

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Webinar

JUNE 16, 2020

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- 12 Patrick Banks.....Louisiana
- 13 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
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1 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened via webinar on Tuesday morning, June
3 16, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Martha Guyas.

4
5 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
6 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
7 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
8

9 **CHAIRMAN MARTHA GUYAS:** Is there anyone that wants to modify the
10 agenda? Is there any opposition to adopting the agenda as
11 written? Seeing none, the agenda is adopted as written. Next
12 on our agenda is Approval of the January 2020 minutes. Is there
13 any opposition to approving the minutes as written? Please
14 raise your hand. All right. Seeing none, the minutes are
15 adopted as written.

16
17 Next on our agenda is the action guide. As usual, I think I
18 would like to just cover those items as we move through them,
19 just to kind of keep us moving and keep us on point for today,
20 and so let's get right to it, and we'll move to Tab E, Number 4,
21 and that's the Update on Federal Fisheries Assistance Package,
22 Process, and Status, and I believe Ms. Kelly Denit is on the
23 line to give us an update on that.

24
25 **UPDATE ON FEDERAL FISHERIES ASSISTANCE PACKAGE, PROCESS, AND**
26 **STATUS**
27

28 **MS. KELLY DENIT:** Thank you, Martha. Good morning, everyone.
29 It's great to be here with you. I'm sorry that I had a total
30 user error on my part, in terms of getting a webcam working, but
31 hopefully everyone can hear me all right.

32
33 My name is Kelly Denit, and I'm the Chief of the Domestic
34 Fisheries in the NOAA Fisheries Office of Sustainable Fisheries
35 up in Silver Spring. I am just going to step through a brief
36 overview of how we did the allocation, eligibility, et cetera,
37 and then a quick update on process and where we stand right now,
38 and I know that Dave Donaldson is on, and he can chime in as
39 well.

40
41 To kick things off, of course, our overriding goal was to get
42 the funding out as quickly as possible. As a result, we took an
43 approach where we use a proportional allocation across all the
44 coastal states, tribes, and territories, and we focused on using
45 readily available total annual revenue information for the
46 commercial, charter, marine finfish, and shellfish aquaculture,
47 as well as the seafood supply chain, and so that includes
48 processors, dealers, wholesalers, for each state, tribe, and

1 territory, and we also took subsistence and cultural fisheries
2 into account.

3
4 Wherever possible, we used multiyear averages to generate these
5 estimates of total revenue. As you guys know, fisheries
6 fluctuate from year to year, and so we wanted to have a
7 multiyear average, and we have the five-year average for the
8 commercial fisheries revenues, and available multiyear averages
9 for aquaculture revenue were included in that commercial
10 revenue.

11
12 Average annual revenue from Alaska, the Northeast, and the Mid-
13 Atlantic states were adjusted to attribute landings in those
14 regions of vessel owners state of residence, and a similar
15 adjustment was applied to at-sea processors on the west coast.
16 Other west coast fisheries and the Pacific Islands, Southeast,
17 and the Gulf of Mexico did not have this adjustment, because we
18 did not have readily available data, and it represented a
19 smaller proportion of the total revenues.

20
21 The seafood sector revenues were calculated using our input-
22 output model, which, again, was multiyear and included both
23 first and second-line processors. For the for-hire, we used the
24 five-year average of for-hire angler trip expenditures, and, as
25 I mentioned, we used a multiplier for the subsistence and
26 cultural aspects.

27
28 There were some exceptions to the multiyear approach for the
29 data, where data was not available, such as shellfish
30 aquaculture. In addition, as part of the allocation, we
31 established a minimum and maximum, a minimum of \$1 million and a
32 maximum of \$50 million, respectively.

33
34 With respect to eligibility, this is all spelled out in the
35 CARES Act, and the commercial fishing businesses, charter/for-
36 hire businesses, qualified aquaculture operations, processors,
37 tribes, federally-recognized tribes with saltwater and
38 anadromous fisheries, and then other fishery-related businesses,
39 and there is flexibility in that other fishery-related
40 businesses for the states to make some decisions, and there were
41 some businesses that were excluded, such as seafood retail and
42 restaurants.

43
44 The two main stipulations in the CARES Act which likely all of
45 you are familiar with at this point, is the revenue losses of
46 greater than 35 percent compared to the prior five-year average
47 or any negative impacts to subsistence, cultural, or ceremonial
48 fisheries.

1
2 For the revenue loss, that's left to each state to determine how
3 they're going to do it and how they're going to document it, and
4 it does not have to be an annual comparison, and so, as you all
5 know, we're working with the interstate marine fisheries
6 commissions to execute this funding, Gulf States specifically
7 for this council area, and we are working with them right now to
8 get their applications approved for the overall funding.

9
10 As part of that process, the states are responsible for
11 developing their spend plan, and the spend plans are where they
12 will specify how they're going to determine that 35 percent loss
13 or the subsistence cultural impact, and it's also where they
14 will explain how they're going to verify that loss.

15
16 Once those spend plans are approved by NOAA, the commissions
17 will process the payments to the eligible participants, and the
18 states can choose to execute those payments themselves, if they
19 so desire.

20
21 Just a couple more points here, and then I will pause to take
22 any questions, but the CARES Act language also provided us with
23 language that allows us to execute these funds on a rolling
24 basis, which means that individual states are not beholden to
25 other states in the region, in order to get their spend plans
26 submitted and approved, and so we will be able to review those
27 spend plans as they are submitted to us.

28
29 In addition, eligible participants can receive funds from this
30 process as well as SBA loans or payment protection plans, and
31 we've been getting that question a lot, and so, just because
32 someone has received funds from one of those other programs, it
33 does not mean that they are ineligible for CARES Act assistance
34 from this pot of money under the CARES Act. The concept there
35 is that you just -- The business can't be made more than whole,
36 and so you can receive funding from multiple sources, but you
37 just can't go above your average annual revenue.

38
39 I think I will just pause there, with maybe just one last
40 comment, which is that we are expecting to be on track, working
41 with Dave and those guys, to be ready on July 1 to get the
42 funding to them, and then we will be waiting to get the spend
43 plans from the respective states to review and approve, and so I
44 cannot give you specific dates by which funding might be in the
45 hands of eligible recipients, but know that us and the
46 commission and the state are all working together to get that
47 funding out as quickly as possible, following those spend plans
48 submission. I will pause there, Mr. Chair and Martha, and I'm

1 happy to take any questions.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thank you, Kelly. Are there any
4 questions for Kelly, or, Dave, I don't know if you wanted to add
5 anything. It looks like Patrick has his hand up. Patrick, go
6 ahead.

7
8 **MR. PATRICK BANKS:** Thank you for that overview. Obviously, one
9 of the big issues for us here in Louisiana is trying to explain
10 to our legislators and our fishing industry as to why the
11 tremendous amount of seafood production that we have in
12 Louisiana ended up with only \$14 million, whereas some of these
13 other states ended up with so much more than we did, and so I
14 understand some of how you calculated it, but what we would like
15 to do is try to understand the numbers that you guys used to put
16 into those calculations, so that we can understand how some of
17 these other states ended up being way more valuable than
18 Louisiana. Is there going to be a possibility for us to get
19 those calculations and those numbers that you guys used?

20
21 **MS. DENIT:** Sure, and thanks, Patrick. Remember that it's
22 across all the different seafood sectors, and, in many cases,
23 the seafood processing sector was a major driver for how the
24 allocations ended up falling out, which made a big difference
25 for a number of states.

26
27 Yes, we are working on putting together a little bit more
28 detailed information than what is currently up in our Q&A on the
29 website, which Bernie very kindly has up there, to explain the
30 data that we used and how we did the calculations, and so we'll
31 be working to get that posted hopefully by early next week, for
32 folks to be able to have a little bit more information on those
33 calculations.

34
35 **MR. BANKS:** Thank you. Yes, we would really love to see the
36 numbers behind the calculations, and I think we understand how
37 you did the calculations, but it's the numbers behind it. For
38 example, just like what you just said, the value of the
39 processing sector in a state like Maine, as opposed to
40 Louisiana, or things like that, and so thank you.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Paul.

43
44 **DR. PAUL MICKLE:** I know we have a lot of people listening here
45 today, especially on this topic, and I wanted to bring up the
46 question to you, to get kind of a little bit of clarity, because
47 I've gotten a couple of calls, and I know a few other folks have
48 gotten a couple of calls, from folks from multiple sectors, both

1 commercial, charter/for-hire, and dealers, really looking at
2 kind of, if someone works and lands fish in a neighboring state,
3 is the qualification to the CARES Act, of what you presented
4 here in those allocations by state, is it drilled down to the
5 state that you live in, the state they are licensed to, the
6 state where they have multiple licenses, but the bulk of their
7 landings, and do they flip, and can you provide a little bit of
8 clarification, just because we have so many listeners, and a
9 little bit of guidance, so we don't have folks running to
10 different states and getting confused, and it would help with
11 their efficiency on properly applying. Thank you.

12
13 **MS. DENIT:** Thank you for that question. In the case of the
14 Gulf states, folks should be applying to the state in which they
15 land their fish, and so wherever they're landing is where that
16 revenue was accounted for, and it should be where folks are
17 applying for assistance.

