point about  
24 enforcement, I mean, the same thing could be said of any regulation  
25 that we have in place, and I guess I'm wondering would this take  
26 an act of Congress, or would this come through -- It could come  
27 through the service?

28  
29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Through the council.

30  
31 **MR. GEESLIN:** Okay. That's where I was going.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Just to, I guess, go back, to circle back a little  
34 bit to the data, speaking just for Alabama, through our Snapper  
35 Check survey, the dockside survey, we implemented some questions,  
36 at least last year, and it may have been the year before, in our  
37 dockside survey, asking folks on descending device use, and we  
38 actually added a question regarding the number of discarded fish  
39 on that survey, because it's primarily targeted to harvested fish,  
40 and so we have some additional data, and we've been providing that  
41 to the Return 'Em Right folks, and so I suspect there will be more  
42 than just these initial, you know, surveys that Return 'Em Right  
43 specifically did, as far as trying to determine usage and then  
44 trying to quantify how that would then be, you know, beneficial,  
45 or at least identify those fish that are being potentially saved  
46 from barotrauma issues. Ms. Boggs, did you -- Did you still have  
47 questions? I think we can move on to your questions now, and so  
48 go ahead.

1  
2 **MS. BOGGS:** I have lots to say. Back to Mr. Schieble, and so, I  
3 mean, in this informational brochure from the Gulf Council, a  
4 venting tool, or a descending device, is required to be rigged and  
5 ready for use when fishing for reef fish, and so I think we've  
6 already covered that, and do you need the DESCEND Act to do that?  
7 Not necessarily, and I think it can be done at a council level,  
8 but I think, at the time that the DESCEND Act was going through  
9 Congress and voted on, I don't think we had done anything yet.

10  
11 I know the South Atlantic had, because I was at that meeting when  
12 they passed it, and so that's to that point, and so I don't know  
13 that we would need to do anymore, unless, as Dakus says, he wants  
14 this council to come back and add "must be used", but then I come  
15 back to Dakus about must be used, and I agree with Andy, and why  
16 are we going to implement something that cannot be enforced?

17  
18 The only way I see that being done, and the room is probably going  
19 to explode, is every vessel must have a camera onboard, because  
20 that would be the only way that I think that you can enforce  
21 something like that, and so why should this council take the time  
22 to do a framework amendment for something that we know we can't  
23 enforce, and I would certainly like to get law enforcement's take  
24 on this. Thank you.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Mr. Strelcheck.

27  
28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I can't find it right now, and I will go back and  
29 look at some of the history, but Mara and I were talking, and we  
30 are actively implementing descending device requirements in the  
31 Caribbean right now, through an amendment that would align with  
32 what's already in place in the South Atlantic, and so certainly,  
33 if those councils proceeded, our goal would be, obviously, to have  
34 consistent regulations throughout the entire Southeast.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Andy, on those particular regulations in the  
37 Caribbean and the South Atlantic, there is -- The tone, and the  
38 message, of that is that -- It's kind of similar to what I think  
39 the Return 'Em Right program is trying to do, is just to, you know,  
40 A, get the word out, so to speak, and educate folks that there is  
41 a benefit to doing things on fish that have barotrauma stress,  
42 but, on those fishery regulations in the Caribbean and South  
43 Atlantic, it does kind of give an opportunity for folks to make  
44 that determination, because, with a descending device, you don't  
45 have the same impact as you would a venting tool, but, you know,  
46 keeping the fish on the deck, while you try to get your descending  
47 device -- You know, there's some other things, and so is it worded  
48 such that it still allows some folks to use the discretion for



1 actual individual fish?

2

3 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I think it's very much in alignment with  
4 what has been done with the DESCEND Act as well, right, and so  
5 it's -- What we've learned with barotrauma, right, is it's not the  
6 same for every fish, and it's based on circumstances and depth and  
7 temperature of water, and so giving fishermen the tools, and the  
8 information, in terms of best fishing practices to make those  
9 decisions, to me, it gives that flexibility on the water, right,  
10 and the downside is, right, if you don't require it, and mandate  
11 it, and they just choose not to do it, then you're not getting a  
12 benefit out of it.

13

14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Walker.

15

16 **MR. WALKER:** I just thought I would point out that, if you have  
17 questions, Nick Haddad, the head of the Return 'Em Right program,  
18 is on, and I've been communicating with him here, but, if anyone  
19 has questions for Return 'Em Right, he can answer you.

20

21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other comments, or questions, on this  
22 particular matter? Dr. Porch.

23

24 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you, Chair, and so, obviously, the reality is  
25 the only thing you can really enforce is them having the equipment  
26 on the boat. Anything else, unless you had, you know, cameras on  
27 everybody, there is no way to actually enforce it, and they're  
28 actually making good decisions, and using it when appropriate, and  
29 so, regardless of what happens, you know, there will be some  
30 discard mortality.

31

32 I think one of the important parts of our red snapper IRA program  
33 that's going through Gulf States is funding a workshop to look at  
34 the best ways that we can get estimates of discards, and,  
35 obviously, it's highly uncertain now, and it's predominantly self-  
36 reported, except a little bit for some of the for-hire industry,  
37 where we have observers, and so trying to find ways that we can  
38 get better estimates of discards is really important, because,  
39 even if you think we have clear evidence that we've reduced  
40 discards, you still need to know what that is and how much.

41

42 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Mr. Strelcheck.

43

44 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just one more point, and so I pulled up the  
45 regulations, and we specifically point out gear required by the  
46 DESCEND Act of 2020, and then we talk about the requirements are  
47 effective until January 14, 2026. I think this could be certainly  
48 a simple, expedited framework that the council could work on, and

1 we would essentially strike some of that language of the DESCEND  
2 Act and not put an end date in terms of when it's required.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

5  
6 **MS. BOGGS:** I guess I didn't understand what Andy said, because  
7 our framework, or whatever document we put in, it didn't have an  
8 end date, and so, to me, it would perpetual until this council  
9 changes that, and did I misunderstand something?

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Levy.

12  
13 **MS. LEVY:** We didn't have a framework that added a descending  
14 device requirement. The DESCEND Act did it, and then we -- The  
15 agency did regulations to implement the DESCEND Act, but this  
16 council didn't go ahead with a regulatory action for that.

17  
18 **MS. BOGGS:** Okay. I was just curious, and I will also point out  
19 that the South Atlantic is only for snapper grouper, you know, and  
20 it's specific to what it is, where we have it here for reef fish.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I guess what I'm hearing is that, if there is a  
23 desire, amongst the council, to do something, to have something in  
24 place, that goes beyond the date that's mentioned in the DESCEND  
25 Act, then we need to go forward with a framework action that then  
26 outlines what it is that we intend to do. Ms. Boggs.

27  
28 **MS. BOGGS:** I would like to wait and see what the Gulf States  
29 Marine Fisheries Commission comes back with first.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I am not seeing any other hands. Ms. Marhefka.

32  
33 **MS. MARHEFKA:** Sorry, and I was just pointing out the term "reef  
34 fish" and "snapper grouper", in our case, is interchangeable, and  
35 it applies to all the species, the triggerfish, the porgies,  
36 everything, and not just snapper and grouper.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. I am not seeing any other hands, and  
39 so we'll go ahead and continue on the agenda, again trying to keep  
40 that eleven o'clock start for Reef Fish at that time, and that  
41 leads us into our next agenda item, and that would be the Louisiana  
42 Law Enforcement Efforts Presentation, Tab R, Number 1, and Major  
43 Aucoin. Welcome.

44  
45 **SUPPORTING AGENCIES UPDATE**  
46 **LOUISIANA LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS**

47  
48 **MAJOR DEAN AUCOIN:** Thanks for having us today. It's been a

1 pleasure having you all down here, and I've had some great  
2 conversation over the last few days. I'm going to be pretty brief  
3 and just give a quick rundown.  
4

5 First off, I would like to say that it's been going pretty well in  
6 Louisiana. We have some -- We're doing a good job working with  
7 our NOAA partners. I would like to applaud NOAA. They do a great  
8 job of stealing our state assets and bringing them over to their  
9 side of the field, and Tom Forehand is here, and is our local NOAA  
10 OLE guy, and he works for the department. We trained him to be  
11 the best, and that's why they took him.  
12

13 We can go to the next slide and just talk, real quick, about our  
14 statistics for the JEA program. The 2022-2023 total patrol hours  
15 was 9,022. Of those, 7,500 were commercial and 1,400 were  
16 recreational.  
17

18 That commercial number is high because of the IFQ landings.  
19 Louisiana has put a lot of focus into our IFQ landings, and we try  
20 to attend all of them, and I'm not saying that we do, and we have  
21 some things that come up, boat accidents and things like that,  
22 where we cannot attend them all, but I can promise you that, if  
23 we're not at one, then Tom is at one, and so we are hitting them  
24 all. That's why you see a lot of the commercial hours are not  
25 vessel hours, and they are dockside hours, which is going to be at  
26 our IFQ landing sites.  
27

28 Out of those hours, we had 2,100 contacts, 696 were commercial and  
29 1,400 recreational contacts. The majority of those contacts are  
30 going to be reef fish contacts or HMS contacts.  
31

32 Investigative report writing, court, or any administrative hours,  
33 we've had 165. The majority of these hours are going to be  
34 dedicated to myself and my assistant, who works on the  
35 documentation that we provide to NOAA, for our TED inspection  
36 forms, as well as our administrative duties for the federal JEA  
37 agreement program.  
38

39 The next two slides I'm not going to go over in detail, and it's  
40 just our compliance rating. As you can see, we do not have a big  
41 issue with compliance. When it comes to our federal fisheries  
42 patrols, we have a very high compliance rate, especially when it  
43 comes to our reef fish. This year, we put a heavy emphasis on the  
44 recreational snapper, and we really didn't make any major cases,  
45 over the limit or things like that, and so I'm just saying it's  
46 not due to us not working it.  
47

48 Again, just to wrap it up, LDWF has focused heavily on IFQ landings

1 over the last two years. We're trying to just wrap our head around  
2 the landings, and, as you all are aware of some of the things that  
3 have come up with some cases that we've made, and we have a heavy  
4 focus on the IFQ right now, and so any questions?

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any questions? I am not seeing any, and so, Major  
7 Aucoin, we appreciate you being here.

8  
9 **MAJOR AUCOIN:** Thank you, all.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you for all of your efforts and all of the  
12 efforts of your team.

13  
14 **MAJOR AUCOIN:** Absolutely. It's a team effort. Thank you, all.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Next, we'll go then to the South  
17 Atlantic Council liaison report and Ms. Marhefka.

18  
19 **SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL LIAISON**

20  
21 **MS. MARHEFKA:** Thank you, and, once again, I would like to thank  
22 you all for having me here. Everyone is always so nice when I  
23 come to this meeting, and I really appreciate it, and so thank  
24 you.

25  
26 We met in December, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, in North  
27 Carolina. Before that, in the fall, three of our APs had met,  
28 Snapper Grouper, Dolphin Wahoo, and King Mackerel, and one of the  
29 sort of emerging themes that came out of those advisory panel  
30 meetings was the call for limited entry into the for-hire sector.

31  
32 That was -- A lot of it was based on sort of people understanding  
33 that SEFHIER reporting was not working, and it wasn't -- People  
34 weren't being held accountable, and so, coming out of our Snapper  
35 Grouper meeting, we instructed staff to begin an amendment on a  
36 for-hire limited-entry program for those three fisheries.

37  
38 We're also working on -- We're still continuing to work on our  
39 private recreational reporting amendment. We're chugging along,  
40 and we stood up an ad hoc AP of recreational industry recreational  
41 members, so that we can move along with that, and it looks like  
42 we'll be having public hearings later in 2024. As you can imagine,  
43 that is an interesting thing to discuss, and a very heavy lift, as  
44 far as determining how this permit is going to work, but everyone  
45 is really excited that we're working on it.

46  
47 Yellowtail snapper, which we've been working on with you all, has  
48 been put aside for the moment, while we wait for the assessment to

1 be updated with the reef fish -- With the Florida numbers.

2  
3 We're also working on a scamp and yellowmouth grouper amendment,  
4 and we're attempting to separate those out of the complex, and  
5 sort of reorganize it, in response to a stock assessment that we  
6 got, and then the red snapper -- I'm going to read this verbatim,  
7 as much as I hate doing it, because I don't want to editorialize  
8 on this at all.

9  
10 After the review, and much discussion, the council rescinded its  
11 approval to submit Snapper Grouper Reg Amendment 35 for formal  
12 review. The amendment was developed to address overfishing for  
13 red snapper, reduce the number of fish that are caught and  
14 released, and reduce the mortality of released fish. The council  
15 will continue to work on the amendment and further explore actions  
16 to reduce release mortality, while maintaining access to the  
17 overall snapper grouper fishery.

18  
19 We acknowledge that, while the red snapper stock is deemed to be  
20 overfished and undergoing overfishing, taking additional time to  
21 work on the regulatory amendment poses little risk to the stock,  
22 as it's rebuilding faster than expected and exhibiting strong  
23 recruitment, increasing abundance, and expanding age structure.  
24 We'll continue working on a holistic approach for managing the  
25 snapper grouper, or, as you said, the reef fish fishery, via a  
26 management strategy evaluation and expanding outreach for best  
27 fishing practices, and so we spent a lot of time talking about  
28 that.

29  
30 We're working on a gag and black grouper -- It's been brought up  
31 here before, and there's misidentification issues with gag and  
32 black in Florida, and so we're just doing a little tweak to those  
33 species, and then we're working on on-demand black sea bass pots  
34 being allowed in the sea bass fishery, to reduce interactions with  
35 right whales and possibly open up some areas that have been  
36 previously closed because of right whales.

37  
38 Of course, we've talked, this week, about what's happening in  
39 mackerel, and you know that we're going to be doing the port  
40 meetings, and, of course, your amazing staff, and our amazing  
41 staff, is working well together to make sure that the word gets  
42 out and we get really great feedback about these fisheries, and,  
43 of course, as always, we just have the most amazing citizen science  
44 staff, who are developing apps and working closing with ACCSP to  
45 use an app that other people can -- To create an app that's sort  
46 of plug-and-play, that other people can then create an app, and  
47 hopefully we can create some great data. Finally, we worked on  
48 our allocation review guidelines, and, with that, I will take any

1 questions.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Any questions? Mr. Strelcheck.

4

5 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Not a question, and great report, Kerry. One  
6 thing I just wanted to let people know that's happening at the  
7 South Atlantic is we went out with a grant opportunity, in the  
8 fall, to do innovative management for the reef fish fishery, or  
9 the snapper grouper fishery, to help reduce discards.

10

11 The panel has offered their recommendations, and we're kind of  
12 nearing the final decisions of making decisions on those grants.  
13 It's kind of like what happened years ago in the Gulf of Mexico,  
14 with exempted fishing permits for regional management, and we're  
15 pursuing some EFPs as well to test some new strategies for helping  
16 the snapper grouper fishery, and so I look forward to reporting on  
17 that more as those grants are awarded.

18

19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. All right, and so let's move then  
20 into our next liaison report, and that would be the NOAA Office of  
21 Law Enforcement, Assistant Special Agent Bradford.

22

23 **MR. TERRELL BRADFORD:** Good morning, everybody. Thank you, Mr.  
24 Chair, and thank you, council staff, for having me. We're going  
25 to go through some Quarter 1 reports and updates here for the  
26 National Marine Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement. I'm the  
27 Assistant Special Agent in Charge out of League City, Texas, and  
28 my area that I encompass is the Panhandle of Florida all the way  
29 to the Texas/Mexico border.

30

31 As you can see here, we had 123 opened incidents this quarter. Of  
32 the 123, sixty-one of those, or, actually, a little less than that,  
33 and 50 percent of those resulted in no violations or compliance  
34 assistance. Fifteen cases were referred to our General Counsel or  
35 the U.S. Department of Justice, and I know everybody is looking at  
36 that one right there, the unpermitted charters, and they're finally  
37 coming through the system, and they're at the General Counsel level  
38 now. Observer harassment was some of the cases that came in, and  
39 sanctuary casework as well.