18
19 In the case of shoreside processors, for example, that might be
20 incorporated in one state, but have facilities in other states,
21 they should be applying to the state where their facilities are
22 physically located, and, again, you still have to meet the
23 requirements of the CARES Act, and you have to demonstrate that
24 you've had the 35 percent loss in either of those examples.

25
26 **DR. MICKLE:** Okay. Thank you. By that, and how I've
27 interpreted the bill as well, is there could be individuals that
28 are applying for CARES Act money to multiple states, if they
29 have multiple licenses and landings in multiple states, in
30 certain similar scenarios such as that, and is that correct?

31
32 **MS. DENIT:** Yes, and we've tried to minimize that, as much as
33 possible, as part of the parameters that we have realized as
34 we've dug into this with each of the states, that there are
35 going to be some instances where folks potentially are going to
36 be applying in multiple states.

37
38 I think the key here is that there remains a condition, as part
39 of the grant and the funding, that no business is able to make
40 itself more than whole, and so you would be required to be able
41 to demonstrate how, even though you might be getting assistance
42 from two states for example, that you are not collecting
43 assistance such that it is putting your total revenue for the
44 year above your average annual revenue.

45
46 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Dave.

1
2 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Kelly, you
3 mentioned, or we've had discussions, about the possibility of
4 developing an affidavit that would certify that fishery
5 participants had a 35 percent loss and that they weren't
6 receiving more than 100 percent, to get back to over 100
7 percent, and you didn't mention that in your discussion, and you
8 mentioned the states were responsible for making those
9 determinations, and has the idea of an affidavit gone out the
10 window? Is that something that NOAA Fisheries is not going to
11 be able to do?

12
13 **MS. DENIT:** No, and the states absolutely can use affidavits as
14 part of that, Dave. I just didn't get into that level of
15 detail, and so the states can use that as part of their spend
16 plan process, in terms of using the affidavit as their
17 confirmation that folks have had that 35 percent loss and hit
18 the other criteria that are a part of the requirements.

19
20 **MR. DONALDSON:** Okay. Madam Chair, I've got a couple other
21 points, and Kelly did a really good job of covering everything,
22 but do you want me to go over that, or wait until the questions
23 are over, and then I can update? It's whatever you want to do.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Why don't you go ahead, while you've got the
26 mic.

27
28 **MR. DONALDSON:** Okay. As Kelly mentioned, they're working with
29 the three commissions, and I will point out, in the Gulf of
30 Mexico, we're just working with Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi,
31 and Alabama. The State of Florida is actually working with the
32 Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Those four states
33 mentioned received about \$28 million, and we have submitted --
34 As Kelly mentioned, we submitted our cooperative agreement.

35
36 Once we get the funding for that, the states are also working on
37 developing spend plans, and those have to be approved by NOAA
38 Fisheries, and then, once they're approved, the states will
39 provide a list to us, and we're going to actually send the
40 checks out, and that goes to the point that we're trying to get
41 this money out the door as quickly as possible.

42
43 Some of the draft plans are -- We have developed them a little
44 bit, and had some conversations, and we meet on a weekly basis,
45 and they vary by state. Some will have multiple application
46 processes, and some will just have one. Some are looking at
47 distributing their portion of the funds based on the NOAA
48 allocation for commercial, for-hire, and aquaculture, and others

1 are just going to look at all the applicants and divide it
2 equally among those applicants, but we're still working on those
3 plans.

4
5 We've got a July 1 deadline to get the state spend plans
6 completed, at least drafts, and get them up to NOAA for them to
7 look at, and I want to reiterate what Kelly said, that we're
8 trying to expedite this and get the money out the door as
9 quickly as possible, and so we're hopeful that we can make that
10 happen sooner than later, because I know a lot of folks are
11 looking for some help and need some help, and so, with that, I
12 will answer any questions. Thanks.

13

14 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thank you, Dave. Next, we have Leann.

15

16 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the
17 update on this assistance package, because it is very important
18 to our fishermen. I was wondering, as you developed the
19 methodology to divvy up this money, did you have any
20 interactions with the fishermen themselves? Did you consult and
21 reach out to any of the fishermen with any questions?

22

23 **MS. DENIT:** Thanks for that question. No, we did not. We were
24 seeking to move as quickly as possible, using the information
25 that we had readily available, and so we used the approach which
26 I outlined, which is looking at total revenues across all of the
27 sectors that were stipulated in the CARES Act in order to do the
28 allocation.

29

30 We were receiving input from fishermen, and we've received a lot
31 of information regarding the impacts of COVID to specific
32 businesses, as well as specific fisheries, and regions and
33 areas, but, unfortunately, we didn't have any data that would be
34 consistent across all of the states, in order to be able to do
35 any sort of comparison or allocation across all of the states,
36 and so that was why we used the total revenue approach that
37 allowed us to do the sort of apples-to-apples comparison for
38 everybody as part of this.

39

40 Certainly the states, as part of the development of their spend
41 plans, many of them are engaging with their stakeholders
42 directly right now, as part of developing those, in order to get
43 input.

44

45 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Kevin.

46

47 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Kelly. Just to follow up on the
48 response that you provided to Dave's question regarding the

1 affidavit, his question was NOAA developing, or have they
2 developed, an affidavit to give to the participants, or those
3 who apply, stating basically that they have incurred a 35
4 percent loss or greater, and your response, if I heard it
5 correctly, was that the states could use an affidavit, but I
6 took that to mean that NOAA was not going to provide one and
7 that it was up to the states to develop the affidavit and to use
8 it, and is that correct?

9
10 **MS. DENIT:** Thanks for that clarifying question. We're going to
11 provide an example affidavit that can be used by the states,
12 but, of course, it's going to be the commission's and/or the
13 state's document, and it's not a NOAA document, and so that's
14 why the nuance in my response, but there will be an example that
15 you guys can use, if you so choose.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** The last hand is Carrie, and then we're going
18 to move on.

19
20 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I
21 think this question is for Mr. Donaldson. Are you planning to
22 post the state-approved spend plans on the commission's website?
23 Would that be the appropriate place for us to direct fishermen
24 and stakeholders that might want more information about those
25 spend plans? Do you have a thought on that or how we should
26 proceed with that?

27
28 **MR. DONALDSON:** Thanks, Carrie. We hadn't actually really
29 thought that far in advance. We have weekly calls with the
30 state directors, and we can discuss that with them next week and
31 figure out what the best approach is.

32
33 I believe each state is going to post something on their website
34 about the process for applying and all that, because they're the
35 ones that are going to be collecting that information, and so
36 that might be the more appropriate place, in terms of directing
37 fishermen, but, at this point, we haven't really made a
38 decision, but we'll certainly discuss it.

39
40 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** At least for Florida, if you go to our website,
43 myfwc.com, and scroll down, there is information and a link to
44 the CARES Act, and there's not much there yet, because we're
45 still in development, but there is contact information, for
46 anybody from Florida looking for that. I don't see any more
47 hands, and, to keep us on schedule, I think we're going to move
48 on. Thank you, Kelly, and thank you, Dave.

1
2 Our next item is Status of Gulf State Recreational Data
3 Collection Programs and 2020 Red Snapper Season. What we're
4 going to do here is the designees from each of the five states
5 are going to provide a brief, I am hoping very brief, update on
6 the status of their respective recreational data collection
7 programs and outline their 2020 red snapper fishing seasons for
8 private anglers.

9
10 We will start with Texas and move our way east, and, if we
11 could, I would like to hold questions until after all five
12 presentations. If you want to put your hand up in the queue
13 during the presentation, that's fine, but I'm going to wait
14 until the end for questions, and so we've got until about 10:30
15 to get through these presentations and questions. Lance, you're
16 up.

17
18 **STATUS OF STATE RECREATIONAL DATA COLLECTION PROGRAMS AND 2020**
19 **RED SNAPPER SEASONS**
20

21 **MR. LANCE ROBINSON:** Hi, Martha, and thank you. Just to really
22 briefly recap from 2019, last year for the EFP, Texas projected
23 about a little over 98 percent of the allocation was harvested
24 during that license year.

25
26 As you recall, in the State of Texas, part of the allocation is
27 taken off the top at the beginning of the season and applied to
28 a state year-round season in state waters, and that same
29 protocol was applied in 2020, and so there is a January through
30 December state season. Based on the remaining amount of the
31 allocation, the projections were for a sixty-three-day season
32 starting June 1, and it would end August 2.

33
34 As of last week, our preliminary numbers, and I'm waiting on one
35 other piece of data to come in, but we're at about 13 percent
36 for the year of our allocation that has been harvested thus far.

37
38 Speaking just briefly, and that's probably most of the
39 information that I have right now, and I certainly can answer
40 any questions, but I thought I would touch very briefly on the
41 impact from COVID-19 to some of our sampling programs,
42 especially our creel program, which is where we're getting some
43 of landings information.

44
45 As a result of the COVID-19 and the governor's direction of
46 social distancing efforts, we did have to scale back some of our
47 sampling effort. I take that back. The sampling effort
48 remained the same as it would have normally done, but the

1 information that was collected -- We tried to avoid getting
2 within that six-foot social distancing, and so we weren't
3 collecting species-specific information, but we did collect
4 effort data throughout that timeframe, which ran from about six
5 weeks, April through mid-May, and now we're back up in full
6 operation, starting in mid-May, for our high use, and we've been
7 collecting like we would any other time of the year. With that,
8 I will stop and let the others go and answer questions at the
9 appropriate time.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thank you, Lance. Patrick.

12
13 **MR. BANKS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Our effort on the creel
14 side of things, even though the COVID pandemic, was practically
15 the same. Thankfully, we were still able to get out and do all
16 of our creel sampling during that timeframe, and we only missed
17 three assignments that entire three or so month period.

18
19 What we did find during that sampling from the LA Creel was that
20 we had about an 18 percent increase in total recreational trips
21 during that time, versus the same timeframe in 2019. We
22 surveyed about 20 percent more anglers during that timeframe
23 than we did in 2019, and we had about a 7 percent increase in
24 total catch during that timeframe, as compared to 2019, and so,
25 just like we all suspected, our creel data indicated that there
26 were a lot more people fishing, a lot more activity out there,
27 than we saw last year.

28
29 The difference is a lot like what Lance indicated. With the
30 social distancing guidelines, we just did not actually see and
31 count, physically count, as many fish from the boats as we would
32 normally, and so most of those fish, or a good number of those
33 fish, were reported to us verbally during our interviews by the
34 anglers, and so, in 2019 for example, we counted, during that
35 time period, nearly 23,000 fish, whereas, this time, we only
36 counted, or physically saw and counted, about 12,000 fish, and
37 so that was the biggest difference, where we were getting more
38 information just reported to us verbally during our interviews
39 from the anglers, as opposed to us actually seeing the fish, but
40 it was clear there were a lot of people fishing, a lot of people
41 catching fish, and effort was up.

42
43 That had to do with -- That was just total LA Creel, and that
44 doesn't have anything to do with specifically red snapper, but,
45 if you look at our red snapper for this year, we opened on May
46 22, which was basically Memorial Day weekend, and that was a
47 four-day weekend.

1 Our season is weekends only, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, but,
2 when we have a holiday in there, like we did for Memorial Day on
3 a Monday, we include that Monday, and, as most of you know by
4 now, we're about a ten-day lag in getting the information
5 finalized, and so, as of right now, we have data from the first
6 two weekends of the season, and we are looking at about 22
7 percent of our total allocation as being harvested right now.

8
9 Our allocation is, of course, about 816,000 pounds, but we
10 overshot our harvest last year by about 31,000 pounds, and so
11 our total allocation this year, because of payback, is 784,000
12 pounds, and so we have caught about 22 percent so far, through
13 two weekends of fishing, and, with that, I will turn it over to
14 Mississippi.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Go ahead, Paul.

17
18 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you, Martha. I am going to present this just
19 kind of orally and do a three-year overview of kind of the EFP
20 as carrying into this season, to I guess make a point. In 2018,
21 we had seventy-six days. In 2019, we had seventy-nine days,
22 and, this year, we're on our twenty-third day is today. We
23 don't fish weekends, and we fish all week long.

24
25 All three of these seasons, 2018, 2019, and currently in 2020,
26 Mississippi DMR and the State of Mississippi takes the strategy
27 of opening up on Memorial Day and shutting down in July for a
28 three-week mid-season assessment and then reopening at the end
29 of July, to try to get us to Labor Day. Again, it's all based
30 on ACLs built by the EFPs, and now Amendment 50, and the
31 allocation is around 150,000 pounds, and it's a very small
32 allocation, but sufficient for the State of Mississippi.

33
34 Just to give a little bit of data behind those statements, a
35 catch per unit effort of two complete years, and 2020 itself,
36 are virtually identical. The mean weights, our annual mean
37 weights, are extremely stable at 5.82, 5.54, and, currently,
38 we're at 6.82, but it's always a little higher in the beginning
39 of our seasons. In 2020, we're only twenty-three days into the
40 season, and I mention these metrics as a point to make of
41 stability.

42
43 At least in Mississippi, and I will speak only for Mississippi,
44 we have always wanted stability in season length and season
45 temporal placement, to allow our access for recreational to be
46 consistent, because that was their major plea, and we appreciate
47 everyone working on the Gulf Council to achieve that, through
48 these EFPs as well as Amendment 50.

1
2 My last point will just be that, along with some of the other
3 Gulf states, we have independent data to make sure that we are
4 managing our ACL in a way that is sustainable, and we have to
5 work as a federally-managed species, but we have the major
6 concern of a stable fishery, from a biomass and catch per unit
7 effort standpoint here, just for Mississippi, and with our NFWF
8 sampling, which is independent sampling done by scientists, and
9 we're in our fifth year.

10
11 We have data streams ranging from length and weight and diet and
12 isotopes, et cetera, all confirming a very stable fishery, at
13 least in the short term, and, when I mean short term, I mean a
14 five-year period, and so, right now, the State of Mississippi is
15 enjoying a very stable fishery, and we're in favor of keeping it
16 that way, and I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Paul. Kevin.

19
20 **MR. ANSON:** For the 2020 season, we utilized the available
21 allocation and looked at our recent landings, or trends in
22 landings, and using weather, wind, sea conditions, to help kind
23 of determine what our season length could be. Based on the
24 available pounds for this year's allocation, we came up with a
25 season that begins on May 22 and closes on July 19, tentatively,
26 and that's the Friday of Memorial Day weekend and ends on
27 Sunday, July 19.

28
29 We monitor, again, these landings through Snapper Check, which
30 recreational anglers, all recreational anglers, that are landing
31 fish in Alabama must report through. The red snapper catches,
32 through June 8, we have estimated that approximately half of the
33 1.12-million-pound quota has been harvested, and we've had some
34 very good weather weekends the first two weekends, and the third
35 weekend, which was Tropical Storm Cristobal, that was not a very
36 good weekend, but, at least through June 8, we have harvested
37 approximately half of the landings.

38
39 This year, we started to post the landing updates through that
40 Monday of each weekend on our department's website,
41 outdooralabama.com, and, if you go to red snapper reporting,
42 there will be a link there that provides a graphic, similar to
43 Louisiana's, that folks can follow and watch and see what the
44 season is shaping out to be.

45
46 As far as sampling activities, we have had some minor impacts.
47 We have maintained sampling for practically all of our
48 recreational data collection programs, except for a brief period

1 there at the beginning of April, end of March or the beginning
2 of April, but, at least as far as Snapper Check is concerned, we
3 have continued with our assignment draw, randomly-selected
4 assignments, at the same numbers as previous years.

5
6 There have been some differences for samplers though at the
7 dock, when they intercept anglers, and we also receive a little
8 bit more verbal responses for confirmation of red snapper
9 catches, and our number of fish that we have measured this year
10 is not the same, or is not in the same numbers, as in prior
11 years, but we're still able to get fairly significant numbers of
12 fish measured, and so that's all I have. Thank you.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Kevin. I will give the update for
15 Florida. Our private angler Gulf red snapper season opened last
16 week, on June 11, and it will continue through July 25. Just to
17 give you an idea of our sampling and how we've been operating
18 the last few months, we suspended all of our fisheries-dependent
19 field sampling on March 25, and then we have gradually phased
20 sampling back in, and so, in mid-May, some sampling resumed,
21 such that exposure to ten or less people per assignment
22 occurred.

23
24 Then, in early June, that was changed to limit exposure to fifty
25 or fewer people per assignment, and then, in Florida, we have
26 had -- In southeast Florida, they've been a little bit delayed,
27 in terms of reopening and getting back to semi-normal
28 operations, and so that process has been delayed in southeast
29 Florida, and not that that applies really for the Gulf.

30
31 We have implemented some new sampling protocols, to ensure the
32 personal safety of our staff and the public, and we've been
33 temperature checking our field staff prior to them getting an
34 assignment, and they're wearing masks, and they have extra
35 cleaning supplies and so on, and they are trying to maintain
36 that six-foot social distancing. Where social distancing isn't
37 possible, assignments may be cancelled.

38
39 Some of the programs that we have that were impacted, in case
40 it's not clear, it's MRIP, our in-person sampling for the Gulf
41 Reef Fish Survey, and, of course, biological sampling, similar
42 to what some of the other states have reported, and so we didn't
43 have those angler-intercept surveys conducted in April and the
44 first part of May, but we did have the commercial sampling
45 continuing, and we had limited sampling resume in mid-May.

46
47 Then, for the Gulf Reef Fish Survey, we were able to continue
48 our mail survey of fishing effort uninterrupted, and we're just

1 working on processing those. We have data for March from that
2 Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and it looks like March effort was down
3 compared to last year.

4
5 That's not too much of a surprise, at least in my mind, because,
6 at that point, a lot of the boat ramps around the state were
7 closed, and so access was a little bit limited, and we don't
8 have -- We're still working on our data for April and May, but
9 it is interesting that we saw a downward shift in March, and I
10 will stop there and look for questions. Leann.

11
12 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was trying to take
13 notes and keep up with it all, and I heard two of the states did
14 address effort, what they were seeing in effort, directly, Texas
15 and Louisiana, and I think they're the two states that said they
16 saw effort generally higher this year than last year, and,
17 Kevin, you might have said it too, and I think I just missed it
18 maybe, but what do the other states see, as far as angler effort
19 thus far, for snapper season?