40

41 There were thirty-six summary settlements, and those ranged  
42 between \$100 and \$2,000, between retention during the closure and  
43 sanctuary violations.

44

45 Some of our enforcement highlights were, this quarter, we had --  
46 In the top-left corner there, we have some triggerfish there that  
47 resulted off of an IFQ offload, where the fisherman exceeded --  
48 The IFQ offload exceeded the limit of triggerfish. They exceeded

1 the limit of the triggerfish commercial fish limit for that day.

2  
3 Out of Freeport, Texas there, you've got a snapper case that was  
4 in the EEZ. A recreational angler in possession of twenty-three  
5 red snapper over the limit, and, of course, we've got some outreach  
6 going on everywhere in the areas, and we're continuing to educate  
7 our partners.

8  
9 Here is our partners here, and we work really well with LDWF and  
10 Major Aucoin, and we do a lot of work with these folks, and we  
11 watch Louisiana Wildlife, and we tend to take some folks off that  
12 show and bring them over to NOAA, and we are working with each  
13 other hand-in-hand, our state JEA partners, as well as the United  
14 States Coast Guard Region 8, and it's a uniform effort, and,  
15 recently, we're working with Customs and Border Protection as well,  
16 with the seafood import monitoring program, and so it's a united  
17 effort. As you can see, there were twenty-six enforcement  
18 referrals this quarter, for Quarter 1, nineteen from FWC, two from  
19 Texas Parks and Wildlife, and one from the United States Coast  
20 Guard.

21  
22 Here is some of our enforcement partnerships. I know Ms. Boggs,  
23 at the last council meeting, was talking about the Gulf illegal  
24 charter taskforce out of Mobile, and one of our officers received  
25 the joint taskforce officer of the year, out of Mobile, and they're  
26 very effective out there, and they're really combating the illegal  
27 charter fleet that is operating out of those areas, from the  
28 Panhandle all the way to Louisiana. They're very effective, and  
29 they're doing a very good job. A lot of education and outreach  
30 going on that, and we appreciate the Coast Guard for that.

31  
32 We've got the Environmental Crimes Taskforce out of Puerto Rico  
33 there at the bottom, and they're working well with us, and Texas  
34 Parks and Wildlife here, and that was an IUU operation. We have  
35 been doing multiple operations down in the Texas/Mexico border to  
36 combat the illegal seafood fraud and seafood import monitoring  
37 program, and getting statistics through that.

38  
39 Some of our targeted operations, in the Florida Keys National  
40 Marine Sanctuary, we had Operator Spa Watcher. This was heavy  
41 enforcement on the charter requirements. We had multiple  
42 violations that resulted from this. You know, we had retention  
43 during the closure, some undersized fish in the closed areas and  
44 sanctuary SPAs.

45  
46 I think there's two IUU operations there, Los Coyotes and El  
47 Tejano. During the El Tejano operation, which was in Brownsville,  
48 Texas, there were multiple lanchas interdicted by Station South

1 Padre Island of the United States Coast Guard, Texas Parks and  
2 Wildlife, and NOAA. This operation, they serve as deterrents for  
3 the lanchas, and you can see there were six lanchas interdicted  
4 during that operation that resulted in 3,000 pounds of red snapper  
5 that was seized. That's a lot of red snapper.

6  
7 For shrimp folks, we have a shrimp seizure right there that came  
8 through the passenger lane to the port of entry at Laredo, Texas,  
9 and that's how far, you know, our folks are out there educating,  
10 not only our state and local partners, but our federal partners,  
11 the Customs and Border Patrol, the Agriculture folks, and we're  
12 really educating on the seafood import monitoring program, but  
13 where that doesn't focus is on the passenger lanes of traffic,  
14 where we get -- You know, this could be a commercial load of  
15 seafood coming in somewhere for sale, and that was a really good  
16 job on the enforcement officer down in Harlingen.

17  
18 The current spotlight for OLE is in charter enforcement and the  
19 IUU and seafood import monitoring program, and we're educating our  
20 partners. Our JEAs are now assisting on seafood import monitoring  
21 program inspections, and we're educating everybody on a united  
22 front on all this seafood product.

23  
24 Here's our contact number, if you have any tips from the general  
25 public, and this is a good number to call, and we're take that  
26 number twenty-four-seven. It's monitored. Any questions for me?

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Yes, we have a question from Ms.  
29 Boggs.

30  
31 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you very much for the presentation, and I'm glad  
32 that Glen got the award, because he does a great job over there.  
33 We've had this discussion before, and I think there's a little  
34 more confusion, at least in my mind, and maybe you can help clarify  
35 that.

36  
37 If a charter vessel does not have a federal permit on January 1,  
38 and fishes for red snapper, and then he puts the permit, federal  
39 permit, back on his vessel by June 1, and fishes for red snapper  
40 in federal waters -- I mean, is that -- I know you can't have the  
41 permit and remove it and then fish, and so he couldn't have it  
42 June, July, August, take it off the boat, and fish September,  
43 October, and November, but can he fish the frontend of it, if he  
44 has a state permit and not a federal permit?

45  
46 **MR. BRADFORD:** There's a question, Ms. Boggs, and can we unmute  
47 our General Counsel, and I'm going to let him answer that question,  
48 Duane Smith. He will give you the proper answer on that. I can



1 give you one, but I want to satisfy that question 100 percent.  
2 Duane, are you on?

3

4 **MR. DUANE SMITH:** I am. Can people hear me?

5

6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes.

7

8 **MR. SMITH:** Well, it's funny that Terrell punted to me, and I was  
9 going to punt to Mara, who is sitting in the room. My recollection,  
10 and we ran this to ground not that long ago, and my recollection  
11 is that, if someone does not have a federal permit, and they put  
12 one on during the course of the year, obviously, any requirements  
13 that apply to federal permits don't kick in until they actually  
14 have a permit, and so I think you've correctly identified  
15 potentially what may be characterized as a loophole there, Ms.  
16 Boggs, but I am going to defer to Mara on what the regulation is,  
17 just to make sure that my recollection of our discussion is  
18 correct. Mara.

19

20 **MS. LEVY:** Who can I pass to? No, I think that's right, and so  
21 the requirement that the catch limit, the for-hire catch limit,  
22 and regulations apply to you if it's on your vessel at any time  
23 during the fishing year, and so, if you don't have a permit on  
24 your vessel when the fishing year starts, those regulations don't  
25 apply. Once you then transfer, or have it on your vessel, you are  
26 considered for-hire, for purposes of red snapper, for the whole  
27 year, even if you take it off again, right, and so the link is to  
28 the permit being on your vessel during that fishing year.

29

30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other questions? I just have a question as  
31 it relates to the second slide, but the first slide with  
32 information, and do you all -- When you have these special  
33 operations, do you keep track of kind of your -- I hate to say it,  
34 but your success rate, as far as, you know, incidents that you  
35 create, develop, based on maybe some more targeted enforcement  
36 activities? Do you keep track and say, okay, under our normal law  
37 enforcement activities, this is what we would get, but, when we do  
38 these specialized operations, we get twice the amount, or something  
39 like that, and do you all keep track of that?

40

41 **MR. BRADFORD:** Yes, we do. We keep data on our patrol operations,  
42 our boardings, our inspections, and we try to also talk to the  
43 charter captains, the local -- You know, our council members and  
44 everybody, and get information from the public on our problem  
45 areas, and that is where we start to form these patrol operations  
46 that target problem areas that might have a problem with illegal  
47 charters, say, and we very -- We keep track of everything, and we  
48 really go back and document it well, but we really need that --

1 You know, that communication with the public and our charter  
2 fleets, you know, letting us know where the problem areas are, and  
3 then we'll focus our operations on that area.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** That's great to hear, and I just was wondering,  
6 you know, as far as, you know, looking back, if you will, after a  
7 certain enforcement activity had ended, to maybe go back and  
8 retrospectively look at that and see, you know, if it resulted in  
9 a higher success or, you know, resulted in solving the problem, I  
10 guess, going back to talk to those individuals and see if there is  
11 a reduced amount of that activity, because that might, you know,  
12 lead you to maybe change up how you do it in the future or some  
13 other -- You know, some other possibility, and that's all, and I  
14 was just trying to see if --

15  
16 **MR. BRADFORD:** Yes, sir. After every operation, we do an after-  
17 action report, and we communicate with each other to try to figure  
18 out we could do things better, and we also communicate with folks  
19 in the local area and enforcement, you know, our state and local  
20 partners, who might have a problem there, and to talk to the  
21 general public, to see if there was a change in the bad activities  
22 and if it was effective.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Very good. Ms. Boggs.

25  
26 **MS. BOGGS:** I'm sorry, but I would like to ask one follow-up  
27 question to my previous question, and so, Mara, I'm going to maybe  
28 come back and -- It may come back to you. If a vessel permit has  
29 expired, but yet it still has that one-year renewable period, are  
30 they subject to the federal for-hire stipulation?

31  
32 **MS. LEVY:** No, because it's not a valid permit, right, and so  
33 they're not able to fish as a for-hire vessel.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Anyone else with any questions? I am  
36 not seeing anything, and so Assistant Special Agent in Charge, and  
37 I didn't include that the first time, Bradford, I appreciate it.  
38 Thank you, again, for your efforts as well.

39  
40 **MR. BRADFORD:** Absolutely, and a shoutout to the applications folks  
41 out there, because we use the Fish Rules app to teach during our  
42 academies, and we teach -- You can get on there and talk about  
43 state or federal waters, and, you know, there's multiple things on  
44 the Fish Rules app that talk about the DESCEND Act, venting tools,  
45 and it's very, very helpful for the field, and so I'm sure that  
46 Major Aucoin can tell you that it's very effective for all of our  
47 wardens and folks that are deputized by NOAA, and we really  
48 appreciate that. We also educate the public with the Fish Rules

1 app, and we tell them to download it, and so thank you.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Okay, and so I think we are ready to  
4 go then, and we'll pick back up and get to the Reef Fish Committee.  
5 Dr. Frazer.

6  
7 **REEF FISH COMMITTEE REPORT**

8  
9 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, thank you, and the  
10 committee, for accommodating my request to modify the agenda here.  
11 All right, and so we'll get going with the Reef Fish Committee  
12 report.

13  
14 The Committee adopted the agenda, Tab B, Number 1, after moving  
15 the Review of 2023 Gulf Red Grouper and Gag Grouper Recreational  
16 Landings and Quota Closure under Gag Management Measures and adding  
17 a discussion item under Other Business related to the SEDAR  
18 schedule. The minutes, Tab B, Number 2, from the October 2023  
19 meeting were approved as written.

20  
21 Draft Options: Modification of Mid-Water Snapper Complex  
22 Composition and Catch Limits, Tab B, Number 4, council staff  
23 presented options for the potential removal of wenchman from the  
24 Reef Fish FMP and subsequent modification of the overfishing limit  
25 (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) for the remaining  
26 species in the midwater snapper complex: blackfin snapper, silk  
27 snapper, and queen snapper.

28  
29 Staff clarified that any changes to the catch limits would be made  
30 in Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey  
31 (MRIP-FES) data units, as opposed to the historic Marine  
32 Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS), the current data  
33 unit. The SSC made OFL and ABC recommendations in MRIP-FES units.

34  
35 Wenchman is often caught incidentally in the commercial  
36 butterfly/scad trawl fishery. Council staff highlighted the list  
37 of factors outlined in the National Standards Guidelines that  
38 should be considered when determining whether a species needs  
39 conservation and management.

40  
41 The committee noted that, although wenchman is a rare-event  
42 species, there are other rare-event species that are still  
43 federally managed. Council staff noted also that little life  
44 history information exists for wenchman and annual landings data  
45 are erratic and uncertain. Accordingly, there is little chance of  
46 a stock assessment being completed for this species in the future.

47  
48 Staff discussed the SSC meeting deliberations, and the

1 confidentiality issues surrounding landings data for wenchman in  
2 any given year must be averaged over a period of three to five  
3 years.

4  
5 Committee members remarked that it may be beneficial to consider  
6 removing wenchman from the complex, but retaining wenchman in the  
7 Reef Fish FMP as an ecosystem component. This would allow  
8 continued monitoring of the species, but would not require ACLs to  
9 be established.

10  
11 **The committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 1, to add an**  
12 **Alternative 3 to remove wenchman from the mid-water snapper complex**  
13 **but remain in the Reef Fish FMP.** That motion carried with one  
14 abstention. Mr. Chair.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We have a committee motion. Is there  
17 any discussion on the motion? Not seeing any, we'll go ahead and  
18 use the clickers.

19

<b>B.4.1 In Action 1, to add an Alternative 3 to remove Wenchman from the mid-water Snapper complex but remain in the Reef Fish FMP</b>				
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (16)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (0)</b>

20  
21  
22 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. **It appears that we have sixteen yes,**  
23 **zero no, zero abstentions, one absent.**

24  
25 **DR. FRAZER:** Regarding Action 2, a committee member suggested  
26 adding an alternative for a multiyear ACL. Council staff asked  
27 the committee what other information it needs to determine if  
28 wenchman needs conservation and management. While the amendment  
29 can be updated to reflect the council's motion, it is unlikely

1 that any more data will be available to examine. Consideration of  
2 the National Standards Guidelines criteria for determining  
3 ecosystem component classification will also require discussion.  
4

5 A committee member asked for staff to consider if there is room on  
6 the April 2024 council meeting agenda to discuss these criteria  
7 and, if not, to then bring an updated amendment to the June 2024  
8 council meeting, to allow more time for discussion.  
9

10 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ryan.

11  
12 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to remind  
13 the council, as it pertains to the midwater snapper action, that,  
14 as it relates to the current action, or Alternative 2, in Action  
15 1, that you guys do have that checklist of recommended  
16 considerations that we'll ultimately have to move through, and so,  
17 whether you decide to do that here, or you decide to do that the  
18 next time that this document is brought up, those would all be key  
19 things for you guys to be thinking about as part of building the  
20 record for that part of the discussion.  
21

22 **DR. FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Ryan, for that. All right.  
23 Review of 2023 Gulf Red Grouper and Gag Grouper Recreational  
24 Landings and Quota Closure, Tab B, Number 8, SERO staff reviewed  
25 the 2023 Gulf red grouper preliminary recreational landings, in  
26 particular those landings from Wave 4 (July and August). The MRIP-  
27 FES preliminary landings estimate for this wave in 2023 was  
28 considerably larger than the previous three waves of January  
29 through February, March through April, and May through June,  
30 combined.  
31

32 The proportional standard errors, or PSE, for the Wave 4 fleet-  
33 specific estimates (private vessels 48 percent and for-hire 37  
34 percent) are above 30 percent, but below 50 percent, indicating a  
35 need to exercise caution when using these estimates for management  
36 purposes.  
37

38 SERO stated that trends and outliers are evaluated and addressed  
39 as necessary before finalizing season duration projections. A  
40 committee member said that the 2023 red snapper season in Florida  
41 opened in June, and a large spike in effort was not observed in  
42 Wave 3 for red grouper.  
43

44 Another committee member asked if the effort distribution in prior  
45 years was comparable to 2023 and what proportion of the dead  
46 discards came from the open versus closed season. Dr. Richard  
47 Cody, from the NOAA Office of Science and Technology, replied that  
48 the NOAA Office of Science and Technology noticed a similar pattern

1 from prior fishing years, but could not comment on the proportion  
2 of dead discards by season at this time. SERO staff clarified  
3 that the positive intercepts for red grouper occurred almost  
4 entirely during the open fishing season.

5  
6 SERO and NOAA Office of Science and Technology are continuing to  
7 investigate these landings estimates, which are expected to be  
8 finalized in the spring of 2024. The landings will reflect any  
9 modifications based on those investigations. The accountability  
10 measure (AM) for red grouper does not presently have a payback  
11 provision, but does require management in the following fishing  
12 season to be set based on the annual catch target (ACT) in the  
13 event of an overage of the ACL in the previous year. SERO clarified  
14 that no decision about the 2024 season projection has yet been  
15 made.