20
21 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I can start that. Our season just opened last
22 week, and we don't have a handle on effort specific to that
23 season. March seemed to be down, at least according to the Gulf
24 Reef Fish Survey, with boat ramp closures, but, I mean,
25 incidentally, on weekends during the past few months, we've
26 heard that effort has been up in general, but, at that point,
27 red snapper wasn't open. I think you were also looking for
28 Kevin to chime in on that, Leann?

29
30 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, and so Alabama and Mississippi.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Kevin, do you want to go first, and then
33 Paul?

34
35 **MR. ANSON:** Leann, I did not fully explain the level of effort
36 at least, and I'm going to be providing some information a
37 little bit later on in the committee that has a graphic that
38 kind of overlays this year's harvest to prior years, at least
39 recent years, but you will see, in that graphic, that 2020
40 mirrors almost exactly the first few weekends of the 2018
41 season, and the 2018 season was phenomenal, as far as effort.
42 There were lots of people out fishing the first couple of
43 weekends this year, and the landings showed that 2020 is on par
44 for the 2018 season right now. Thank you.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Paul.

47
48 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you, Martha. The effort levels in 2018 and

1 2019 were fairly steady of large opening weekends, just like you
2 see in other Gulf states, and 2020 was the same. It was
3 actually elevated, and we believe this to be because of COVID
4 and the favorability of social distancing and gas prices, and it
5 was elevated, but we had Cristobal the following weekend, and
6 the storm had a front that led along with it, and so we had
7 deteriorating conditions all weekend long, when it hit on Monday
8 and late Sunday night of the previous weekend, and so it was
9 kind of a balancing act of increased effort on opening weekend
10 and then decreased on the next weekend, but, again, we're just
11 twenty-three days into the season.

12
13 Tails 'n Scales has the ability to measure effort on a daily
14 scale, immediately and in real time, which is a very valuable
15 thing, but, again, in the three years of stability we've
16 enjoyed, the accessibility is really being executed well, and
17 we're just proud of where it is, and those effort levels
18 increase when we get into July and August in all previous years,
19 and we expect it to do the same this year as well. Thank you.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Paul. Susan.

22
23 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have one question
24 for Patrick, and I have two questions for Paul. Patrick, when
25 is the Louisiana season projected to end?

26
27 **MR. BANKS:** We try our best not to do those kinds of
28 projections, because we know how many types of things can change
29 that during the season. I mean, we do some -- Let me try to
30 bring it back up, but we do try to put up some information based
31 on last season's harvest effort and effort over the data we have
32 this season, and I think the data that we have this season, if
33 you average that out and project it out, I want to say it's
34 sometime around the first part of August that it's projected to
35 end, but, again, that's based on two weekends worth of effort,
36 and we all know how that's going to change, and so we don't tend
37 to set an ending date, or a projected ending date, because of
38 the many factors that change that during the season.

39
40 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you very much. Paul, you had mentioned the
41 length of the seasons in 2018 and 2019, and, as Leann said, I
42 couldn't write fast enough, and so how many days did you all
43 have in 2018 and 2019? Then the second question is I understood
44 that you opened on Memorial Day, and is it consecutive days that
45 you all fish, and then you shut down in mid-July, or do you
46 eliminate the weekends? I was really confused.

47
48 **DR. MICKLE:** 2018 was seventy-six days, and 2019 was seventy-

1 nine days. Your second question, in 2020, we are open, and,
2 just like in 2018 and 2019, all week long. We are not weekends
3 only, but we do have a mid-season closure, to make sure that we
4 close out all of our trips, and so Tails 'n Scales has open
5 trips and closed trips, because of our trip number, and we do a
6 mid-season assessment, and our intent is to extend each year to
7 Labor Day, with a two to three-week closure in the middle, and
8 fishing weekdays and weekends, obviously except during that mid-
9 season closure.

10

11 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you.

12

13 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. I think I see Leann real quick, and
14 then we're going to move on, because we do have one more thing
15 to cover before our break.

16

17 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks, Martha. Paul, real quick, I wrote down 50
18 percent, round about, for Alabama, as far as percentage of quota
19 landed, and around 22 percent for Louisiana, and what is
20 Mississippi at? Do you know, round about?

21

22 **DR. MICKLE:** With being open today and yesterday, we don't have
23 the weekend totals, and I don't want to release the total from
24 last week yet, and it's hard to put a number, but it's right on
25 pace with what we expected. Right now, as we see it, we see us
26 making it, just like we have in the past, to Labor Day, barring
27 any sort of change in effort or things like that, but it seems
28 consistent with all prior years.

29

30 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thank you, Paul. Okay. Let's go
31 to our next item, and then we'll take a break. Next is Tab E,
32 Number 6, and Peter Hood is going to present the reef fish and
33 CMP landings. Take it away, Peter.

34

35 **REVIEW OF REEF FISH AND COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS LANDINGS**

36

37 **MR. PETER HOOD:** Thank you. While we're waiting for the
38 presentation to pop up, I just want to say this is the first
39 time I've given this report. If there's anything you feel like
40 you want to hear in the future, or don't want to hear in the
41 future, please feel free to mention it to me, and I'll make sure
42 that I include it.

43

44 I guess I should also mention right now too that, when you see
45 the data, we only have the Wave 1 information, and we don't have
46 Wave 2, and, of course, we know that there's been challenges
47 with sampling in Wave 2, and so it will be interesting to see
48 what happens in the future.

1
2 We will first go through the reef fish, and here we have
3 commercial landings and the ACTs and ACLs for gray triggerfish
4 and greater amberjack, and you can see that, as of the end of
5 May, 48 percent of the gray triggerfish ACL has been harvested,
6 and about 35 percent of the greater amberjack ACL has been
7 harvested, and, if you look at 2019 final landings, and I don't
8 know if Sue had those finalized at the January meeting, but we
9 stayed under the ACL for both species, the commercial ACL for
10 both species.

11
12 Here we have recreational landings for greater amberjack, and we
13 don't -- Again, we don't have any Wave 2 landings, and we
14 wouldn't expect to see any Wave 1 landings for this year,
15 because the season is closed through -- This is in June and
16 July, and then the fishing year starts in August, and you can
17 see that, to date, for greater amberjack, 34 percent of the ACL
18 has been harvested. Last year, they harvested 87 percent.

19
20 Here we have recreational landings for gag, gray triggerfish,
21 red grouper, and red snapper for-hire, and, since we don't
22 really have those Wave 2 landings, at least for what we have to
23 present, we've barely scratched the surface of the ACL, and so
24 we really don't have much there, but you can see that, last
25 year, for gag, red grouper, and the red snapper for-hire sector,
26 we were under our ACL, and we did exceed the gray triggerfish
27 ACL in 2019, and so we're certainly trying to monitor that
28 closely.

29
30 Next just shows what was reported to us by the different states
31 through their sampling programs under the 2019 exempted fishing
32 permit, and you can see that the states, based on those landings
33 compared to their ACL, ranged from about 75 percent for Florida,
34 and then the only state that exceeded their ACL was Louisiana,
35 but not by much, but about 4 percent, and you've heard about all
36 that.

37
38 These are for our stock ACLs, and so we have hogfish, lane
39 snapper, mutton snapper, and vermilion snapper, and you can see
40 that the percent of the ACL that's been harvested is between 6
41 percent for hogfish to 16 percent for lane snapper.
42 Unfortunately, somehow, we managed to miss gray snapper on this,
43 and, basically, between the recreational and commercial sectors,
44 what we had was 118,000 pounds that were landed, with an ACL of
45 2.42 million pounds, and that's about 4.9 percent of the ACL
46 that's been harvested.

47
48 I also wanted to just -- I did a quick and dirty look at the

1 commercial landings, just to see if they were off, and,
2 basically, what I did was I took the last five years of landings
3 for this January through most of May time period, just to see
4 how things compared, and so, for gray snapper, we had about
5 36,000 pounds landed, and that compared to an average of 41,000
6 pounds, and so they were about 88 percent of what they were for
7 that average of 2015 to 2019.

8
9 I also did it for mutton snapper, lane snapper, and vermilion
10 snapper, and, again, over that five-month period, if you compare
11 the average to what was landed in 2020, it ranged from 42
12 percent with mutton snapper to 67 percent with vermilion
13 snapper, and so it looks like landings are off, but, again, this
14 is just sort of a quick and dirty look at it, and certainly we
15 need to get into that in more detail later on.

16
17 Here we have the CMP landings, and this is for king mackerel
18 commercial, and you can see that, right now the -- Again, this
19 fishing year is July 1 through June 30, and most of the ACL has
20 been caught. Only the king mackerel northern zone is open, and
21 the gillnet fishery did not exceed its ACL this year. In
22 2018/2019, the final landings, the table below, they did exceed
23 their ACL. However, to compensate for that, their quota in
24 2019/2020 was not exceeded, and they did not exceed that quota,
25 or ACL.

26
27 This is recreational king mackerel, and so you can see that, so
28 far this year, only 14 percent of the ACL has been landed.
29 Again, we don't have Wave 2 landings to add to that, and, in
30 2018 to 2019, 37.6 percent were landed.

31
32 These are the commercial and recreational landings for Spanish
33 mackerel and cobia. Again, these are stock ACLs, and we can see
34 that, again, we're just scratching the surface of the ACLs for
35 both species, with right around 1 percent of the ACL being
36 harvested. Last year, king mackerel landed about -- Well, 26.6
37 percent of its ACL, and cobia was 39.4 percent. I think this is
38 the last slide, and so I guess, if anybody has any questions, I
39 would be happy to try to answer those.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thank you, Peter. Dale.

42
43 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** I don't have a question, but, while Peter had
44 the floor, I just wanted to congratulate him on his new position
45 with NOAA Fisheries. I think he was a great choice, and I look
46 forward to working closely with him in his new job.

47
48 **MR. HOOD:** Thank you.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Ditto. Patrick.

3
4 **MR. BANKS:** I will reiterate what Dale said as well.
5 Congratulations, Peter. I'm looking forward to working with
6 you. My question has to do with recreational amberjack and the
7 huge discrepancy between the September and October wave in this
8 current season, as opposed to that wave in the previous season.

9
10 It seems like that it was really that wave in the previous
11 season that effectively caused the closure, and it didn't allow
12 the season to open in May of 2019, but, this year, there was
13 such a -- There was a much less amount of fish harvested during
14 that wave, and have you guys had any thoughts or any kind of
15 analysis to try to understand what the difference is between the
16 two and why we could have had such a big difference?

17
18 Is there some analysis of maybe the error around the estimate
19 for that wave that would help us understand if those are truly
20 different numbers, or are they statistically different, and I
21 would think that they would, because there's such a large
22 discrepancy there, but any thoughts on why that's such a big
23 difference?

24
25 **MR. HOOD:** I can't really say. I will go back and talk with
26 some of our folks and see if I can provide you with an answer,
27 but, at this point, I'm just not sure what the answer is.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Any other questions for Peter?
30 Leann.

31
32 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Peter, I was just wondering,
33 and could we change one minor thing, and I was looking at the
34 recreational 2019 red snapper private angler preliminary
35 landings, and is there any way we could have a total at the
36 bottom, like you total them up and give me then the total
37 percentage overall for how we're doing on the quota right there,
38 the overall TAC?

39
40 Then my other question was -- So that's 2019, and I was
41 wondering, and is there any way that, when we have a meeting,
42 that we can get an update in here for whatever landings are
43 available through that meeting date, or a week or two before
44 that meeting date, I guess it would be, and there has to be a
45 cutoff, but is there any way that we could get that information
46 and have it in this report, the way we do for all the other
47 species when we have a meeting, and we get the most recent, up-
48 to-date data that we have?

1
2 **MR. HOOD:** We try to get things in for the briefing book as
3 early as we can, and so we do have to have a cutoff date. I
4 mean, we can try to extend it, and put it into maybe the second
5 briefing book, as opposed to the first briefing book, but I
6 think that would be about as good as we can do. That means it
7 would probably be like a week or two off, in terms of commercial
8 landings, and then, certainly with recreational landings, we're
9 dependent on when a wave is completed, and that is usually 45 to
10 60 days after a wave has ended, and so that's the date it can be
11 tallied and QA/QC'd, et cetera.

12
13 **MS. BOSARGE:** Just to follow-up, if I may, Madam Chair.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Go ahead.

16
17 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you. I was thinking specifically to -- We
18 can get all the data we need for the species that we're looking
19 at right here, and I meant, with our new program in place with
20 the states, I think we have to set up a protocol, I guess,
21 whereby we actually reach out to the states and have a cutoff
22 time, be it a week or two weeks before the meeting, to get
23 updated red snapper landings, whatever they have, and I realize
24 it's different for every state, and it would depend on the
25 timing of the meeting and when the wave is falling for Florida,
26 and then how much weekly data Mississippi, Alabama, and
27 Louisiana may have at that point, but I think we need to put in
28 place a standard protocol, where we reach out to the states and
29 try and get whatever data there is to get for each meeting, so
30 that we can have that information in our landings update.

31
32 **DR. CRABTREE:** Martha, if I could, to that point?

33
34 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure. Go ahead, Roy.

35
36 **DR. CRABTREE:** I think, Leann, that's fine, and, if the council
37 would like to have those updates, that would be fine, but I
38 think you need to request those from the states, and they would
39 need to provide you with the update of the state survey
40 landings, rather than the Fisheries Service.

41
42 **MS. BOSARGE:** I agree, Roy, and I think we just need to put in a
43 protocol that NMFS understands they will reach out to the states
44 before each meeting, and you will have a cutoff time, a week or
45 two before the meeting, that that would be submitted to NMFS, so
46 you can get it in our briefing book.

47
48 **DR. CRABTREE:** What I'm saying is I don't want to do it that

1 way. I want the council to reach out directly to the states and
2 have them provide the landings for the briefing book, or however
3 you want to do it, but I don't really want to be a go-between
4 between the council and the state surveys. I think you need to
5 get that information right from the horse's mouth and have the
6 states provide it.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Well, I think we can figure out a path
9 forward on that. It probably would be good to have some sort of
10 report that we could have it streamlined, rather than spend a
11 bunch of time going around the table. We've got a few more
12 hands here, and then we are pushing past our break, and so we're
13 going to move on. Susan.

14
15 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A quick comment to
16 Patrick's question about amberjack. I can tell you that the
17 fleet in Alabama just said they're not out there to catch, and
18 they just had a poor August, September, and October, and the
19 fish weren't there. Peter, I have one question, or, actually, I
20 have two. I see there is landings for amberjack in November and
21 December, and I don't recall any states being open for
22 amberjack, and so I guess those are people that didn't realize
23 the season was closed, and, number two, when we might expect the
24 numbers for Wave 2, and I guess it's too early to be asking
25 about Wave 3.

26
27 **MR. HOOD:** To your first point, yes, it was probably some people
28 who just weren't paying attention to what the regulations were
29 and ended up landing some fish when they shouldn't have, and,
30 with respect to the other issue, I think that certainly -- I
31 think everybody is interested in Wave 2, and certainly Wave 3,
32 information, and I think it should be ready by the next council
33 meeting, and so something you may want to request from either
34 our group or from the Science Center might be some sort of dive
35 into the recreational numbers, just to see what may have
36 happened.

37
38 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you. Tom.

39
40 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** I just wanted to, again, circle back to Leann's
41 point, and I understand what the request is, and I also
42 understand how Roy would like to proceed with that protocol, and
43 so I'll just work with Carrie and the staff here to make sure
44 that we request from the states those data and then pass it on
45 over to SERO, so they can include it in the updates. That's all
46 I've got, and so it's probably a good time for a break.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** It's 10:41 by my clock, and we are scheduled

1 for a fifteen-minute break, and so let's take that now, and
2 we'll come back shortly before 11:00.

3

4 **DR. FRAZER:** 10:55.

5

6 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Yes.

7

8 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

9

10 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Let's move on to our next item, and we have
11 several presentation and discussion items relative to
12 calibration for red snapper in the Gulf states. First under
13 this agenda item, we have a presentation by Dr. Richard Cody,
14 who is also in a new position, and so congratulations, Richard,
15 and I will also note that we are really on the schedule for this
16 item to be an hour for discussion, and so I may rein that in,
17 and so, without any further ado, Richard, you are up.

18

19 **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION ON CALIBRATION PROCESS FOR RED**
20 **SNAPPER WITH THE GULF STATES**

21

22 **DR. RICHARD CODY:** Thanks, Martha. What I have for the
23 presentation today is really a status update on calibrations,
24 but also just a follow-up to what the states already presented
25 on the status of their survey operations as well, and so I'll
26 present a little bit on where we are with the APAIS estimates
27 and MRIP estimates for Wave 2, and so those are the two items.

28

29 How did we get here? The Gulf survey calibrations were required
30 as part of the transition plan, which is part of the MRIP
31 certification, and so each state survey was required to have, in
32 their transition plan, a plan for transitioning to the new
33 survey methods.

34

35 The transition plans may require the development of
36 calibrations, to account for survey differences, and certainly
37 there are substantial differences between the MRIP estimates and
38 the state survey estimates, and so calibrations were required
39 for that.

40

41 I included two links here in this slide that point towards the
42 certification documentation and the procedural directives for
43 certification and transition, so you can find some other
44 information on it, but the reason for calibration really is
45 that, when you have multiple surveys in use, you have to have a
46 way to compare them, and I don't think there is any survey
47 statistician that likes the idea of calibrations, because it's
48 just seen as a necessary procedure that you have to go through

1 if you want to maintain continuity between different survey
2 methods and be able to compare the different methods, and so
3 they are needed for assessment and annual catch trends, and then
4 also for ACL monitoring.

5
6 A little bit about the survey timelines. Obviously, we've had
7 the state surveys in place now for several years. In the case
8 of LA Creel, basically, it was introduced in 2014 as a
9 replacement for MRIP in the State of Louisiana, and so, from
10 2014 onward, LA Creel has been the official survey of Louisiana
11 catch and effort.

12
13 We did have some benchmarking that went along after LA Creel was
14 instituted, and so, in 2015 through 2017, we continued the FES
15 benchmarking period, and so there's three years of comparisons
16 there for the FES with LA Creel effort estimates.

17
18 We did introduce the APAIS, re-introduce it, back into Louisiana
19 in 2015 for one year of benchmarking and a limited comparison,
20 and so there's only one year of APAIS to compare that overlaps
21 with LA Creel for comparison purposes.