16  
17 Of note, SEDAR 88, which will assess Gulf red grouper, will  
18 consider the State of Florida's State Reef Fish Survey, or SRFS,  
19 for private recreational vessel landings. Shore mode landings are  
20 not included in the red grouper stock assessment, due to a lack of  
21 data for that mode.

22  
23 A committee member advocated for and noted past instances where  
24 conversations with state fisheries staff have helped to resolve  
25 outliers or explain oddities in the landings data. SERO agreed,  
26 stating that SERO could do more to flag outliers and identify other  
27 abnormalities in landings data.

28  
29 Another committee member asked what NOAA Office of Science and  
30 Technology was doing to resolve puzzling trends in the data. Dr.  
31 Cody replied that getting the data sooner may help and that NOAA  
32 Office of Science and Technology is looking into working with the  
33 Gulf states to seek efficiencies in data provision. Dr. Cody added  
34 that the 2023 estimates would be finalized by NOAA Office of  
35 Science and Technology in April and that he does not expect them  
36 to change much.

37  
38 A committee member did not think NOAA Office of Science and  
39 Technology working more closely with the states was enough and  
40 thought that MRIP was broken. The committee member noted that the  
41 SRFS estimate, which has a lower PSE, was over one-million pounds  
42 less than the MRIP estimate and thought that the MRIP estimate was  
43 uninformative.

44  
45 Another committee member thought the overestimation issues were  
46 not related to the 2023 pilot study, which characterized  
47 telescoping bias and a possible overestimation of private and shore  
48 landings. The committee member thought the errors within MRIP

1 were more symptomatic of an error inherent to its effort  
2 extrapolation methods and would not be resolved with alternative  
3 question ordering in the Fishing Effort Survey (FES).  
4

5 Dr. Cody replied that NOAA Office of Science and Technology's  
6 continued work was necessary to improve MRIP-FES and said that all  
7 surveys could be improved in some way. A committee member said  
8 that stakeholders' livelihoods were at stake, based on these MRIP-  
9 FES estimates, and the continued issues with this survey were very  
10 concerning. Dr. Sweetman.

11  
12 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I figured this was a good  
13 time to bring up a motion along these lines here, and so, Bernie,  
14 if you could bring up the one that I sent you. Okay. Thank you.  
15 **The motion that I'm proposing here is to write a letter to NOAA's**  
16 **Office of Science and Technology escalating the review and**  
17 **evaluation of recreational effort extrapolation methodologies**  
18 **between MRIP-FES and state effort programs. These findings should**  
19 **be presented to the Gulf SSC and council.** I can discuss more if  
20 we get a second.

21  
22 **MR. DIAZ:** Second.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I heard a second by Mr. Diaz, and so any further  
25 discussion, Dr. Sweetman?  
26

27 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No, and, I mean, I think it was pretty well covered  
28 within the committee report here. However, the extrapolation  
29 methods -- These seem to be at the heart of some of these issues  
30 that we're dealing with here, and we've heard it consistently from  
31 various states, whether it's greater amberjack in Mississippi,  
32 whether it's now Gulf gag and red grouper here, during this  
33 situation, and so I feel like this is an important issue that we  
34 need to effectively navigate here, as we're trying to deal with  
35 some of these data discrepancies between the various surveys.  
36

37 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Diaz.

38  
39 **MR. DIAZ:** A couple of things. **Can I make one friendly suggestion?**  
40 **At the end, where it's -- At the last word, "council", that we put**  
41 **"ASAP"?** I hate to put a date certain, you know, because I can't  
42 control Science and Technology's schedule, but we've been talking  
43 with folks from Science and Technology for a long time about  
44 working with folks, on ways to smooth out outliers, and that falls  
45 right in with this, and I support the motion.  
46

47 While I have the mic, I want to say that I applaud the people at  
48 public testimony yesterday. I cannot remember a time, since I've

1 been on the council -- Very few times when we had that much  
2 recreational participation, and so maybe one or two other issues  
3 might have brought it up, but this is definitely one of the best  
4 participation that we've had, and we're hearing, loud and clear,  
5 that they don't trust MRIP, because they see some of the crazy  
6 numbers that gets determined by MRIP.

7  
8 This work here, in my mind, is very important, and not just because  
9 of gag and red grouper, and I brought up, a few meetings ago, and  
10 somebody from Mississippi brought up the amberjack stuff in  
11 Mississippi. I mean, we've got a couple of times where we're  
12 showing amberjack, for one wave, for two-hundred-and-fifty-  
13 thousand-plus pounds, and, in most years, we land less than 30,000  
14 pounds, and so, if we don't have a way to deal with these things,  
15 and we have to shove out fish that don't exist, and maybe have  
16 paybacks, and close seasons early, and a whole lot more unpleasant  
17 things, we just ought to be able to deal with them, and we can't  
18 now. Anyway, I applaud the public, and I hope they know that at  
19 least this council member hears them loud and clear.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** General Spraggins.

22  
23 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I very much appreciate the motion, and I do  
24 support it, but I want you to also understand that I hope that we  
25 look at all outliers, and not just one or two, because I know it's  
26 been brought up, time after time, about Mississippi and our  
27 outliers and red snapper and where it's at, and I realize the  
28 outliers that you're looking at now, but I want to make sure that,  
29 if we're going to go forward with this, we look at all of them,  
30 and not just one.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Sweetman.

33  
34 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, General. This would be -- That is my thought  
35 here, too.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I had two folks, and I had Mr. Strelcheck and Ms.  
38 Boggs.

39  
40 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So I guess I'm just seeking clarification from  
41 C.J., because I'm hearing a couple of different things, and so, to  
42 me, this issue of outliers may be related, but your motion reads  
43 more of kind of the comparative methodologies and why are there  
44 such stark differences. I mean, the outliers, and some of the  
45 statistical decisions we make with regard to then monitoring catch  
46 limits, is more in the purview of this council, working with our  
47 scientists, and so I just wanted to clarify.



1 **DR. SWEETMAN:** To that point, I agree with you, and I think that  
2 inherent in there, and I understand sample size constraints and  
3 relative to outliers, but inherent in that is the extrapolation  
4 procedures that are used in there, and so I would think that it  
5 would be all accommodating for basically everything on the table  
6 there, Andy.  
7  
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.  
9  
10 **MS. BOGGS:** My comment is not actually to this motion, and so I  
11 will be happy to save it.  
12  
13 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Walker.  
14  
15 **MR. WALKER:** I certainly support the motion, but, to me, this is  
16 just a minor look here at a far bigger problem than, you know,  
17 what this might fix, but I support it, but I have bigger issues  
18 with MRIP, myself.  
19  
20 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.  
21  
22 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, C.J., I know we've been working very well  
23 with Bev Sauls and Luiz Barbieri, and would it be worth narrowing  
24 the scope of this initially, to use like the recent examples with  
25 grouper, to investigate those effort estimates in greater detail?  
26 I mean, I understand the broader need to look at this across all  
27 our state programs, but I'm trying to think of what might be able  
28 to be provided sooner rather than later.  
29  
30 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I understand where you're coming from there, Andy,  
31 and I just want to say, and maybe, for the sake of timing, I can  
32 understand how gag and red would be one of the first things that  
33 we could look at there, but I would not want this to be restricted  
34 to just that, because there's other issues with the other states  
35 that we talked about there too, and so I want to be encompassing,  
36 but, if it's just a procedural way for what we talk about first,  
37 sure, but I want to make sure that everything is included.  
38  
39 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I would agree with Dr. Sweetman's comment, you  
40 know, because -- You know, the two species we've been talking about  
41 most this week are pretty much Florida-centric species, and the  
42 calculation of the estimates for particular waves, and how the  
43 methodology, and the process, got to that might be different for  
44 other states with other species that have been discussed here at  
45 Reef Fish, and briefly here during Full Council, and so I would -  
46 - I appreciate you staying with that.  
47  
48 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Also, I'm good with the friendly amendment from

1 Dale.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Dugas.

4  
5 **MR. DUGAS:** Just a question. Adding "as soon as possible", and  
6 would it be more feasible to add a sunset, like at the next council  
7 meeting, or the June meeting?

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Sweetman.

10  
11 **DR. SWEETMAN:** While I would like it to be before then, I'm not  
12 sure that's entirely feasible, considering we're going to need to  
13 interact with various state agencies and different staffs of both  
14 Science and Technology, FWC, and I don't necessarily want to be  
15 too prescriptive, as far as a date goes there, J.D., and that's my  
16 thought.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Donaldson.

19  
20 **MR. DONALDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will point out that the  
21 GulfFIN Regional -- The new GulfFIN Regional Implementation Plan  
22 was announced today, and one of the priorities in that plan is to  
23 streamline, or to develop, an inclusive and transparent process  
24 for reviewing recreational catch and effort data, and specifically  
25 how to handle outliers, and so that's something that is on the  
26 table. I know it's not specific to this, but it's something that  
27 is on everybody's radar, and we're working to improve that.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I haven't seen that timeline yet, Dave. Does it  
30 give an indication as to when it might occur, those meetings, or  
31 when a product would be developed?

32  
33 **MR. DONALDSON:** Yes, and it was actually the meeting that is  
34 scheduled for May 14 and 16, here in New Orleans, that Dr. Cody  
35 referred to.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Porch.

38  
39 **DR. PORCH:** Just to add to that, you know, you remember we've had  
40 this conversation about the red snapper IRA funds, and so, in  
41 tandem with the effort that Dave Donaldson just mentioned, we'll  
42 be funding a workshop that's going to look at alternative methods  
43 of estimating effort, and you might hear about that a little bit  
44 later, but that should happen -- Dave, I'm not sure exactly when  
45 that's scheduled, for February, or is that the one that's a little  
46 bit later, but it's happening pretty soon.

47  
48 The point being that I don't think we're going to get a full

1 resolution on this, because, at the end of the day, they're all  
2 surveys, and so we don't have a gold standard to say which one is  
3 right, et cetera, and this would be a way that at least parts of  
4 the domain get something that we hope is a gold standard, and we  
5 don't know exactly what we'll do, and it could be counting boats  
6 going through passes, or, in some cases, it could be satellite  
7 technology, and it could be a lot of different ways to do that,  
8 where we could actually count the vessels that are fishing and  
9 then compare it with the effort estimates that we get from various  
10 surveys. I think that's going to be a really important development  
11 for everybody to watch for.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I certainly don't want to communicate that the  
14 next iteration, or new methodology that's proposed, is going to be  
15 the silver bullet, you know, that makes everyone happy, so to  
16 speak, but at least it has to kind of produce a number that, you  
17 know, as far as what we have discussed previously, not only at  
18 council, but during some of the meetings that I've been involved  
19 with when we're talking about recreational data, it has to address  
20 the issues of accuracy and precision.

21  
22 Right now, we are -- We don't have a very accurate survey for the  
23 recreational data that we're using in our management, nor is it  
24 very precise, and so those are the challenges that we need to be  
25 looking at as we look at reviewing the current FES survey, as well  
26 as when we start thinking about a new replacement survey, or  
27 surveys, to do that.

28  
29 You know, there's two issues that I see here, that a lot of public  
30 comment were made yesterday relating to the FES survey, and that  
31 is the accuracy side of the house, and then, you know, the timing  
32 of how folks who are directly impacted -- How the council will be  
33 able to mitigate that within Magnuson-Stevens, but how quickly we  
34 can provide some sort of relief to them, and certainly getting  
35 better data will address that, but that won't address the  
36 timeliness of it, and so, anyway, I'm going a little bit off-  
37 tangent. Is there any other discussion on the motion? Mr.  
38 Strelcheck.

39  
40 **MR. STRELCHECK:** A friendly suggestion. The letter is directed at  
41 NOAA, and we're certainly happy to collaborate, and coordinate,  
42 but, because the states are going to be involved, and they provide  
43 the effort estimates, I would also recommend that we send the  
44 letter to the states.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Sweetman.

47  
48 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, I think that's fine. Obviously, it's going to

1 require coordination between the various states and S&T, and so,  
 2 Andy, were you talking about removing the Science and Technology  
 3 part of it or just adding in to write a letter to NOAA's Office of  
 4 Science and Technology and the state agencies?  
 5

6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** (Mr. Strelcheck's comment is not audible on the  
 7 recording.)  
 8

9 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so, Bernie, I think we're keeping in the  
 10 NOAA's Office of Science and Technology, and we're just adding  
 11 "and state agencies". I'm okay with that, if the seconder is as  
 12 well.  
 13

14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. I think that captures it. Dr.  
 15 Sweetman, and Mr. Diaz, the motion -- You're good with that? All  
 16 right. I got two thumbs-up. Okay. Any further discussion on the  
 17 motion? All right. Clickers out, please.  
 18

<b>B.8 To write a letter to NOAA's Office of Science &amp; Technology and the States escalating the review and evaluation of the recreational effort extrapolation methodologies ....</b>				
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (16)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (0)</b>

19  
 20  
 21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so we have sixteen yes, zero no,  
 22 zero abstentions, and one absent. The motion carries. Dr. Frazer.  
 23

24 **DR. FRAZER:** All right. SERO staff reviewed the 2023 Gulf gag  
 25 grouper recreational landings from Wave 5 (September and October).  
 26 This MRIP-FES landings estimate was considerably larger than  
 27 anticipated. SERO and NOAA Office of Science and Technology are  
 28 continuing to investigate the 2023 landings estimate, which is

1 expected to be finalized in the spring of 2024, including any  
2 modifications.

3  
4 Like red grouper, the PSE for the fleet-specific estimates for  
5 Wave 5 (private vessels at 42 percent and for-hire 33 percent) are  
6 above 30 percent, but below 50 percent, indicating a need to  
7 exercise caution when using these estimates for management  
8 purposes.

9  
10 The shore mode landings are not recommended for use, per NOAA OST.  
11 The shore PSE is 99 percent. The MRIP-FES estimate is seven-times  
12 higher than the comparable estimate from SRFS for private vessels  
13 in 2023. SERO noted that there are three private vessel dockside  
14 intercepts which are highly influential to the landings estimate  
15 that are being investigated.

16  
17 SERO added that final rulemaking for Amendment 56 to the Reef Fish  
18 FMP is underway, which would transition catch limits to SRFS data  
19 units and institute a payback, unless the best scientific  
20 information available suggests otherwise. SERO will evaluate the  
21 final estimates, ultimately converted to SRFS data units, to  
22 determine the subsequent recreational fishing season duration for  
23 2024. Lastly, SERO said that an overage would have occurred  
24 regardless of the data unit used to monitor landings.

25  
26 A committee member thought that more needed to be done to consider  
27 the state survey data. NOAA OST previously acknowledged that SRFS  
28 was more precise than MRIP-FES. Another committee member thought  
29 the issues with MRIP were justification for a for-hire sector-  
30 specific data collection program.

31  
32 A committee member said much weight is placed on dockside  
33 intercepts and provided an example of how unusual intercept data  
34 can affect the end estimate. The committee member agreed that  
35 more collaboration with the states was critical.

36  
37 Council staff asked for clarification about why an estimate for  
38 shore was published, if there was only one intercept, and asked  
39 Dr. Cody to clarify NOAA Office of Science and Technology's  
40 practices for minimum sample sizes. Dr. Cody acknowledged that  
41 NOAA Office of Science and Technology does not have control over  
42 minimum sample sizes and added that data are published, even if  
43 not supported by NOAA OST due to high PSEs, for transparency.

44  
45 A committee member said that, of the nineteen days for which the  
46 gag recreational season was open in October 2023, several were  
47 unfishable, due to inclement weather. Despite this, the landings  
48 estimated by MRIP-FES in October 2023 exceeded the annual

1 commercial gag landings for the last five years. Andy.

2  
3 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Tom. I just wanted to speak again to  
4 kind of next steps, and we talked about, with red grouper  
5 projections, bringing back something for the April meeting, and so  
6 that will be what we're going to strive for, in terms of talking  
7 about that, and then, with gag grouper, because we are shifting to  
8 SRFS, through implementation of Amendment 56, I had mentioned, and  
9 we're still exploring, being able to factor in the SRFS landings  
10 into the projections, determine how much influence that overage  
11 has, and what adjustment would be needed for the catch limit in  
12 2024 to account for that overage, which is different than just  
13 simply taking the landings, subtracting them from the catch limit,  
14 and saying there's potentially a zero catch limit.

15  
16 We're in the, I will say, early stages of exploring that, and that  
17 would have to be determined to be best scientific information  
18 available, consistent with our accountability measures, but we can  
19 also, hopefully, bring that information back to you by the April  
20 council meeting, and that's a little less urgent, because,  
21 obviously, the season wouldn't open until September 1, but we  
22 definitely want to work through that as well, and we'll coordinate  
23 with the State of Florida on that, since gag is obviously a major  
24 fishery off of Florida.

25  
26 **DR. FRAZER:** Thanks, Andy. Ryan, did you have a question? All  
27 right, and so we'll move on.

28  
29 Draft Options: Gag Grouper Management Measures, which is Tab B,  
30 Number 5, council staff reviewed a revised presentation of the  
31 effects of modifying the recreational daily bag limit for gag from  
32 two fish per person to one fish per person. Effects were described  
33 as the difference in the projected recreational fishing season  
34 duration between these two scenarios and were considerate of the  
35 council's stated goals for gag management during the rebuilding  
36 plan.

37  
38 A committee member did not think a 10 percent gain in fishing days  
39 was worth halving the recreational bag limit. Another committee  
40 member wanted to prioritize preserving the fishing season and  
41 questioned what other options might be available to further  
42 constrain harvest.

43  
44 A committee member thought that fishermen's behavior may likely  
45 change, with effort compression, if the fishing season is  
46 shortened. However, the committee member acknowledged the  
47 shortcomings in the precision and reliability of the data to  
48 analyze that effort compression.

1  
 2 A committee member thought it should be a priority to avoid  
 3 increasing discards for gag, as the council prioritized at its  
 4 August 2023 meeting. **The committee recommends, and I so move, to**  
 5 **stop work on Draft Options: Gag Grouper Management Measures.** That  
 6 motion carried twelve to two with three abstentions. Mr. Chair.

7  
 8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have a committee motion. Is there any  
 9 discussion on the motion? Seeing none, we'll go ahead and move to  
 10 a vote.  
 11

<b>B.5.15 To stop work on Draft Options: Gag Grouper Management Measures</b>				
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>			
Kevin	Anson			Abstain
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck		No	
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman			Abstain
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (13)</b>	<b>No (1)</b>	<b>Abstain (2)</b>

12  
 13  
 14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so we have thirteen yes, one no,  
 15 two abstentions, and one absent. The motion carries.  
 16

17 **DR. FRAZER:** A committee member asked when the council might see  
 18 a document considering spatial area closures for gag. Council  
 19 staff replied that considerable research would be needed prior to  
 20 presenting options to the council for modifications to spatial  
 21 area closures. Ms. Boggs.

22  
 23 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairs. I don't know if this is the  
 24 appropriate time to bring this up, but, while we're talking about  
 25 options, and just thinking outside of the box, and we've got so  
 26 many species that are in trouble, and I will put it that way, and  
 27 I understand the data is in question, and we've got gag grouper,  
 28 red grouper, amberjack, king mackerel, cobia, and, I mean, the  
 29 list goes on.

1  
2 I was wondering if we could explore, and I don't know how this  
3 would happen, and probably the Science Center, but if we had an  
4 incidental catch for some of these species. Instead of having  
5 seasons, if you're out red snapper fishing, and you catch a gag  
6 grouper, keep the darned thing, because what's killing us, it seems  
7 like, in all of this, is our discards, whether they survive,  
8 whether they're dead, and discards always seems to be an issue.

9  
10 Andy had challenged us, I think a year ago, to start thinking  
11 outside the box, and, I mean, I see, you know, spatial area  
12 closures and all of that, but you know, that's -- If you're looking  
13 at the charter-for-hire industry, if you have a six-pack boat, you  
14 can have two incidental -- I'm just throwing numbers out, and I'm  
15 not saying -- But I think we need to start looking at some of these  
16 issues and see if that helps some of our problem, and it's just a  
17 suggestion.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other comments? Mr. Strelcheck.

20  
21 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I agree with you, Susan, in terms of, you  
22 know, concepts, ideas, you're throwing out, and I think this is  
23 really going back to the intent of the recreational initiative,  
24 and standing up this workgroup, and them thinking through some  
25 innovative new strategies, and so, unfortunately, it just can't  
26 come fast enough, the way I'm looking at it, but I agree with you  
27 that we need to continue down that path.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Dr. Frazer.

30  
31 **DR. FRAZER:** All right. Final Action: Draft Abbreviated Framework  
32 Action: Modifications to Catch Limits for Gulf of Mexico Lane  
33 Snapper, Tab B, Number 6, staff reviewed the summary of public  
34 comment, draft codified text, and draft abbreviated framework  
35 action document. A committee member noted that the SSC did not  
36 express concern over the increase to the OFL and the ABC in Option  
37 2. **The committee recommends, and I so move, to make Option 2 the**  
38 **preferred.** That motion carried without opposition and with one  
39 abstention.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have a committee motion. Any discussion on  
42 the motion? All right. If you can get your clickers again,  
43 please.

44



<b>B.6.1 To make Option 2 the preferred</b>				
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (16)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (0)</b>

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so have sixteen yes, zero no, zero abstentions, and one absent.

**DR. FRAZER:** The committee recommends, and I so move, to recommend the council approve the Abbreviated Framework Action: Modifications to Catch Limits for Gulf of Mexico Lane Snapper 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. That motion carried without opposition.

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We have a committee motion. Any discussion on the motion? Okay. Let's go ahead and vote.

B.6.2 To recommend the Council approve the Draft Abbreviated Framework Action: Modifications to Catch Limits for Gulf of Mexico Lane Snapper .....				
First Name	Last Name			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (16)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (0)</b>

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so we have sixteen yes, zero no, zero abstention, and one absent. The motion carries. Dr. Frazer.

**DR. FRAZER:** Permit Requirements for Participation in Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ), Tab B, Number 7, Ms. Alisha Gray, from SERO, said two IFQ-focused amendments are currently in development in response to previous council motions. Reef Fish Amendment 59, the main focus of her presentation, will update the goals and objectives of the red snapper and grouper-tilefish IFQ programs and address requirements for obtaining an IFQ account and holding and obtaining IFQ shares and annual allocation. The second amendment (Reef Fish Amendment 60) will be discussed during the April 2024 council meeting.

Ms. Gray reviewed a draft purpose and need statement for Amendment 59. The committee recommended staff delete references to IFQ program reviews from the statement, because the reviews are now several years old.

Action 1 considers alternative requirements to obtain and maintain a shareholder account. Ms. Gray reviewed IFQ participation trends and noted that the most restrictive alternative would require a commercial reef fish permit to obtain and maintain an account. The committee discussed the addition of an alternative to Action 1.

1 The committee recommends, and I so move, in Action 1, to add an  
 2 Alternative 4. Alternative 4 is require a commercial reef fish  
 3 permit to maintain an account. That motion carried eleven to three  
 4 with three abstentions.

5  
 6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Okay. Again, it's a committee motion. Is there  
 7 any discussion on the motion? Seeing none, we'll go ahead and  
 8 vote.  
 9

B.7.2 In Action 1, to add Alternative 4: Require a commercial reef fish permit to maintain an account				
First Name	Last Name			
Kevin	Anson			Abstain
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (15)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (1)</b>

10  
 11  
 12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so we have fifteen yes, zero no,  
 13 one abstention, and one absent. The motion carries.  
 14

15 **DR. FRAZER:** Action 2 defines and evaluates active participation  
 16 within the IFQ programs, which could be based on landings, VMS  
 17 activity, and trip declarations and landings notifications.  
 18 Committee members discussed activity metrics presented and  
 19 indicated that IFQ species landings, rather than overall reef fish  
 20 landings, should be used to assess activity, because the interest  
 21 is in evaluating activity levels of IFQ participants.  
 22

23 The committee suggested staff exercise caution in using VMS pinging  
 24 activity after the demarcation line as a metric, because it may  
 25 unduly penalize those who fish closer to shore. The committee  
 26 recommended the removal of trip declarations from the amendment,  
 27 because they do not necessarily capture activity.  
 28

29 Actions 3 and 4 address requirements to hold and maintain IFQ  
 30 shares and annual allocation, respectively. Alternatives in

1 Action 3 range from status quo to requiring a permit and showing  
2 fishing activity to obtain and maintain IFQ shares. Action 4  
3 considers a similar range of requirements to obtain and maintain  
4 IFQ annual allocation.

5  
6 Ms. Gray noted that share requirements and allocation requirements  
7 do not have to be the same, and that a reef fish permit can be  
8 valid, expired but renewable, or terminated. Ms. Gray discussed  
9 divestment protocols and procedures, including divestment measures  
10 at implementation and post-implementation and time periods to  
11 consider to account for adjustments to the permit and activity  
12 requirements.

13  
14 Ms. Gray provided a timeline for the development of Reef Fish  
15 Amendments 59 and 60, indicating that Amendment 60 will be  
16 discussed in April 2024, while Amendment 59 will come back before  
17 the council in June 2024.

18  
19 The committee inquired about the potential impacts of permit  
20 requirements on dealers. Committee members noted that the updated  
21 goals and objectives of the IFQ programs intend to give control of  
22 the shares and allocation to those who actively fish. Staff noted  
23 that dealer permits are open-access permits. The committee  
24 recognized that the purpose and need statement should be amended,  
25 if flexibility for dealers is included.

26  
27 The committee asked whether exemptions to permit and activity  
28 requirements could be considered. Staff replied that, rather than  
29 exemptions, the alternatives presented afford the council the  
30 flexibility to select a suite of alternatives consistent with its  
31 vision for the IFQ programs. Committee members recommended staff  
32 fully consider the role of dealers in the IFQ programs while  
33 developing the amendment.

34  
35 The committee inquired about the potential impacts of permit status  
36 on divestment measures. Staff indicated that additional options  
37 based on permit status will be developed.

38  
39 Committee members discussed the federal finance program and  
40 thought further discussion to ascertain whether there are  
41 opportunities to support fishermen is warranted. Staff noted that,  
42 while some consolidation would be expected under permit and  
43 activity requirements on related accounts, a better understanding  
44 will be gained as the amendment progresses.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

47  
48 **MS. BOGGS:** I know the answer, but I'm going to ask it, so that

1 people who don't may understand, and will we see this again at our  
2 April meeting for discussion, because I know we'll see Amendment  
3 60 as well.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Simmons.

6  
7 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, at the  
8 end of the meeting, staff has put together a little PowerPoint  
9 slide for us to think about what we're planning to bring back for  
10 regulatory actions to the April council meeting, if we could just  
11 hold that until then.

12  
13 **MS. BOGGS:** Yes, ma'am, and I realize that, but, for those that  
14 didn't, I wanted them to know that there would be further  
15 discussion, and so thank you.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Frazer.

18  
19 **DR. FRAZER:** Okay. Under Other Business, Gulf of Mexico SEDAR  
20 Schedule, a committee member sought clarification about the SEDAR  
21 schedule, based on the results of the SEDAR 74 research track for  
22 Gulf of Mexico red snapper. Staff noted a SEDAR Steering Committee  
23 meeting is scheduled for March 2024 in Charleston, South Carolina,  
24 and that the SEDAR Committee will be convened in April 2024.

25  
26 The Southeast Fisheries Science Center added that the type and  
27 timing of the next red snapper stock assessment needed to be  
28 negotiated between the council and the Southeast Fisheries Science  
29 Center at the SEDAR Steering Committee meeting. Council staff  
30 replied that it is the current intent to request a benchmark  
31 assessment, which will produce actionable management advice upon  
32 passing an independent peer review. Council staff also clarified  
33 that the Gulf SEDAR schedule would be updated for the April 2024  
34 council meeting.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.

37  
38 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I would like to have just a brief discussion of  
39 this. I wasn't aware that the SEDAR Steering Committee was going  
40 to meet before our next meeting in April, and so, in light of that,  
41 and in consultation with the Southeast Fisheries Science Center,  
42 I've put together a motion that I sent to staff earlier, and they  
43 should have it. It's fairly robust.

44  
45 **I can read it, while they're pulling it up, just to clarify it**  
46 **here, and so the motion is to request that the Southeast Fisheries**  
47 **Science Center work with the Gulf Council staff to outline a**  
48 **proposed action plan for revising aspects of the SEDAR process and**

1 planning to be presented at the spring SEDAR Steering Committee  
2 meeting, to include consideration of state surveys becoming fully-  
3 integrated replacements for FES, consideration of conducting  
4 assessments of some stocks outside of SEDAR, and the potential for  
5 utilization of interim assessments for some species towards  
6 implementation of more responsive approaches.

7  
8 I think this is -- Obviously, I'm open to some feedback on this,  
9 and it's fairly lengthy, but I couldn't figure out a more  
10 consolidated way of combining these, because I don't think we could  
11 look at them separately, and I think we need some sort of direction  
12 for the Steering Committee meeting to possibly evaluate some of  
13 these things, and then we could get a report from them back at our  
14 April meeting and the SEDAR Committee.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We can have lots of discussion, but we'll get a  
17 second for that. Mr. Broussard seconds. Any discussion, further  
18 discussion, on the motion? Mr. Rindone.

19  
20 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am looking there towards  
21 the end, Chris, about the potential for utilization of interim  
22 assessments, and mostly because -- Like the interim analysis, or  
23 interim assessment, and we've kind of used that interchangeably in  
24 the past, actually refers to a specific approach that's used, and  
25 there might be other approaches that we could use for different  
26 species, depending on the data available, and it might be something  
27 that uses say a couple of indices or -- You know, or what have  
28 you, and so not like a strict interim analysis, but also not a  
29 fully blown, you know, age-structured stock assessment either, and  
30 so I'm just putting that out there for you to think about a little  
31 bit, you know, maybe changing what we're calling -- What's said  
32 there from "interim assessments" to "appropriate analyses", or  
33 something like that, or "data-appropriate analyses", but just to  
34 give us a little more flexibility.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.

37  
38 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** To that point, I'm open to suggestions, and I was  
39 trying to think of the correct phrasing for simplified assessments,  
40 or expedited assessments, and I know that interim assessments  
41 generally are, and so that's why I stuck it in there, but, if  
42 you've got better verbiage, I'm open to suggestion.

43  
44 **MR. RINDONE:** I think it would be my recommendation to say "data-  
45 appropriate analyses", and so I'm kind of looking at Dr. Porch, to  
46 see if that makes him itchy.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Porch.

1  
2 **DR. PORCH:** I get the intent here, and interim assessments, or  
3 interim analyses, as we typically use them, mean a very simple  
4 approach, usually linked to an index of abundance, you know, the  
5 best information that we have, and so you might want to preserve  
6 that sentiment, and it's not just doing simplified assessments in  
7 between assessments, and we may want to include some interim  
8 approaches, and so I wouldn't object to putting the potential for  
9 utilizing simpler assessment methods and interim analyses or  
10 something, and I don't know how specific we have to get here,  
11 because the motion is just asking us to request -- It's requesting  
12 the Southeast Center work with Gulf Council staff to outline a  
13 proposed action plan, and so I don't know if we have to sort  
14 through all the specific details.

15  
16 I will say that I support the sentiment, because SEDAR itself was  
17 never intended to be used for every single stock assessment, and  
18 it's intentionally a very slow and transparent process, and,  
19 consequently, it involves many, many partners, and so,  
20 consequently, when you run assessments through it, it's a very  
21 slow process, and that doesn't always suit our needs, and sometimes  
22 having just a consistent process, that you can implement quickly,  
23 may be the better route, and so I like the sentiment of the motion.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Simmons.