22
23 Snapper Check was introduced in 2014, and it's not a complete
24 year in 2014, but it has been in place since. For benchmarking
25 purposes, we looked at, with guidance from Kevin and crew, a
26 benchmarking period of 2017 through 2019, and we focused on the
27 2018 and 2019 years.

28
29 For Tails 'n Scales, that was instituted in 2015, and it has
30 been going ever since, and we looked at a benchmarking period of
31 2018 and 2019 as the preferable years for calibration purposes,
32 and then, for the Gulf Reef Fish Survey, it was introduced early
33 in 2015, and it has been going ever since. Because it was a
34 component, or functioned as a component, of the MRIP draw, the
35 states weren't included all of the data for that period.

36
37 Just a recap on the general method that was used, and a simple
38 ratio-based approach was chosen, a method, and it has some pros
39 and some cons to it, but the pros are that it's relatively
40 easily implemented, and then the cons would be that it can be
41 fairly simple, and it's constrained by the limitations of the
42 data, and so you can have a ratio of better or not stable,
43 depending on the resolution of the data for comparison.

44
45 This approach was applied between MRIP and the state surveys,
46 and, when I talk about MRIP, I'm talking about the FES-based
47 MRIP estimates, and the reason we did this was because 2017 was
48 the last year of the CHTS-based surveys, and so FES replaced the

1 CHTS after that, and you will note that, in some of the cases
2 here, the comparisons were for the later years of the state
3 surveys versus the MRIP surveys, and so CHTS-based estimates
4 were not available for all.

5
6 The considerations for any kind of a calibration method, they
7 are varied, but you have to consider the minimum needs for ACL
8 development and annual trends, and survey compatibility is a
9 concern as well, in terms of the estimation domains and how well
10 they are aligned for comparisons and for production of ratios.
11 Then survey coverage can be an issue as well, where you may not
12 have the same geographic and temporal coverage of the surveys,
13 or you may not have the same resolution, either.

14
15 For these surveys, we were concentrating mostly on annual catch
16 estimates, and so the concerns weren't so much about the
17 resolution of the data, because of the methodology used, and
18 then the stability of the ratio really is a reflection of all
19 these other points, the minimum needs, survey compatibility, and
20 survey coverage.

21
22 There is quite a bit written on this slide, and I have a couple
23 of updates as well on the information, but the LA Creel
24 calibrations have been available for some time now, since 2018,
25 and Joey Shepherd and Harry Blanchet took the lead on producing
26 the calibrations for LA Creel, and we worked with them, and our
27 consultants, to provide some input on those calibrations.

28
29 As I mentioned, there was one year of FES overlap, or three
30 years of FES overlap and one year of APAIS, and so there was
31 limited catch information for comparison purposes there. The
32 surveys, by design, are fairly similar, and so that did help
33 with the production of the calibrations.

34
35 Alabama Snapper Check calibrations were ready earlier this year,
36 and Kevin and his crew provided the consultants with data to
37 look at and different estimation domains and different levels of
38 resolution, and the comparisons were made at the wave level as
39 well as the annual level, and, in the end, we looked at annual
40 ratios, because they were a little bit more stable, although we
41 did find that the wave level comparisons were informative on an
42 annual level, because, in some cases, you had situations that
43 could be explained by a lack of data, and having that wave-level
44 data helped to identify the reasons why the ratios were stable.

45
46 Mississippi Tails 'n Scales calibrations, the years used were
47 2018 and 2019, and that was at the request of DMR staff, Trevor
48 and Joe Jewell, and so Trevor used an R-based package to

1 generate a ratio of two population totals, and this is a
2 standard package that's been available for use in R from Tim
3 Johnson at the University of Idaho, and you can use it compare
4 regressions, and also you could -- It works with point estimates
5 as well as regression information.

6
7 Then the Gulf Reef Fish Survey calibrations, we had been working
8 with Florida, and, at the time that I produced this
9 presentation, Florida had been using an iterative process to
10 randomly select Gulf Reef Fish Survey and MRIP values and assign
11 them to a truncated nominal distribution, and so they were
12 increasing their sample sizes by resampling, using a resampling
13 protocol there, but, since then, and based on consultant input,
14 and also we just received the report from Florida on the methods
15 that they used, they are no longer pursuing the iterative
16 approach, and they are using a methodology that's more in line
17 with what the other states have used in just using straight
18 ratios for a comparison of the estimates.

19
20 This slide really is to sort of address some of the questions
21 that I heard earlier on, and there's a lot of questions about
22 what are the possible next steps, and the plan is, at this
23 point, to try to finalize the process of developing the
24 calibrations, but also to look towards the future, in terms of
25 how the calibrations may be refined with additional years of
26 data being available, and then, also, possible studies to look
27 at survey differences, to try and explain the differences
28 between the estimates, because it's one thing to calibrate, to
29 account for the differences, and it's another thing entirely to
30 try to explain those differences, but we feel like the logical
31 next step would be to conduct a workshop to finalize and present
32 the calibrations, and, right now, we're looking at July as a
33 possible date for this, given that there are some logistics
34 there in setting up a meeting, given the status of things right
35 now. It would have to be a virtual meeting.

36
37 Then one of the other considerations there would be data
38 management, and this goes back to Leann's concern about
39 accessibility of the data, and we have a transition working
40 group that's been set up, and it's a sub-group of the transition
41 team that was set up for MRIP, and it's made up of Gulf
42 participants, and the idea would be that -- It's also council
43 members.

44
45 The idea would be that the concerns, such as data management and
46 accessibility, could be brought up at this workshop and looked
47 at in terms of the next steps and who handles the data, are they
48 providing it through Gulf States, or are they obtaining it

1 directly from the states, and those are the kinds of questions
2 that could be addressed there, but we feel like this would be a
3 logical conclusion to the presentation of the calibrations.

4
5 Then the consideration that I brought up about refinement of
6 calibrations is that we have limited overlap here to produce the
7 ratio-based calibrations, and there are -- We would expect that
8 this will continue for a period of time, at least in the states,
9 and that there would be more data to compare as the years
10 continue, and so there would be options for updating the
11 calibrations, and that provides opportunities and other
12 considerations that would need to be addressed as well.

13
14 I think that might be the last slide in the calibration status,
15 and, yes, that was the last slide in the development of the
16 survey calibrations, and I don't know if it's appropriate here
17 to save the questions until I finish the talk or if you think I
18 should go ahead with the status of the MRIP survey operations at
19 this point and save the questions for last. I will leave that
20 open to the Chair to decide.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I am not seeing any hands raised.

23
24 **DR. FRAZER:** I was just going to say it's probably in the best
25 interest to just move on at this point.

26
27 **DR. CODY:** Okay. Well, just following up on the information
28 provided by the states, in terms of the status of the
29 supplemental and general survey operations, I have here a status
30 of MRIP survey operations, and I'm just going to sort of
31 identify the main concerns, as they pertain to Waves 2 and 3 at
32 this point, and so we have very limited dockside survey coverage
33 for Waves 2 and 3.

34
35 We have some data from early to mid-March, but sampling
36 activities were largely suspended in April and May in most
37 states, with a patchy distribution of intercept data for those
38 months, in most cases.

39
40 What was pointed out to me at an Atlantic States directors
41 meeting recently was that they have concerns over partial data
42 for Wave 2, and possibly 3, because March is not necessarily a
43 good proxy for April, in terms of species that are targeted and
44 the type of fisheries that are prosecuted for those two months,
45 and we heard concerns from North Carolina and others on that
46 end.

47
48 As far as the fishing effort survey is concerned, and the for-

1 hire telephone survey, both of those surveys were able to
2 continue, and we encouraged the states to have the for-hire
3 fleet participate as much as possible, so that we could at least
4 continue to get for-hire telephone data, and I'm happy to say
5 that the states were very accommodating in this respect, and all
6 of the states, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, increased the
7 number of calls that they made, and Florida, I think, doubled
8 their sample size, whereas Mississippi and Alabama were able to
9 increase theirs by 50 percent, to get as much information as
10 they could on a weekly basis.

11
12 We had discussions with the Gulf States about obtaining some of
13 the for-hire data and making it available to the Southeast
14 Regional Office and Science Center, so that they could look at
15 trends in the reporting information, and not necessarily
16 calculating effort at a higher resolution, but just looking at
17 trends overall.

18
19 Those two surveys, as I said, were able to continue, and are
20 expected, basically, to produce estimates on their regular
21 schedule, or maybe delayed just slightly, while we're going
22 through the review process right now. The APAIS information
23 does play a role in the overall effort estimates, and I want to
24 -- There's two things, in terms of the overall Fishing Effort
25 Survey estimates.

26
27 It provides an accounting of the out-of-state fishing effort and
28 also the area fished, and so I would caution, even in the
29 interpretation of the state survey results, in looking at trends
30 just in that information, and there is the possibility that
31 effort may have been displaced, and so if it appears, for
32 instance, in one of the state surveys that there has been a
33 reduction, or an increase, in effort, it should be taken into
34 consideration that that pertains to that fishery, and there may
35 have been some displacement in the other fisheries.

36
37 With the FES, we use the APAIS information to get at the area
38 fished, and that tells us something about the types of species
39 that are being targeted for those fisheries and how the effort
40 was allocated towards those, and so there's limited area fished
41 information available for the for-hire telephone survey. We do
42 obtain some as part of the telephone survey, in terms of the
43 waters fished and species targeted.

44
45 Just an update of where we are, in terms of the procedures that
46 we might have to follow going forward, but we're continuing to
47 monitor our survey operations for Wave 3, and we've had
48 discussions with several states, on the Atlantic and in the

1 Gulf, as far as how they want to phase-in sampling activities,
2 and so we're trying to work with them to produce sample draws
3 that can accommodate this phased-in approach, and, as I
4 mentioned, this is done through regular contact with the states
5 and with the Gulf States Commission.

6
7 As I said earlier, the states have accommodated a larger sample
8 size for the for-hire telephone survey and are making raw data
9 available through the Gulf States Commission to the Southeast
10 Regional Office and the Science Center.

11
12 Options for production though of Wave 2 catch estimates, or MRIP
13 catch estimates, are pretty limited at this point. What we're
14 doing is looking at a variety of different options that might be
15 available to us, for instance modeling approaches. The issue
16 with modeling is that it would take time, and so, I mean, it's
17 foreseeable that it could take several months to come up with an
18 approach that might be feasible.

19
20 The other thing we're looking at are imputation methods based on
21 last year or previous years of data, or APAIS information, and I
22 think you heard earlier on that some of the catch rates remain
23 fairly similar, but it doesn't -- You have to make some
24 assumptions there on how applicable the previous years of data
25 would be to this year, and I think there may be questions
26 regarding the validity of those assumptions.

27
28 One thing that we tried to do to get some support for
29 assumptions that we would have to make in those cases is that we
30 looked at options to inform consideration of proxy catch
31 information from other years, and one way of getting at some of
32 this information is try to conduct an additional survey that
33 gets at fishing behaviors over the waves, or over the months,
34 that we didn't get reliable APAIS data.

35
36 We developed a retrospective questionnaire that could function
37 as an add-on to the APAIS, and we went through the process of
38 trying to get that approved through the White House Office of
39 Management and Budget, and I have to say they weren't convinced
40 of the utility of the survey and that it could achieve what it
41 was intended to achieve, and so I'm not too optimistic that we
42 will get this in place anytime soon, but we are still pursuing
43 that as a potential way to get information that could help us at
44 least justify the use of previous years of data as a proxy and
45 then how the data are treated as well. That's basically where
46 we are.

47
48 The thing I will just reiterate is that we expect to have effort

1 estimates, albeit that they will be for resident angler effort,
2 and they won't include out-of-state effort, and they won't have
3 the adjustments that we would normally get from APAIS for the
4 areas fished, and so it will be limited, in that respect, and,
5 the for-hire data, we are now reviewing that as well and looking
6 at that to see how much information we can actually get on the
7 area fished and how much we can say about the reduction of
8 effort that has been at least anecdotally reported, but I think
9 it's fairly widely reported for all states at this point for the
10 for-hire fleet. That's where we are right now. If you have any
11 questions, I would be glad to take those.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thank you, Richard. I'm going to
14 give folks a minute to put hands up, if they have a question,
15 but I also want to ask you one. Could you let us know the
16 status of the report from that September 2018 meeting in New
17 Orleans about integration and calibration of Gulf red snapper
18 data, the state data and MRIP? Do you have a timeline of when
19 we will see that report?

20
21 **DR. CODY:** Yes, and that report was delayed for a number of
22 reasons, and one of the reasons was that we had the white paper
23 that was released mid-year last year, and it felt like having
24 two reports out there at the same time would add to some of the
25 confusion surrounding the options that were available.

26
27 We felt, at that time too, that it was best to hold off on
28 releasing that report, for that reason, and that, potentially,
29 once we had the calibrations more or less finalized, that they
30 could be added as an addendum to the report, with information or
31 context provided from the white paper that would help to
32 finalize the report. I see a good date for finishing up that
33 report to be prior to the workshop that hopefully we can
34 schedule for July, prior to the August council meeting. I don't
35 know if that answers your question.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Yes, it does. I'm going to go to Kevin next.

38
39 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for asking that
40 question, and that was one of my questions that I wanted an
41 answer to as well, as Richard outlined the process, or
42 processes, of the MRIP staff reaching out to the states to do
43 some of this preliminary work associated with calibration, and
44 it's been a long process, and Martha mentioned the fall of 2018
45 meeting.

46
47 That consultant report, although I've been told it's brief and
48 doesn't contain much, could have been helpful as part of the

1 discussions, and just one thing that I wanted to point out,
2 Richard, on a comment you made relative to your presentation and
3 Alabama's participation in the benchmarking, and this is on page
4 3, or Slide 3, I guess, of your presentation, where you provide
5 the years of benchmarking for each of the state surveys, and,
6 although we did provide data in 2017 through 2019, you did
7 mention that the calibration that's proposed, that we're going
8 to be discussing here in a few minutes, was based off of the
9 2018 and 2019 years, as I recall, and that we used the three-
10 year time period because those were the years where Snapper
11 Check was certified, or approved, using certified methods and
12 methodology and that 2017 had a large discrepancy in the
13 landings, much larger than the 2018 and 2019.

14
15 I think part of the discussion as to why that was is that we
16 determined that there was inconsistencies in that year, and that
17 was the last year that the states had inconsistent seasons, and
18 that was the year, the weird year, where the federal season was
19 opened after the initial three-day season was announced, and so
20 another reason there, but certainly inconsistent seasons played
21 a role, I think, in that disparity, and so I just wanted to
22 point out that and make an observation about that. Thank you.

23
24 **DR. CODY:** That's a good point, Kevin. The 2017 data, and they
25 were looked at by the consultants, and they did find that the
26 ratios were not that stable for those years, at the wave level
27 or the annual level. As Kevin pointed out, there were
28 inconsistencies between the data, in terms of data availability
29 from MRIP as well as matching of the data between the two
30 surveys.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Leann.

33
34 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Dr. Cody,
35 for coming and giving us this update. I was excited to see, in
36 your next steps, that you have a bullet there that is going to
37 examine survey differences to explain the differences in the
38 estimates, and, as you know, that's something that I've been
39 passionate about for the past several meetings, probably for the
40 last several years, and I would like to dive a little deeper
41 into that, if you give us a little more information on when will
42 that start and how long will it take.

43
44 The reason, to me, that that's very important is because you
45 essentially, for any given year in the more recent years here,
46 you have three different possible landings numbers. You have
47 old MRIP landings numbers, and you have new MRIP, FES MRIP,
48 landings numbers, and then, if you were to total all the states

1 together, you have the states landings numbers, for red snapper
2 anyway, and some states for others.

3
4 The question, in my mind, is which one of those sets of numbers
5 is more accurate, and I'm sure none of them are pinpoint
6 accuracy, but one of them has to be more accurate, and it has to
7 be closer to the true number, but there's only one real number,
8 and that's important, because one of the things that was
9 discussed in that New Orleans meeting that somebody was asking
10 about when will we get the report for it was the idea of, if we
11 do believe that one of those landings estimates is a little
12 closer to the real number, then there can be a weighting factor
13 put on that, as you try and go through some of these
14 calibrations, because these affect a lot of different things.

15
16 When will we get to that, because, really, that is the point --
17 Once we have that information, and we put a weighting factor on
18 it, if need be, that's when we have our more finalized
19 calibrations and landings, true landings, numbers that we're
20 going to use in management for a lot of different decisions.

21
22 **DR. CODY:** That's a very good question, and a comparison between
23 the surveys would take time, and the pilot studies that we have
24 been dealing with with MRIP have been one to three years, and
25 that doesn't necessarily mean that you can address all of the
26 differences.

27
28 Like you said, we have several different surveys, and all
29 surveys have non-sampling error to the survey, and, as I said
30 earlier on, it's very difficult to pinpoint exactly which survey
31 is the most accurate, and, also, it's even harder to guess an
32 idea of where those differences exist, but we do have an
33 opportunity with these surveys, because we have several
34 different surveys that are out there, that compare MRIP to
35 those, we're limited, in that we would be focusing on one state,
36 and it doesn't necessarily mean that the results that apply to
37 one survey are applicable to one of the others.

38
39 It's a difficult process, I think, to logistically put on the
40 ground, and we had discussed with some of the Gulf states, at
41 the Gulf Commission meeting, the potential for looking at some
42 of these differences, and one of the ways that we were looking
43 at was to change the APAIS survey so that it was more like the
44 Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and vice versa, and compare the two and
45 see if the answers for the Gulf Reef Fish Survey more closely
46 match what MRIP does, and vice versa for MRIP and the Gulf Reef
47 Fish Survey, but these kinds of changes take time to put in
48 place.

1
2 The other aspect of it is how we account for unsampled effort,
3 for instance, and I will use the Gulf Reef Fish Survey again as
4 an example, because I'm a bit more familiar with it, I think.
5 What is used in that is, even though both of them are mail
6 surveys, they use very different ways to get at off-frame
7 effort.

8
9 One asks a question about your state of residence, and the other
10 asks a question about whether you have a Gulf reef fish
11 subscription, and so that's two different ways to get off-frame
12 effort, and so I would -- I guess what I'm trying to say is that
13 I would try to caution against there being a definitive answer
14 about which survey is correct and which one is wrong.