26  
27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a question  
28 regarding the item, where it says "consideration of state surveys  
29 becoming fully-integrated replacements for Fishing Effort Survey",  
30 and so, right now, kind of the way we're handling it is, as we get  
31 a new assessment, and we go through terms of reference with our  
32 SSC, and we talk about, you know, if the data is available, and  
33 it's gone through a certification process, if it's needed, and how  
34 it could be integrated into the stock assessment, and so I believe,  
35 in February, when we're talking about the review for red snapper,  
36 we're going to start thinking about how we're going to do this for  
37 red snapper in the benchmark assessment.

38  
39 I think it's okay to leave in here, but it is kind of a beast in  
40 itself, and I don't know that the Steering Committee is really the  
41 right folks to be working through that, and so maybe we could think  
42 about it with different staff, and a different process for each  
43 species, and I'm just not sure it's -- Maybe it should be a separate  
44 effort, is what I'm trying to ask, and I don't know, and maybe  
45 Andy and Clay have a better idea about that.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Porch.

48

1 **DR. PORCH:** I guess I was hinging on the word "consideration", you  
2 know, but actually coming up with a way to do it is a whole  
3 different beast, and, in the case of the upcoming red snapper  
4 assessment, we already have had experts say, at this point, it's  
5 not practical, and maybe impossible, because you have all these  
6 different currencies, and we've got to deal with all the different  
7 calibrations, and some of them don't get discards, and so you rely  
8 on FES anyway for the discards, and so I don't know that that would  
9 happen for the red snapper assessment, and remember that  
10 consistency is key, but coming up with a plan, consistent with the  
11 Gulf States' plan that Dave Donaldson just mentioned, I think is  
12 really important.

13  
14 I also have a little bit of a concern if we set up several different  
15 groups working on the same kind of thing, and so I would recommend  
16 that, if we move forward with consideration of state surveys  
17 becoming fully-integrated replacements for FES -- That's part of  
18 the broader vision for the Gulf States transition plan, and I think  
19 that's the appropriate place where that could be considered.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.

22  
23 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** To that point, my thought process here, and maybe  
24 -- You know, we're going to have a pilot study taking place here,  
25 with Alabama and Mississippi, using the similar effort survey to  
26 Louisiana, and so, at the endpoint of that, we'll have three states  
27 under the same effort survey system, and so maybe, in that portion  
28 of the motion, we say "consideration of state effort surveys  
29 becoming fully-integrated replacements for FES", to specify just  
30 the effort component of the state surveys, and not the dockside  
31 part, and would that fix part of the problem here?

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Porch.

34  
35 **DR. PORCH:** Again, I guess it just depends on what you mean by  
36 "consideration". You know, take it in the broader sense, and,  
37 yes, we should totally consider that, and that, again, would be  
38 part of this broader Gulf program that we're talking about, and I  
39 don't -- Obviously, that hasn't even happened yet, and so it's not  
40 going to happen tomorrow, but it just depends on where you see  
41 that plugging in. I think there's a broad effort to reimagine the  
42 whole recreational fishing data collection program, and, to me,  
43 this is part of that.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.

46  
47 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Right, and so that's why, at the beginning, it's to  
48 outline a proposed action plan for revising aspects of the SEDAR



1 process, and so those are -- This should really be more like bullet  
2 points below that, I guess, in a way, but I didn't know how to  
3 phrase it in the motion, but the overall action here is to get  
4 that plan from you all, with the council staff, to the Steering  
5 Committee for -- Was it the February or March meeting? All right,  
6 and then report could come back to us in April for a SEDAR  
7 Committee. Then those would be the bullet points for  
8 consideration.

9  
10 They could -- You know, they could come back with a report that  
11 says, okay, here is our thought process on integrating state effort  
12 surveys as replacements, and then that would just be an agenda  
13 item for us to look at at that point, but we're going to need to  
14 start somewhere to fix this process, and so that's my  
15 consideration.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Geeslin.

18  
19 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. A couple of thoughts, and I  
20 really appreciate and can value the spirit of this motion, Chris.  
21 It's well thought out. While we're in kind of the context of re-  
22 envisioning, and reconsideration, I wonder, just given the stock,  
23 or the status of this stock assessment, which I will categorize as  
24 the wheels have fallen off, is this a place where we could, you  
25 know, direct, or reconsider, incorporating the Great Red Snapper  
26 Count?

27  
28 You know, we've heard a lot, at the SEDAR level, about why we can't  
29 use this, and we can't incorporate it into the model, and maybe a  
30 little different spin on that, and how we can incorporate it into  
31 the stock assessment, would a more appropriate approach at this  
32 given time, just given where we are with this stock assessment,  
33 and so I would love to see an incorporation of the Great Red  
34 Snapper Count into this motion, and into the stock assessment  
35 process, and really embracing that how do we incorporate that,  
36 rather than, you know, we can't, we can't, we can't.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Gill.

39  
40 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. **My reaction to the motion,**  
41 **Chris, is I appreciate you bringing it forward, but exactly the**  
42 **same as Ryan's, and so I would like to propose a friendly change**  
43 **to incorporate that, and, instead of "utilization of interim**  
44 **assessments", "utilization of other methods, such as interim**  
45 **assessments".**

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I've got a thumbs-up from Mr. --  
48

1 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I'm good with that, if Mr. Broussard is good with  
2 it.  
3  
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Broussard, are you -- Both have thumbs-up,  
5 and so, Dr. Simmons.  
6  
7 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so it gets  
8 back to Mr. Geeslin's question, and so, for the red snapper count,  
9 I believe the SSC is going to talk about this, what the reviewer  
10 said, and what our next steps are going to be, as far as how --  
11 What we need to do to try to consider it in the next assessment,  
12 benchmark assessment, process, and so I think maybe that would be  
13 a separate motion, since it's so specific for red snapper, if you  
14 want to make that clear for us for the SSC meeting, is what I'm  
15 thinking right now.  
16  
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other discussion? General Spraggins.  
18  
19 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I definitely support the motion, and,  
20 obviously, you know, when Amendment 50 was written, you know, the  
21 state data was what we was looking at, and what is the state data,  
22 and we've had now a good five years of state data, and so I agree  
23 with what you're saying. You know, state data needs to be looked  
24 at, and we need to look at that, as compared to FES, because the  
25 state data is more accurate, for the state, than anything out  
26 there, and I think that ought to be looked at very hard and make  
27 sure that they don't just -- You know, it's hard to make a change,  
28 but I think it's time.  
29  
30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.  
31  
32 **MS. BOGGS:** I will support the motion, only because it says  
33 "consideration of", because what concerns me about the state  
34 surveys is they're not consistent, and you will be using some for  
35 some SEDAR assessments, and some for not, because, as you just  
36 mentioned, Chris, Alabama and Mississippi, even though they're  
37 going to be piloting, they don't currently collect all the data  
38 that Louisiana does, all the data that Florida or Texas does, and  
39 that's what concerns me, but, the fact that the word  
40 "consideration" is there, I will support the motion.  
41  
42 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.  
43  
44 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** To that point, thank you, Ms. Susan, and I  
45 appreciate that, and, yes, it's -- So I guess the thought process,  
46 in my head, is a timeline, because the pilot study for the FES  
47 evaluation will be finished about the same time the pilot study  
48 for the state effort surveys in Mississippi and Alabama will be

1 finished, and so those two will make it to the finish line at the  
2 same time, and then we'll have a good idea of where we are with  
3 those.

4  
5 You will have three states running the same effort survey in the  
6 Gulf, out of five, and SRFS is fairly similar to the way it works,  
7 as we've seen by the implementation of it into the gag assessment  
8 already, and so I think that we can get to that timeline, and then  
9 make critical decisions once those two things are done, but to get  
10 this process started on the frontend, and we know how long it takes  
11 to do things here, right, and that's my thought, is to match those  
12 up at the end.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so we have a motion on the board.  
15 There was a change made, and so I will read the entire motion,  
16 quickly. **To request that the Southeast Fisheries Science Center**  
17 **work with the Gulf Council staff to outline a proposed action plan**  
18 **for revising aspects of the SEDAR process and planning to be**  
19 **presented at the spring SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, to**  
20 **include consideration of state surveys becoming fully-integrated**  
21 **replacements for FES (Fishing Effort Survey), consideration of**  
22 **conducting assessments of some stocks outside of SEDAR, and the**  
23 **potential for utilization of other methods, such as interim**  
24 **assessments, for some species towards implementation of more**  
25 **responsive approaches. Mr. Gill.**

26  
27 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can I suggest that we put a  
28 common after "interim assessments", so that it's not misread?  
29 Thank you.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Okay, and so we'll go ahead and vote  
32 on this then.

33

B.9.1 To request the SEFSC work with Gulf Council staff to outline a proposed action plan for revising aspects of the SEDAR process and planning to be presented ...				
First Name	Last Name			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (16)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (0)</b>

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so we have sixteen in favor of the motion, zero no, zero abstentions, and one absent. Hold on a second. Ms. Boggs.

**MS. BOGGS:** While we're on SEDAR, why is gray triggerfish taking so long? Can someone please tell me?

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Porch or Ryan? Dr. Porch? No? Ryan.

**MR. RINDONE:** Well, upon deep and further reflection, Carrie decided it was not in fact her favorite fish anymore. I mean, we have a very dynamic schedule that we've been contending with, and, with the time loads from some of these efforts, like SEDAR 74, and our representatives on the SEDAR Steering Committee have kept it on there, and I think the version that you guys had sent around to you was a June version, which I am trying to very quickly pull up, but we do have it as a -- It originally was on the schedule as an operational assessment, but some preliminary conversations that we've had with the Science Center, and given the pivot with some of the approaches, we've talked about doing that more as like a benchmark assessment, one due to what happened with the last assessment, and two due to the amount of time it's been since we've done anything meaningful with it.

It would just give a better opportunity for data evaluation, and, because of what happened with SEDAR 62, it really would be appropriate to have, you know, a benchmark-style approach applied here, and that would allow us to have a good framework upon which

1 to move forward with, you know, perhaps a simpler updating approach  
2 in the future.

3  
4 Right now, the stock is still using CHTS data units, and so that  
5 would have to be turned over, and then an evaluation of, you know,  
6 like the GFISHER video survey would be something else that would  
7 be key to that, and the last assessments used more of a piecemeal  
8 approach to the video data, and the GFISHER is a considerable  
9 advancement from that.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Porch.

12  
13 **DR. PORCH:** I would just add that there's been considerable work  
14 on ageing these animals, and it turns out that we needed to revise  
15 that approach, and, also, you know, we're revisiting our bycatch  
16 estimates, because bycatch estimates were -- Shrimp bycatch were  
17 driving a lot of it, and we wanted to understand those better, and  
18 so we've been totally reevaluating our entire observer program and  
19 how we're collecting samples and how we're extrapolating up and  
20 all of that, and so all of that is part of the delay, but just in  
21 an effort to make sure we give the best data possible.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Simmons.

24  
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so it is  
26 still my favorite fish, but don't forget the council is funding  
27 exactly what Dr. Porch was telling you about with the spines and  
28 the otolith issue with ageing, and so we are expecting to get  
29 results of that here soon, so it can be integrated into the stock  
30 assessment, in Dr. Patterson's lab.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

33  
34 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I only ask because I was at the 2019 SEDAR  
35 meeting when the wheels fell off of this, and that's going to be  
36 five years this May, and it just -- Now we're another -- 2025, I  
37 believe, the end of 2025, is when I see it back on the schedule,  
38 and so I'm just curious, and it better be good, and that's all I  
39 can say.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Dugas.

42  
43 **MR. DUGAS:** Well, while we're on SEDAR, I have some of the same  
44 questions, or concerns, maybe, for Ryan, and is there any movement  
45 on amberjack?

46  
47 **MR. RINDONE:** So we currently have amberjack also listed as a  
48 benchmark on the June version of the schedule, and beginning in

1 2026, using data through 2024, and amberjack is in a similar  
2 situation as gray triggerfish, with respect to improvements in  
3 looking at ages and then the ability to also consider the GFISHER  
4 data, as opposed to the piecemeal version of the video data that  
5 we've used in the past, and it may come to pass that using the  
6 video data is something that we can use as part of a simpler  
7 approach to being able to assess amberjack more frequently in the  
8 future, and so we've had some positive conversations with the  
9 Science Center about using that approach. Right now though,  
10 starting in 2026 for amberjack.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.

13  
14 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So is it appropriate to make a request, or maybe it  
15 needs a motion, but can we make a request to have, I guess, Sean  
16 Powers, or whomever, come give an update on the Great Amberjack  
17 Count at the next council meeting? Is that something we can do,  
18 or do you need a motion for that?

19  
20 **MR. RINDONE:** We had an update from Dr. Powers at an SSC meeting,  
21 a few meetings back, and I can try and find exactly -- I don't  
22 remember, off the top of my head, which one it was, but it is  
23 included the SSC summaries, but I can send that around to you guys,  
24 but, if you want him to come and give an update, either to the SSC  
25 and/or the council, we can certainly ask him to do that.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ryan, isn't that supposed to wrap -- Isn't he  
28 supposed to provide the final report like at the end of the summer  
29 or something?

30  
31 **MR. RINDONE:** Something like that. It's close to getting the  
32 bowtie on it.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

35  
36 **MS. BOGGS:** I was just going to say that April will be in Orange  
37 Beach, or Gulf Shores, and it won't be a long travel for him.

38  
39 **MR. RINDONE:** Surprise, Dr. Powers.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Any other points regarding SEDAR,  
42 before we wrap up the Reef Fish report? I don't see any. Dr.  
43 Frazer.

44  
45 **DR. FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Update the Ad Hoc  
46 Red Snapper/Grouper-Tilefish IFQ Advisory Panel (AP) Charge,  
47 council staff reviewed the current charge for the Ad Hoc Red  
48 Snapper/Grouper-Tilefish IFQ AP and an alternative charge that

1 better aligns with the current expectations of the AP.

2  
3 **The committee recommends, and I so move, to accept the proposed**  
4 **changes to the charge for the Ad Hoc Red Snapper/Grouper-Tilefish**  
5 **IFQ AP. The revised charge is to evaluate and make recommendations**  
6 **relative to requirements for participation in the red snapper and**  
7 **grouper-tilefish individual fishing quota (IFQ) programs**  
8 **considered in Reef Fish Amendment 59 and to modifications to IFQ**  
9 **shares and annual allocation distribution approaches proposed in**  
10 **Reef Fish Amendment 60. That motion carried without opposition**  
11 **and with two abstentions.**

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so we have a committee motion.  
14 Any discussion? Ms. Boggs.

15  
16 **MS. BOGGS:** So I don't know what order we need to do this in, and  
17 I suppose we can vote on this motion, but I'm going to go ahead  
18 and let you know that I'm going to recommend that we repopulate,  
19 because, if this passes, we're totally changing the charge.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Sounds like a plan, yes, and so, relative to the  
22 motion on the board, regarding the charge, is there any discussion  
23 on the motion? All right. We will need to do this by clicker.

<b>B.9a.1 To accept the proposed changes to the charge of the Ad Hoc Red Snapper/Grouper-Tilefish IFQ AP....</b>				
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (16)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (0)</b>

25  
26  
27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so we have sixteen yes, zero no,  
28 zero abstentions, one absent. The motion carries.

1  
2 **DR. FRAZER:** Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.  
3  
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you for that. Ms. Boggs.  
5  
6 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I didn't know if I needed to do it now or then  
7 or -- **I'm really not prepared, but I would like to make a motion**  
8 **that we advertise to repopulate the Ad Hoc Red Snapper/Grouper-**  
9 **Tilefish IFQ Advisory Panel.**  
10  
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so we'll have staff get that motion  
12 on the board. All right, Ms. Boggs. Is that your motion?  
13  
14 **MS. BOGGS:** That's the intent. I'm not exactly sure if that's how  
15 it should be worded, or if we just need to say to advertise. It's  
16 good. Okay. Thank you.  
17  
18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and do we have a second? It's seconded  
19 by Mr. Diaz. Any discussion on the motion? Mr. Diaz.  
20  
21 **MR. DIAZ:** So we had a short discussion about this in Admin/Budget,  
22 and our staff did get me some information on absences, and so they  
23 met three times. The first two meetings, there was really good  
24 attendance. The third meeting, about a third of the committee, or  
25 exactly a third of the committee, was absent, but, between the --  
26 This is at the last meeting, which was a virtual meeting, and the  
27 fact that it's been so long since we're reviewed this panel, and  
28 that's my reasons for supporting the motion. Thank you.  
29  
30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Walker.  
31  
32 **MR. WALKER:** I agree with Dale. It's been a long time, and there's  
33 nothing wrong with it, and, if you really want the same people,  
34 you can put them back on, and so a fresh look is a good thing, in  
35 my view.  
36  
37 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Those same people will have to reapply though,  
38 and so yes. All right. No further discussion? Ms. Boggs.  
39  
40 **MS. BOGGS:** So my question is, and I guess this will follow the  
41 same timeline as all the others that we'll be advertising for and  
42 populating, looking at it in April, and then voting on, or  
43 confirming, in June?  
44  
45 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I will look at staff. Dr. Froeschke.  
46  
47 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** That's what I anticipate.  
48



1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Great. All right, and so we'll go  
 2 ahead and use our clickers one more time.  
 3

<b>B.9a.2 To re-advertise to repopulate the Ad-Hoc Red Snapper/ Grouper Tilefish IFQ AP</b>				
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (16)</b>	<b>No (0)</b>	<b>Abstain (0)</b>

4  
 5  
 6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have sixteen yes, zero no, zero abstentions,  
 7 and one absent. The motion carries. Any other discussions, or  
 8 topics, for Reef Fish? I am not seeing any, and we are well ahead  
 9 of schedule, but we may need a bathroom break, and so let's take  
 10 a short bathroom break, for let's say ten minutes, and we will be  
 11 back here at 12:30 to wrap up the meeting.

12  
 13 (Whereupon, a short recess was taken.)

14  
 15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, folks. Council members, if you can  
 16 make your way back to the table. Okay. We're going to reconvene.  
 17 Before we move on to the next agenda item, which will be the Gulf  
 18 States Marine Fisheries Commission liaison report, I had another  
 19 comment from Mr. Geeslin.

20  
 21 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I didn't know exactly where  
 22 to bring up this motion, whether it was more appropriate in the  
 23 SEDAR or at the conclusion of the Reef Fish Committee, and so I  
 24 will bring it up now, and, Bernie, if you will please bring up the  
 25 motion that I crafted, and I will read it into the record.

26  
 27 Okay. **The motion reads as such: To direct the SSC to include**

1 consideration of the Great Red Snapper Count in the terms of  
2 reference for the planned benchmark assessment of Gulf red snapper.  
3 Consideration should be sensitive to the concerns expressed by the  
4 peer review team during the SEDAR 74 review workshop.  
5

6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We have a motion on the board. Is  
7 there a second for the motion? It's seconded by Dr. Banks. Any  
8 further discussion on the motion? Mr. Gill.  
9

10 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so I would like to hear a  
11 little bit from staff, and I thought the indication was that the  
12 SSC is going to discuss this at the next meeting, and whether this  
13 is different than what is already planned.  
14

15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Rindone.  
16

17 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So they're going to talk about  
18 the SEDAR 74 review, which will include comments from the reviewers  
19 about, you know, this is what you did, this is what we liked and  
20 didn't like, and then the Science Center is going to have, you  
21 know, basically what we intend to do next, or like what we would  
22 envision doing next, like to the extent to which they have an  
23 agreed-upon approach to whatever problem needed solving.  
24

25 With respect to the Great Red Snapper Count, there were several  
26 things that the reviewers had talked about, and so those will be  
27 discussed at the SSC meeting. I think the SSC would have talked  
28 about this anyway, and one of the issues outstanding though, both  
29 directly from members of like the co-PIs from the team and from  
30 conversations between them and the Science Center, is that a lot  
31 of these co-PIs have moved on to other projects, and constantly  
32 coming back to this project is not something they necessarily have  
33 budgeted time or resources for, and so one of my concerns would be  
34 trying to -- That there are some things that would require the  
35 people that initially handled the data to be involved, and I don't  
36 know the degree to which we can coax, or coerce, that, and we  
37 certainly can't require it, because we don't manage those people.  
38

39 A couple of the co-PIs, like Dr. Sean Powers and Dr. Will  
40 Patterson, are active participants in our SSC process, and they  
41 have not held back as far as like continuing to provide information  
42 about what they've been responsible for, and so, as far as the  
43 rest of it is concerned, we would just have to try to work with  
44 those other co-PIs to gauge the degree to which they could be  
45 involved and help out with some of the outstanding concerns from  
46 our review workshop.  
47

48 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other discussion on the motion? We'll go

1 ahead and vote on this then.  
2

<b>B.9.2 To direct the SSC to include consideration of the Great Red Snapper Count in the terms of reference for the planned benchmark assessment of Gulf red snapper...</b>				
<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>			
Kevin	Anson	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas	Yes		
Anthony	Overton			
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill		No	
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
<b>Result - Passed</b>	<b>Subtotals</b>	<b>Yes (15)</b>	<b>No (1)</b>	<b>Abstain (0)</b>

3  
4  
5 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have fifteen yes, one no, seven abstentions,  
6 and one absent. That will take us then to the Gulf States Marine  
7 Fisheries Commission liaison report and Mr. Donaldson.

8  
9 **GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION**

10  
11 **MR. DONALDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Historically, I have a given  
12 a verbal report about the activities of the commission, but I'm  
13 not sure how effective that's been, because there's been several  
14 things that I've reported that people haven't heard, and so I have  
15 threatened to do an interpretive dance, but I don't want to -- No  
16 one really wants to see that, and so I'm going to try a PowerPoint  
17 instead.

18  
19 We've got several activities going on, and one is the IRA funding  
20 activities through the commission. The overarching goal on that  
21 is to kind of revitalize the state-federal cooperative programs,  
22 and then the specific goals are to improve quality and timeliness  
23 of recreational fishery-dependent data, for assisting management  
24 of red snapper, and also other species, and there is five  
25 activities under that, like improving the state and commission  
26 data management systems, improving better quality control,

1 establishing the commission as the central warehouse for the  
2 region's fishery-dependent data, and then evaluating ways to  
3 validate recreational fishing effort and improve recreational  
4 discards.

5  
6 For this year, we're focusing on the data management system  
7 improvements, and we're developing recreational fisheries  
8 standards, through a workshop that we're currently setting up, and  
9 then we're also evaluating the data management systems, both at  
10 the commission and the states, and we're going to focus on  
11 improving the data management system at the commission, and then  
12 the other two are two workshops that we've alluded to throughout  
13 our discussions this week, but first is the effort validation  
14 planning workshop and then the recreational discards workshop.

15  
16 Where we are with those workshops is we've created a steering  
17 committee to develop the terms of reference, and Gregg Bray, Ken  
18 Brennan, Richard Cody, Bev Sauls, Trevor Moncrief, and Nicole Smith  
19 are on that, and we've also reached out to the council, to see if  
20 Lisa, or someone on the staff, would like to participate, but these  
21 workshops are going to look at effort validation, as well as  
22 discards, and help answer questions related to those and ID  
23 additional research and work that needs to get done. We're  
24 shooting for later -- Probably late spring or early summer to  
25 convene those workshops.

26  
27 For the out years, we're going to be focusing on improving the  
28 data management systems for the states, and we will -- We will be  
29 contracting with IT specialists and programmers, and then also  
30 make money available to the states for hardware, network  
31 communication improvement, things along those lines, and be  
32 working with each of the individual states. The total award to  
33 the commission is \$6.6 million.

34  
35 Another activity that we're involved in, and Mr. Schieble mentioned  
36 it earlier today, is we are conducting a recreational fishing  
37 effort pilot. It's a one-year pilot, and we're testing the LA  
38 Creel effort survey in Mississippi and Alabama. It's weekly  
39 telephone calls to anglers, licensed anglers, and we began this in  
40 January, earlier this -- Well, actually last month now, on January  
41 9, and it presents a unique opportunity to examine the difference  
42 between the state and federal recreational surveys, and the Gulf  
43 states, NOAA, and the commission staff will be working  
44 cooperatively on the analysis, and hopefully that analysis will be  
45 given later this summer, or early fall, and so hopefully, by maybe  
46 the November meeting, I'll be able to provide some updates on that.

47  
48 Also, the recreational survey programs meeting, and Richard Cody

1 mentioned this during his discussion, and it's scheduled for May  
2 14 and 16 here in New Orleans, and it's going to include both state  
3 and federal recreational data program managers, and we're looking  
4 to restore the process of reviewing recreational survey programs  
5 and estimates, and then the main focus for this first meeting is  
6 to establish a new process for developing, or reviewing, these  
7 estimates, and we'll be developing this process for future years,  
8 and we plan on meeting in-person annually.

9  
10 The last thing. that that I don't have a slide for, but I did  
11 mention, was that the Gulf Regional Implementation Plan was  
12 announced. It was released today, and I believe that everybody -  
13 - Most people have received the email from Evan Howell, up in S&T,  
14 and there's a variety of different things in there, but there's  
15 six priorities that we're going to be focusing on.

16  
17 It's improving the timeliness of recreational catch and effort  
18 estimates, improving recreational fisheries discard data,  
19 sustaining biological sampling, biological data collection, and to  
20 evaluate the age and sex of managed stocks, streamlining and  
21 improving the for-hire data collection methods, and, as I mentioned  
22 earlier today, developing an inclusive and transparent process for  
23 reviewing recreational catch and effort and how to handle outliers.

24  
25 Then looking at additional methods for evaluating spatial data,  
26 which are essential in determining the impacts of wind and fish  
27 farms and things along those lines, and I just want to thank our  
28 state partners, NOAA Fisheries, and the commission staff, for  
29 putting this together. It's been a great collaborative effort,  
30 and we appreciate everyone's time and effort along those lines. I  
31 will answer any questions.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any questions for Dave? Mr. Schieble.

34  
35 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you for that report, Dave. You may not have  
36 an answer to this question, but I don't know, and have you received  
37 any opinion on the BioFIN funding stuff? I know that the budget  
38 from last year -- Contracts had to be completed or whatever, in  
39 order to determine if there was funding for this year for that  
40 part of it.

41  
42 **MR. DONALDSON:** We've got some -- We have some realized savings,  
43 because of COVID, and there are some unspent funds, and we're still  
44 working with S&T staff to see if we can utilize that, and so the  
45 short answer is no, we don't have any clarity on that yet, but  
46 we're hoping that there will news shortly.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.

1  
2 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Dave. The presentation was good, and I  
3 still think you need to up your game and do an interpretive dance  
4 next time.

5  
6 **MR. DONALDSON:** As I said, no one wants to see that.

7  
8 **MR. STRELCHECK:** No, but, in all seriousness, I appreciate you  
9 providing the updates, especially on the IRA, and I know I've  
10 talked to Carrie, and a few folks, about people wanting to  
11 understand that better, what progress is being made, and so I think  
12 we'll work with you to provide those regular updates to the council  
13 going forward, and I appreciate you going into detail here today.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Anyone else? I will just add, Dave, that we  
16 appreciate you and your staff, and the hard work, that particularly  
17 Gregg did, with trying to get the contracts set up and the  
18 communications established between the contractor that Louisiana  
19 has used, to allow the States of Mississippi and Alabama to, you  
20 know, have a streamlined process, a quick process, for us to  
21 utilize the contractor that's been doing the survey, to make it a  
22 much more seamless process, as we try to get going as quickly as  
23 possible, and all that occurred within six or eight weeks, again  
24 at the end of the year, and so we just really appreciate their  
25 hard work and diligence, and so thank you.

26  
27 **MR. DONALDSON:** We appreciate that, and, also, we appreciate Chris  
28 and his folks and their willingness to share and get things moving  
29 sooner than later, and so it was a truly cooperative endeavor.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.

32  
33 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I just want to say welcome to the skunkworks.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** That will take us to our next liaison report, and  
36 that will be from the U.S. Coast Guard, and we have Lieutenant  
37 Fuhs, and so, again, welcome to the meeting, and hopefully you've  
38 had a chance to learn one or two things this week, but, please,  
39 take it away.

40  
41 **U.S. COAST GUARD**

42  
43 **LT. CARL FUHS:** Thank you for having me, and thank you for the  
44 warm welcome to the council. I just have a short presentation  
45 with some of the items that we covered. For our area of  
46 responsibility, the 8<sup>th</sup> District covers the majority of the Gulf.  
47 However, there are, on the western side of Florida -- That area is  
48 covered by District 7, and so one of my counterparts, a close

1 friend that's in Miami, kind of covers that, and so, if there's  
2 anything that is specifically on the west coast of Florida, that  
3 will fall under District 7's AOR.

4  
5 Our Exclusive Economic Zone enforcement, this is what we call the  
6 lancha mission, and this is primarily down within Sector Corpus  
7 Christi, along the border of Mexico, and this is our main  
8 international fisheries mission, where we're looking to protect  
9 the U.S. EEZ and deter illicit fishing within our EEZ.

10  
11 You listed some of the historical interdictions and then the amount  
12 of red snapper that we've found onboard these lanchas over the  
13 last few years, and there has been a slight trend downwards in the  
14 number of interdictions. However, that doesn't necessarily mean  
15 that there were fewer lanchas incurring in our EEZ. A lot of the  
16 lower amount of interdictions is more closely related to the lack  
17 of manpower within the Coast Guard, and, as everybody is aware,  
18 just the military, and the Coast Guard in general, we've had to  
19 take some decisive action with how we're sourcing and manning  
20 stations, and so we're losing several assets within the Gulf of  
21 Mexico, as a result of a recent force alignment.

22  
23 However, our main station, Station South Padre Island, is  
24 conducting interdictions, and then our fast-response cutters,  
25 which is pictured in the lower-right hand corner, also conducts  
26 this mission. Historically, we see an increase in lanchas  
27 incurring within the EEZ during the next upcoming few months, as  
28 we lead into Lent, as there is a higher demand for fish within  
29 Mexico, and so we're doing our best, and we should have consistent  
30 coverage along the boundary line, to prevent those incursions.

31  
32 Additionally, with the red snapper, the pounds that we find onboard  
33 the lanchas -- It's not a super accurate indication of how much  
34 fish they are taking, because there's a number of different  
35 circumstances that can occur. You know, ideally, we interdict the  
36 lancha when they're heading north, before they get to set their  
37 nets, or their lines. However, a lot of the times, we'll interdict  
38 them after they've already set their lines, before they get fish  
39 onboard, or we catch them in the Gulf setting lines, and they run  
40 from that, and so, by the time we interdict them, they may not  
41 have fish onboard, but then the worst-case scenario is they already  
42 have the line already out there, and we weren't able to recover  
43 it.

44  
45 Our cutters routinely recover several miles of longline, illicit  
46 longline, on each patrol. We had a cutter return last week, and  
47 they recovered about eight nautical miles, over a week-and-a-half  
48 period, of longline.

1  
2 Then, lastly, Mexico is also looking to increase their cooperation  
3 with us, as a result of the negative certification, and so we've  
4 seen an increased amount of outreach from them, and we're looking  
5 to conduct targeted enforcement operations with them to maximize  
6 their utility along the boundary line.

7  
8 On the domestic side, these are our number of boardings from the  
9 last fiscal year and this fiscal year. Right now, we're sitting  
10 right around 200 so far, since October, with five significant  
11 violations. The majority of our violations come from TEDs and  
12 BRDs, and we've seen an increase in some of the TED violations  
13 recently.

14  
15 In our look ahead, we're looking to just increase maritime domain  
16 awareness, and, as we've seen a reduction in our force within the  
17 Gulf area, we're looking to maximize our effect, by conducting  
18 some targeted enforcement operations, leveraging our partnership  
19 with NOAA and our state agencies to get maximum effect for the  
20 time we're out there.

21  
22 Lastly, for marine protected resources, and this slide is actually  
23 out-of-date, and we had a -- During the cold weather, the last  
24 week or so, Station South Padre Island helped recover about 100  
25 sea turtles, with some of their state partners, and get them to  
26 re-warming centers, and so we're already exceeding the amount of  
27 marine protected resources encounters that we had last year within  
28 the Gulf, and these typically are usually turtles, and stuff like  
29 that, that we find entangled, that we will help free, and then  
30 we'll turn them over to local resources, and that's all I have,  
31 pending any questions. Thank you.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you. Any questions? I am not  
34 seeing anything. Thanks again, Lieutenant Fuhs, for being here.  
35 We appreciate it.

36  
37 **LT. FUHS:** Thank you.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Okay, and so we'll move now into Tab R, Number 6,  
40 Discussion of Council Planning and Primary Activities. Dr.  
41 Simmons.

42  
43 **DISCUSSION OF COUNCIL PLANNING AND PRIMARY ACTIVITIES**

44  
45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've had  
46 several comments, from different council members, you know,  
47 regarding trying to get a better understanding of what to expect  
48 for the next meeting, and so what we tried to do is take our action



1 schedule and kind of bring up some of the documents to the  
2 forefront, the regulatory actions that we're really planning on  
3 bringing back to you in April.

4  
5 This does not include everything that we're doing on the to-do  
6 list, all the other working groups and everything else that we're  
7 involved in, but just to try to give the council a snapshot of  
8 what to expect, again, for the next meeting, and so, just to go  
9 through this, you can see the green dots are the final action  
10 items, and so you just took final action on your framework for  
11 lane snapper catch levels.

12  
13 The arrows, red arrows, indicate ongoing actions, and they don't  
14 really say on here, necessarily, what we're bringing back, and you  
15 have to go to the action schedule, but I will try to run through  
16 that here, as best as we can try to anticipate what we need to  
17 bring back to you in April, and so, for the for-hire data  
18 collection, I think there will be a series of presentations, one  
19 that would start to incorporate what you directed us to do for the  
20 next steps of the SEFHIER program, as well as trying to get into  
21 some of those economic information -- How the economic information  
22 is used in management, and have a separate presentation for that.

23  
24 We're planning to bring a final action document for Spanish  
25 mackerel catch levels, and so you have now decided not to take  
26 action on the gag management measures, and so you will not see  
27 that in April, and I think, Ms. Boggs, you were asking about the  
28 IFQ amendment, and so we're planning to bring a new document, or,  
29 well, a draft, I believe, Assane, a document or a presentation,  
30 for Reef Fish 60, the IFQ distribution, but we will not bring back  
31 the permit requirements until June to the council, so we have some  
32 time to work on that.

33  
34 We have a lot to do on the shallow-water grouper amendment, and  
35 we're hoping we can make some progress on that and bring something  
36 to you on that in April. For midwater snapper, we talked about  
37 this in committee, and we want to skip the council meeting and  
38 then bring back the document in June, but, based on the discussion  
39 during the committee, our understanding is that we will be -- At  
40 least in April, we're going to start talking about those criteria,  
41 as far as if they're in need of management or not, and so I think  
42 we can squeeze that in.

43  
44 Then we confirmed that we're going to bring back the framework  
45 action for shrimp vessel position data, and so, Mr. Chair, that's  
46 what we've got together to start this discussion, and so we're  
47 looking for feedback, if there's some different direction that you  
48 want us to go, or if this was helpful, and you want to see it

1 again, or what you would like us to do.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

4  
5 **MS. BOGGS:** This is very helpful, and I did ask my question to  
6 Assane, but, you know, and as you can see by the schedule, and I  
7 think it's good, every other meeting, we'll see either 59 or 60,  
8 so we're not so overwhelmed with the documents, and we're not so  
9 overwhelmed with what we're trying to do, and so I think that's  
10 very good, to space it out that way. Thank you.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Gill.

13  
14 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I agree. I think this is  
15 helpful. It integrates us with the future planning better. Even  
16 though it was in the action schedule, many of us don't pay a whole  
17 lot of attention that document, but I wanted to bring up another  
18 item, which is really not related to this directly, but it caught  
19 my attention, and so I would like to bring it to the attention of  
20 the council.

21  
22 A couple of weeks ago, the Pacific Council convened a council-of-  
23 the-whole for two days. That struck me, and I said, what's that  
24 about, and it turns out that they were not discussing, and I don't  
25 know all the intricate details, but they were not discussing  
26 regulatory items, but council processes, how they were doing, what  
27 they should do in the future, et cetera, solely attention on  
28 council actions, and I was skeptical, and I thought, well, I don't  
29 know if we need that or not, but I was talking, after it, to a  
30 long-time council member, and I said, you know, how did it go, and  
31 what do you think, and he said it was great, that it was really  
32 helpful, and we got a lot done, and I'm glad we did it.

33  
34 Well, I was surprised by that, and I didn't expect that reaction,  
35 and so I just bring it to you all's attention, and mention it, and  
36 I don't know if staff knows about it already, and I'm not  
37 suggesting that we need it, but it's a different way of doing  
38 business that we've never done, as far as I know, that might be  
39 worth a look, to see whether there is value to be gained for us.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Maybe perhaps, Dr. Simmons, if you aren't familiar  
42 with what they were doing, or what they got accomplished, if you  
43 can maybe check-in on that and see. You know, Dr. Simmons, and  
44 the staff, have -- You know, they're very much open to council  
45 member input, and there are the special meetings that are held,  
46 lunchtime meetings that are held, with each of the state  
47 representatives and the host state, to ask about, you know, how  
48 things are working, or not working, and so there's opportunities,

1 but that's not to say that, once you get everybody together, you  
2 might see things collectively a little different than you do more  
3 individually, but anyway, those are my comments.  
4

5 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, I can certainly look into that  
6 and get some more information to share with you and J.D.  
7

8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Great. Thank you. Mr. Strelcheck.  
9

10 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Bob, I'm not sure if I was fully following you,  
11 but I guess -- You've been to, as a liaison, to the South Atlantic  
12 Council, and the South Atlantic Council does business a little bit  
13 differently than the Gulf Council, and convenes council sessions  
14 sometimes before the -- At the start of the meeting as well as the  
15 end of the meeting, and even maybe in the middle of the meeting,  
16 and so is that similar to what the West Coast was doing?  
17

18 **MR. GILL:** No, it was not, and so they convened a special meeting,  
19 outside the council meeting, for two days, and they all went up to  
20 Portland, and they just discussed council processes, et cetera,  
21 and so it's a different approach that they took.  
22

23 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so is there anyone else that wants  
24 to discuss what Dr. Simmons presented and is on the slide, or the  
25 screen, right now? Any other comments related to that? Mr.  
26 Strelcheck.  
27

28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I will just say thank you, because I've  
29 been in Carrie's ear quite a bit about this, and I've provided the  
30 examples of what the South Atlantic Council does, and I think this  
31 is a great start.  
32

33 You know, one of the concerns that we're always thinking about,  
34 after a council meeting, is motions that are passed, and work that  
35 needs to be completed, and how do we space that out with the  
36 existing staff and resources, and so, to me, this sets  
37 expectations, and it gives the council an opportunity to make  
38 modifications, if you think things are not moving fast enough, or  
39 might benefit from slowing them down, but, at the end of the day,  
40 it will also help us, in terms of planning, and in terms of our  
41 staffing and being able to complete actions in a timely manner for  
42 the council.  
43

44 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I will just add to that, and I don't want to add  
45 more work to staff, but they are -- They are very good at what  
46 they do, and they've had some recent experience, but I'm wondering  
47 if this could be taken just a step further, where you can  
48 incorporate the action guide with this, and it may be not the same

1 graph, but maybe a similar graph, to kind of put on the action  
2 guide, and the action guide is in a spreadsheet style, and maybe  
3 having a timeline format might -- With everything on it, with, you  
4 know, color-coding, or a letter associated with the activities,  
5 the actions, that we've got, and then the council can make a best  
6 guess as to when --

7  
8 Or at least there is some indication, on the spreadsheet, as to  
9 when it might be started, when it might be completed or whatever,  
10 but have that, and then, in that same kind of web, the management  
11 timeline tool that we use, or observe, with, you know, all the  
12 amendments that are associated with a species, and what about  
13 having something set up like this, where it's got, you know, the  
14 timeline of the specific action, or document, or something like  
15 that, and so I just throw that out there, kind of on the fly. I  
16 haven't discussed it with staff, but I'm just throwing that out  
17 there for a possibility to look into, if it's not too difficult.  
18 Mr. Schieble.

19  
20 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I was thinking along similar lines, and, instead of  
21 using little red arrows, could we have -- So, for shrimp vessel  
22 position data, you would have discuss draft, like it says here in  
23 the action guide right now, and just put a little box next to the  
24 arrow that says "discuss draft" over April, you know, and then the  
25 boxes would replace the arrows, and they would tell you what we're  
26 doing in April. I don't know.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** That sounds good. I mean, really, I think it's  
29 just whatever technology is available, and staff time, but they  
30 are very creative, and so whatever you all can do to make it very  
31 clear and provide as much information that's easily, you know,  
32 synthesized as possible, and that will be great. All right, and  
33 so that takes us to Other Business, and we have on here the  
34 litigation update. Ms. Levy.

35  
36 **OTHER BUSINESS**  
37 **LITIGATION UPDATE**  
38

39 **MS. LEVY:** Thank you. I originally thought this was going to  
40 really be boring, and I would just be like I have no update, but  
41 that was not the case. Yesterday, late afternoon or early evening,  
42 the Mississippi District Court issued its decision in the Amendment  
43 54 litigation, and that is the one that involves the Appointments  
44 Clause issue, and so really about the constitutional makeup of the  
45 council, whether council members are officers of the United States,  
46 and, if they are, whether they're appointed consistent with the  
47 Appointments Clause.

48

1 The takeaway is, and so it's a long decision, and it's like fifty-  
2 five pages, and there's a lot to digest, but the takeaway is that  
3 the court upheld the rule, but made some kind of unfavorable  
4 decisions, depending on who you are, about the council structure,  
5 and I'm going to summarize it like super succinctly, and I'm happy  
6 to take questions afterwards, but I will say, right now, I probably  
7 will not have any answers to broader implications and everything  
8 else, because, again, this decision just came down last night, and  
9 no one has had a chance to talk about it, or even necessarily fully  
10 digest all of the court's analysis.

11  
12 Also, I will preface it with the plaintiffs in the -- There were  
13 two cases, and they were consolidated, and so the plaintiffs in  
14 one of the cases already filed a notice of appeal, and so it's  
15 going to the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals, and so whatever I'm  
16 going to say is not necessarily the end.

17  
18 The court essentially held that council members are officers, under  
19 the Appointments Clause, and, if you're an officer, then you need  
20 to be appointed in a particular way, and, in this decision, the  
21 court said that council members are inferior officers, and that  
22 means that you can be means that you can be appointed by basically  
23 the Secretary of the department, right, and so department heads  
24 have the ability to appoint inferior officers.

25  
26 The court said that six of the council members are not appointed  
27 consistent with that power in the Constitution, and so, the RA and  
28 the state reps on the council, because they are just on there by  
29 virtue of their positions, were not properly appointed by the  
30 Secretary of Commerce. The other members that are submitted by  
31 the governor, and actually appointed by the Secretary, the court  
32 said that their appointments were fine.

33  
34 There's another little piece of the analysis which, if you're going  
35 to be an appointed officer, okay, but you also have to be able to  
36 be removed, right, and so there's a removal type of consideration,  
37 and the court found that all of the officers except the RA are  
38 unconstitutionally insulated from removal, and so, for example,  
39 the state reps can't be removed by the Secretary at all, and  
40 they're on there because of their position.

41  
42 The remaining council members can only be removed, under the  
43 statute, under very limited circumstances, like misconduct, things  
44 like that, and the court said that that limited the Secretary's  
45 ability to remove and that that was unconstitutional, but, in the  
46 end, the court upholds the rule, essentially finding that there  
47 was a majority -- So eleven properly-appointed officers, and that  
48 constitutes an appropriate quorum, right, for council meetings,

1 and a majority of that quorum voted for Amendment 54, and so the  
2 court said that that council action was appropriate, despite the  
3 fact that there are six members that are not constitutionally  
4 appointed.

5  
6 With respect the removal provisions, the court essentially said  
7 there's a three-step test in the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit about whether there's  
8 a remedy for this violation of being not being able to be removed,  
9 and that the plaintiffs hadn't met any of those requirements, and,  
10 ultimately, the Secretary, through Janet Coit, approved the  
11 amendment, and there was basically no indication that the Secretary  
12 wanted to remove anybody, and so that the plaintiffs could not get  
13 a remedy for that violation.

14  
15 Again, the rule is fine for now, but a lot of stuff about  
16 appointments, and this is the first case that has actually  
17 addressed the merits of the Appointments Clause issue with respect  
18 to the council. There have been other cases, but they have been  
19 dismissed for other reasons, particularly standing, that  
20 plaintiffs don't actually have standing to bring the claim, and,  
21 in this case, the court said the plaintiffs did have standing.  
22 It's a -- I'm not sure that I want to get into all of that.

23  
24 I did send the decision to Carrie, and she can distribute it to  
25 you all, and you can read what the court said about standing and  
26 things like that. If you have particular questions, I am happy to  
27 try to answer them, but, again, in terms of broader implications,  
28 and all of that stuff, I am not going to have answers to that.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** General Spraggins.

31  
32 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Just a question, and you may or may not know  
33 the answer to it, but do other councils have the same makeup?

34  
35 **MS. LEVY:** Well, I mean, they're made up in the same way, but they  
36 all have a different number of members, right, and so a different  
37 number of appointed members, a different number of state reps, and  
38 I will say that there are cases -- The same arguments are being  
39 made in other cases around the country, and I believe there is a  
40 case in the 1<sup>st</sup> Circuit, and I believe there's a case in the 2<sup>nd</sup>  
41 Circuit, and those are still in the district courts, and so this  
42 argument is being made in various places, and so it just this  
43 happens to be the first decision like this on the merits here.

44  
45 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** The second part is do I not have to come in  
46 April?

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Any other questions? Mara, was that

1 all you had for your report?

2  
3 **MS. LEVY:** Yes. Regarding the Amendment 53 red grouper litigation,  
4 it's still with the District Court of Appeals in D.C., and I  
5 haven't seen a decision on that one yet.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you. Well, that will take us  
8 then -- We had two other items that were added at the beginning of  
9 Full Council, and one of those two is the red grouper interim  
10 analysis. Dr. Simmons.

11  
12 **DISCUSSION OF ANNUAL REQUIREMENT FOR RED GROUPEr INTERIM**  
13 **ANALYSIS**

14  
15 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to remind  
16 everybody, the council had a standing request, a motion, that they  
17 would request, from the Science Center, to receive an interim  
18 analysis information every year on red grouper, and so we have  
19 done that for the SSC meeting in February, but that information  
20 will not have catch advice for red grouper with it, because we  
21 have an ongoing assessment for red grouper, and that is expected  
22 to be completed in August, I believe, and would go to our SSC and  
23 council after that, and so I don't expect that we'll spend a whole  
24 lot of time on it at the SSC meeting, but it is a health check.  
25 We will see what that index is doing, and then we'll get that  
26 operational assessment here later in the year.

27  
28 In 2025, we're going to indicate to the Science Center that we  
29 think we're going to be working on the results of that operational  
30 assessment, and we would not need another interim analysis, and,  
31 if that changes, we could always make that change, based on what  
32 occurs, but I just wanted to bring that full circle. Thank you.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any questions? I am not seeing any, and that  
35 takes us to the third, and final, item I have for Other Business,  
36 and that's the discussion on the 2024 red snapper for-hire season  
37 change. I think I wrote that correctly, and, Ms. Boggs, you  
38 brought it up.

39  
40 **DISCUSSION OF 2024 RED SNAPPER FOR-HIRE SEASON**

41  
42 **MS. BOGGS:** Yes, sir, I did, and thank you. I believe it was 2008  
43 when Amendment 27 was passed, that set the red snapper season for  
44 charter-for-hire to start on June the 1<sup>st</sup>, and, since that time,  
45 we've seen lengthening seasons, and, in October of last year, Andy  
46 posed, to Captain Walker and I, about, if there were fish  
47 remaining, would we want a fall season, and I know some comment at  
48 the podium has been they would like to move it back to the spring,

1 March or May, and, well, we can't do that, because of Amendment  
2 27, and so I thought, well, at least maybe we can look at, for  
3 2024, trying to see if there was some flexibility that we could  
4 have with the seasons, if maybe we could request that we have an  
5 end date sooner that would allow for another season maybe, and I  
6 put out there the Friday before Thanksgiving, but some way to kind  
7 of spread out the season, because a lot of the fishermen that I've  
8 spoken with, and I've talked to fishermen from Texas, and I've  
9 talked to Ed, and I've talked all the way down to Tampa Bay and  
10 St. Pete, and they were all willing --

11  
12 They were all telling me that -- Except Louisiana, I think, was a  
13 little on the fence about we don't need red snapper in August,  
14 because school goes back, but, when you come into November, and  
15 you have people traveling for the holidays, it would be nice to  
16 have something to catch.

17  
18 I have always said what's wrong with leaving a few fish in the  
19 water, but I think, if you kind of spread it out, and you open it  
20 more towards the November timeframe, and it would give National  
21 Marine Fisheries time to get the fourth wave, or the fifth wave,  
22 whatever wave that is, the July and August wave in, so they could  
23 look at the numbers.

24  
25 The point to all this too is having kind of a time-certain date  
26 that would give NMFS kind of a deadline, and then give the charter-  
27 for-hire industry time to advertise, if they are going to have a  
28 fall season, and so I did send a motion to staff, but that's the  
29 intent of what I'm trying to do here.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Just to make sure that's your motion, Ms. Boggs.

32  
33 **MS. BOGGS:** Yes, and it's a little redundant with the for-hire,  
34 but I wanted it to be very -- To be understood that this is strictly  
35 for the for-hire industry.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. There's a motion on the board. Is  
38 there a second to the motion? I am not seeing a second. Mr.  
39 Strelcheck seconds. Okay. Any discussion? Captain Walker.

40  
41 **MR. WALKER:** I think I agree with the spirit of the motion to maybe  
42 examine an additional season, and I'm not comfortable, as an  
43 individual, selecting the week that industry would like, you know,  
44 or whatever additional time, at this time. I think we have to go  
45 out and essentially survey the guys, because there are regional  
46 differences, and there are seasonal differences.

47  
48 You know, from my area, pretty much everything is closed in



1 November, and I would think that my guys would say, yes, if we  
2 could -- If there was a good fish that we could target in our  
3 charter season, when all our groupers are closed, and amberjack is  
4 closed and everything else, they would probably be in favor of it,  
5 but I'm, again, reluctant. I think we can reach out and get a  
6 more broad opinion before just picking a date. I'm not opposed,  
7 but I think we should include more input.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I've got a couple of people that have raised their  
10 hands. I've got Mr. Strelcheck and Dr. Banks, but, before -- Just  
11 maybe a little administrative thing here, and should you include  
12 that this is just for red snapper, to make it clear in the motion?  
13 I know the bullet, the section, says the red snapper charter-for-  
14 hire season, but this is just for red snapper, and so maybe it  
15 ought to be clear in the motion.

16  
17 **MS. BOGGS:** Certainly, and to request the Regional Administrator  
18 reopen the red snapper for-hire fishery the Friday before  
19 Thanksgiving, if it is determined that the red snapper for-hire  
20 ACT has not been met. I will say this, and, I mean, we don't have  
21 to put a time certain, as far as like the Friday before  
22 Thanksgiving, but the intention there was to try to -- The  
23 conversation is, and I think, even if October, we were talking  
24 about, well, when are we going to find out, and are we going to  
25 have enough time to advertise, and that was kind of -- Well, not  
26 kind of, but that was the intent of being specific about when to  
27 reopen.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you. Mr. Strelcheck.

30  
31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Susan talked to me about this, and, you know, for  
32 those that may not be aware, there is, obviously, the start date,  
33 which is fixed in the regulations at June 1, and the way that the  
34 language is written is that NOAA Fisheries will project the length  
35 of the season, and determine when it's met, based on the catch  
36 target.

37  
38 The intent here, obviously, is, if there is fish still left on the  
39 table, that you're giving direction as to when that general  
40 reopening would occur. The key here, and what I was conveying to  
41 Susan, is that we will -- We typically get the landings data for  
42 the full summer months season in mid-October, or a little bit later  
43 than that, and so this gives enough time for the Fisheries Service  
44 to review and process that data, determine if the catch target is  
45 met, and, if it hasn't been met, then work on getting an  
46 announcement out that's going to give at least several weeks, if  
47 not longer, for the industry to react to it.

1 It also is at least putting a date certain for people to kind of  
2 be thinking about, in terms of when it might open, right, but with  
3 no guarantee.

4  
5 The problem that -- I will speak briefly to the broader problem,  
6 and I think where the council should really consider going, is  
7 whether we want to reconsider the season structure and have that  
8 June 1 opening, or start moving that back into May at some point,  
9 or even providing like a final cutoff date, as to we want to close  
10 on August 15 and then reopen in the fall, if quota is available,  
11 and so I think there's a lot of options here, and I don't think  
12 we're prepared to talk about it today, but I think it's worth  
13 considering.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Banks, then followed by Captain Walker.

16  
17 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think I agree with the  
18 sentiment behind Susan's motion, but I would like to hear, like  
19 Ed, from the charter fishery. I've already gotten messages saying  
20 that definitely not Thanksgiving, and so, at least from some of  
21 the guys in Texas, and so I would like to maybe hear a little more  
22 from the charter fishery before we just pick a hard date. In  
23 Texas, that's deer and duck season, and a lot of our guys have  
24 shifted into hunting, and so --

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Captain Walker.

27  
28 **MR. WALKER:** Well, I think it helps a lot, Mr. Strelcheck, that,  
29 you know, this is kind of like the earliest, or right up there  
30 with as early as it could be done, and I hadn't thought about it  
31 that way, and, historically, the week of Thanksgiving is a very  
32 busy charter week, where I live anyway, and so earlier would  
33 probably be better, once the number is available, for guys to start  
34 planning their season, but still we would need some regional input,  
35 because what we're saying here is it's either going to be November  
36 or December, and those are kind of your two options, right, and so  
37 that narrows it down a little bit.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

40  
41 **MS. BOGGS:** So a couple of things. First, to Kesley's point, I'm  
42 very aware of that. I mean, my husband is a deer hunter, and I  
43 get it, but, for those that -- But we also -- This is our sole  
44 income, and to have the opportunity to -- A multitude of things.

45  
46 One, if you leave fish in the water, there was a comment made at  
47 another meeting, and I can't remember when, of, well, then give  
48 them to another sector, and so, if we're limited to these short

1 seasons, and we have fish left in the water, to me, it behooves  
2 that industry to prove that they can catch those fish, and that's  
3 one of my concerns, because, every year -- Well, not every year,  
4 but at least the last two years, I believe, we have been under our  
5 ACT, and it's not that we, we being the charter-for-hire captains  
6 -- They are very capable of catching those fish, given the  
7 opportunity to catch those fish, and so that was one of my  
8 concerns.

9  
10 Again, this is a time of year when it's probably not going to have  
11 near as much pressure, and it does take some of the pressure off  
12 of the fish, because I know, in our port, June and July -- Those  
13 fish are hiding. They don't want to be caught, commercially or  
14 recreationally or otherwise, and I would not be opposed to, you  
15 know, take out the Friday before Thanksgiving, but, again, to  
16 Andy's point, that just kind of gives people an idea of having  
17 time to -- To be aware of when to maybe be looking for this opening.

18  
19 If you push it back to April, you can get public comment, and  
20 that's fine, and I just was trying to do something that might be  
21 in place for the 2024 season, if possible. Thank you.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** To that point, Dr. Banks?

24  
25 **DR. BANKS:** Yes, thank you. Again, I agree with the sentiment. I  
26 am just saying, and I want to clarify, and, when I say it's deer  
27 and duck season, our charter guys are running guided duck hunts,  
28 and now they're doing guided deer hunts, and I am speaking about  
29 the charter fleet and not personal hunting excursions. Thank you.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. I have several folks. I have Mr.  
32 Dugas, Mr. Gill, Captain Walker, and Mr. Schieble.

33  
34 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Susan, I think I see the intent  
35 here, and I'm not ready to take a vote on certain days of  
36 Thanksgiving at this moment, and I would prefer us to bring this  
37 back in April, give us some time to think about it, to talk to the  
38 industry, get their public comment, and then we can maybe make a  
39 better-informed decision, but I'm okay to do something.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Gill.

42  
43 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree with J.D., and the  
44 second half is that Andy mentioned there's really a broader  
45 question here, and so maybe this ought to be two steps, one to  
46 address this question and the other later on, longer-term, to  
47 develop whether we want to change the frontend of the season, but  
48 J.D. is spot-on.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Captain Walker.  
3

4 **MR. WALKER:** If I could ask Andy a question. The potential dates  
5 this might even possible would be November and December, or is  
6 there maybe a little bit more than that?  
7

8 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I would say mid-November is probably the earliest,  
9 because you're going to want to give people some time to plan for  
10 it, right, and, when I say time, a couple of weeks notice. It's  
11 obviously under my authority that I can reopen at any point in  
12 time, right, if the catch target is not met, and, typically,  
13 there's landings that trickle in still, you know, after the seasons  
14 have closed, and so we've done a pretty good job of harvesting the  
15 catch target in the recent years, at projecting the season, but,  
16 yes, I would say mid-November is probably the absolutely earliest,  
17 and then all the way into December.  
18

19 **MR. WALKER:** So we're talking about a six-week window here, and I  
20 don't know how long duck and deer season is in each state, and  
21 then I know we have Christmas at the end there, and so it's a  
22 smaller window than we might have thought, and so my thought would  
23 probably be the earlier in that part the better, but, again, more  
24 input is probably required, but it's not as open of a door as you  
25 think, and it's a narrow window to select what works best.  
26

27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.  
28

29 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I can see the intent  
30 of the motion, and we can work on this, and maybe adjust it a  
31 little bit, and I might be in support of it overall, but I agree  
32 that I don't like picking a specific time upfront. We hear a lot  
33 of feedback, from our charter fleet, about they don't like how our  
34 state charters are able to get an earlier season at the beginning  
35 of the spring, before the federal for-hire fleet gets out there on  
36 June 1, and so I might be suggestive of we look at the frontend of  
37 the season as well, because they don't like them targeting the  
38 snapper before they get a shot at it.  
39

40 I'm also having a sense of déjà vu here, because I feel like we're  
41 talking about Amendment 50 discussions all over again, when we had  
42 the federal for-hire fleet included in some of the Amendment 50  
43 individual state plans, when we went down the road of deciding  
44 state management, and this was part of the very reason we had them  
45 included in there in the first part, so that the individual states  
46 could decide when they wanted to have the federal for-hire season.  
47 I'm not trying to resurrect old dirt here, but I'm just saying  
48 that it seems like the same discussion.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.  
3  
4 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, to be clear, this is specific to 2024,  
5 because the council would have to take action to change the season  
6 structure, and this allows -- It provides direction to me that I  
7 can consider, in terms of reopening. If there is fish on the  
8 table, when we get those landings in mid-October, it will be up to  
9 me to decide then when do we reopen, and, if your guidance says,  
10 well, we would prefer mid-November, versus before Thanksgiving,  
11 versus after Thanksgiving, that's an informative -- You know, it's  
12 information for me to make a decision.  
13  
14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I guess, to that point, Andy, administratively -  
15 - I mean, let's assume a motion with this intent, or this  
16 particular motion, is passed here, and you come back with a  
17 formalized document, a presentation, for April, and assume it gets  
18 passed then, and, I mean, you're still looking at a six-month  
19 window in order to be able to put that through for 2024, or --  
20  
21 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Nothing would have to be done for this year's  
22 season, if this passed, because it's just a request, and so we  
23 would do our projections, open on June 1, and close when we think  
24 the catch target is going to be met, and then we'll assess if it  
25 wasn't met, and there is poundage, and then reopen based on  
26 whatever fish are left on the table, and we could start it at any  
27 time in that kind of mid-November or later window.  
28  
29 If we start it earlier, and have a lot of fish on the table, that  
30 potentially maximizes the season length. If you start it later,  
31 you might not catch all the quota, because you've just started it  
32 too late in the year to finish the quota.  
33  
34 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.  
35  
36 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** This is just a question, and so we had this scenario  
37 two years ago, right, where we had the season closed, and there  
38 was a little bit left over, and we reopened, and when was that?  
39 Can you remind me? It was October, wasn't it, that we reopened?  
40 Right?  
41  
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Sure.  
43  
44 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So isn't there the potential for that to happen  
45 again?  
46  
47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I work with three councils. You think I remember  
48 all of that?

1  
2 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** You remember an awful lot, and so I guess my point  
3 is we have an amberjack season coming up in September and October,  
4 and I would think, if we could have this in October, it would make  
5 more sense.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I think I recall there was some extenuating  
8 circumstance with that fall reopening, like a hurricane or  
9 something like that, that caused, you know, a disruption in  
10 landings, and so it was under that scenario, and so any other  
11 questions, comments, discussion about the motion on the board?  
12 Mr. Strelcheck.

13  
14 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Since I think this was a great discussion, and I  
15 seconded it for discussion, I think, if Susan is willing, I would  
16 recommend that we just pull this down and, you know, come back to  
17 this discussion in April.

18  
19 **MS. BOGGS:** In Andy's words, sure.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Great. I don't have any other business  
22 listed. Dr. Sweetman.

23  
24 **DISCUSSION ON FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY**

25  
26 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just really quick, Mr. Chair, and so I just wanted  
27 to highlight that we heard, during public comment, a request for  
28 a brief discussion about the Florida Keys National Marine  
29 Sanctuary, and, since I'm involved in that, I figured that I might,  
30 just really at a high level, give something here.

31  
32 I don't really want to get too into the weeds, but there's been a  
33 little bit of an issue recently that relates to authorities to  
34 implement fisheries regulations within the Florida Keys National  
35 Marine Sanctuary, in both state and federal waters. The protocol,  
36 and the procedures, for which those fisheries regulations are  
37 implemented within the sanctuary -- They are outlined within the  
38 protocol for cooperative fisheries management.

39  
40 The Gulf Council, South Atlantic Council, FWC, and the sanctuary  
41 -- We've been kind of actively working to try and update these  
42 agreements, since they are presently outdated, and you may recall  
43 previous discussion that we've had at the council level, and from  
44 the public, about the importance of the definition of "traditional  
45 fishing" that's housed within that cooperative fisheries  
46 management protocol, and so I just kind of wanted to highlight  
47 that.

1 All of this is extremely important. We've been kind of actively  
2 working on the protocol for cooperative fisheries management, but  
3 we feel like we need to get some of these issues resolved, as it  
4 relates to authorities, before we move a little bit more forward  
5 on that and finalize the protocol, and, just from discussions with  
6 Carrie and other council staff, I do know that -- I do believe  
7 that this item will come before the council again, at least one  
8 more time, and so that's all I wanted to say, Mr. Chair.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you for the update. Anyone  
11 else? Is that it? All right. Well, we'll go ahead and finish  
12 Full Council. Thank you, everyone. Save travels, and we'll see  
13 you next time. Thank you.

14  
15 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on February 1, 2024.)

16  
17 - - -  
18