15
16 I think that there are questions of accuracy with any kind of
17 survey that is put in place, as long as there is non-sampling
18 error that we can't account for, and so it's going to be -- I
19 would say that would be one of the focuses of that workshop, to
20 outline a plan going forward that we can look at the different
21 surveys and do comparisons, so that we can get at those
22 differences. That is sort of a long-winded way of answering
23 your question, or skirting it, but the short answer is that it
24 will take some time.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Richard. The next hand is Paul Mickle.

27
28 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you, Martha. Yes, I think we can all agree
29 that the calibration process is hugely intricate, because we're
30 dealing with -- I don't know. We deal with old MRIP data, I
31 guess, and then the FES, and then individual state data and
32 programs, and it's just a complicated issue, and that's the only
33 point that I want to make on that.

34
35 The other is, similar to what Kevin said, although I want to
36 make a different point about it, but that slide showing the
37 benchmark years that Richard presented, I want to just emphasize
38 that we didn't recommend the use of the two years for
39 Mississippi, 2018 and 2019. It was recommended to use those two
40 years, as they were the only years available with, I guess,
41 consistent data in them, because those are EFP years.

42
43 The issue with that, and this is the major point I want to make,
44 is that, for example, in 2018, there was -- Louisiana opened up
45 early in the year and showed some very large landings in times
46 where Tails 'n Scales was not operating, but MRIP was operating,
47 and so, when you start calibrating one data stream to another,
48 with inconsistent seasons, there's a problem, and I think a lot

1 of people would agree with that.

2

3 My major issue is that using two years of data or three years of
4 data to go through a calibration process, from a power analysis
5 perspective of trying to do ratio-based calibrations with such
6 small sample sizes, is borderline, or I feel fairly confident,
7 just as a scientist, saying it's inappropriate in that process.
8 There needs to be more years, if we're going to calibrate, and I
9 just don't understand why we're taking on calibration ratios and
10 trying to move forward on such small sample sizes when it's just
11 statistically inappropriate to do so, because of such things as
12 the examples of what Kevin brought up, as well as what I'm
13 bringing up.

14

15 Just I really think the consultants are missing that in the
16 calibration process, because of the seasonality and the
17 regionality and individuality of each state's program. Now,
18 they are calibrating with NOAA individually with each state,
19 but, again, the differences between each state I don't think are
20 being taken into account on the whole calibration process
21 overall.

22

23 I think they're taking it into account by each state, but
24 they're missing the picture, in the process, by not looking at
25 how to calibrate with so many variations in season and
26 regionality, when we're just doing it on an individual basis,
27 and then throwing them all into a pot and trying to do some sort
28 of Gulf-wide calibration, and it just doesn't make sense
29 scientifically.

30

31 Just overall, from my point of view, it just doesn't seem to
32 make much sense, and, also, in the overall scheme of things, I
33 think it needs to move forward in a way where there's a little
34 bit more attention paid to understanding these ratio-based --
35 Some sort of calibration discussion on showing why the
36 individualities are being becoming present in that sense. Thank
37 you.

38

39 **DR. CODY:** Paul, if I can address that, at least the way that we
40 approached this was that there are differences between the
41 surveys, and you know, for instance, on a given year, that the
42 estimates of one are X times larger than the other, and so you
43 have a way of converting one standard to the other, and it's a
44 simple ratio, and it's not unprecedented for that to be used in
45 stock assessment realms for other types of adjustments.

46

47 With years of data, and with inconsistencies in those ratios,
48 depending on what resolution you look at them, it's better to

1 have more years of data, and the issue here, with these surveys,
2 is that more years of data will become available as we go on,
3 and we do need to have some way of saying how we're going to
4 handle those additional years of data, and that may be
5 informative when it comes to developing calibrations.

6
7 As far as the comparisons between states, you're exactly right.
8 I mean, basically, we have a conversion between each individual
9 state and the MRIP CHTS, in this case, and that's based on an
10 adjustment that has been made, because we don't have FES-based
11 ACLs in place, and so we have to do conversions in FES, and so,
12 if you are to compare the quota between the states, they're not
13 necessarily on a one-to-one basis, because those calibrations
14 pertain to each individual state and not across states, and I
15 would say it that way.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Next, we have Roy.

18
19 **DR. ROY CRABTREE:** Coming back to Leann's question, and it ties
20 in a little to Paul's comments about trying to understand why
21 we're getting different results and which one is closer to the
22 actual magnitude of the catch, and I have asked that question
23 myself many times, because certainly life would be easier if
24 they were all giving us very similar answers, but that's not
25 where we find ourselves, but I think the key is it's going to
26 take time to sort that out, and it's going to likely take
27 several years, and so we are where we are, and we can't really
28 say, okay, this survey is the closest to the truth, and this one
29 is off, because we just don't know.

30
31 I think what is critical here is to ensure that we are comparing
32 like estimates, that we are comparing apples-to-apples, and
33 that's been a problem with the state surveys and our management
34 program for the last couple of years, and the tool we have
35 needed, to adjust for that problem and make sure that we're
36 putting everything into a common currency and the numbers are
37 comfortable, are these calibrations, and we've talked about this
38 any number of times over the years in the development of
39 Amendment 50, and we addressed it in the final rule to Amendment
40 50, and that's going to be the basis of the next discussion
41 topic we're coming to, which is the letter from the Ocean
42 Conservancy and the actual implications of the calibration model
43 and state quotas.

44
45 I think there is no disputing that we need to make sure that the
46 numbers we're using to set the quotas coming out of the
47 assessment are comparable to the numbers that are coming out of
48 the surveys we're using to monitor the catches, and I think

1 that's something that we have to address now.

2
3 I think it's a process, and I think we'll come back to it
4 repeatedly as we get new assessments, but that's typical of
5 everything we do. The science evolves, and we get new
6 assessments, and we update things, and we move forward. Thank
7 you, Madam Chairman.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thank you, Roy. Clay.

10
11 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of points,
12 both of the basically agreeing with Roy. You can't get away
13 from the conversion issue. It's kind of like somebody sets the
14 price for an item in U.S. dollars and then someone comes and
15 tries to buy it with Canadian dollars, and you have to do the
16 conversion. There's just no way around that.

17
18 The next point is a question, I think, for Richard. It sounds
19 like we're kind of in a conundrum, and, at some point, we might
20 be able to understand why the estimates are giving us different
21 -- Why the estimates between the states and the FES are so
22 different, but not which one is more correct, and so I wonder,
23 Richard, if maybe you could talk a little bit about some ways
24 that we actually could get at which one is more correct, and I'm
25 thinking about, for instance, from the State of Florida on the
26 east coast, it's estimating the landings of red snapper, they
27 just count boats going through passes, and then you have some
28 fraction of them of that are intercepted that you can figure out
29 whether they were fishing or not, and can we do something like
30 that.

31
32 It's more localized than Gulf-wide or east-coast-wide perhaps,
33 but, at least if you did that, where you were really confident,
34 and I mean you really blanket the effort, and it may be
35 expensive, but, if we all work together and we really get a good
36 handle on what that effort is, we could compare it to the other
37 ways that we're estimating effort.

38
39 **DR. CODY:** There is a study going on in Louisiana, and Patrick
40 can correct me here, that looks at vessel traffic, basically, as
41 an estimate of effort, and they take -- I think Venice Marina is
42 one of the locations that they looked at, but there is the
43 potential for that type of a survey, but I would caution that
44 it's still a survey, and so blanketing that effort and making
45 sure that you account for all effort would be a challenge, and
46 probably fairly costly, when it comes to the red snapper
47 fishery, which extends throughout the Gulf, and so there are
48 points where you could maybe regionalize that and get some

1 estimates based on a given region, in terms of boat effort going
2 on, and there are a few chokepoints that you could look at,
3 possibly, but I think those are the kinds of things that we
4 would discuss at the workshop, in terms of what we could, in all
5 feasibility, try to accomplish, and it would be a costly
6 undertaking. So that's one example.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks for bringing that up, Clay, and so we've
9 done some of that in Florida on the west coast of Florida as
10 well, in the Panhandle. I think, at our last in-person meeting,
11 there were some slides in Bev Sauls' report, but, yes, we've
12 done some of that in Florida, and it looks like the Gulf Reef
13 Fish Survey was more accurately predicting effort, at least for
14 the Florida Panhandle, where we do have those chokepoints.
15 Next, I have Paul and then Kevin.

16
17 **DR. MICKLE:** Thanks, Martha. I do like Clay's point of taking
18 that kind of blanket or large-scale approach of taking on that
19 effort, because I think that's a good way of providing that
20 calibratory metric that could somewhat bring it in, and it's
21 almost like that Great Snapper Count. This could be the Great
22 Snapper Snatcher Count, which would provide that data stream,
23 which would help, obviously.

24
25 My comment is towards kind of just the State of Mississippi and
26 showing how -- I want to share with the group that it seems like
27 the FES is probably the most different from Tails 'n Scales and
28 the other states surveys, as FES is showing catches -- I'm
29 sorry. Landings, but between 800 and 1,000 percent different
30 than Tails 'n Scales.

31
32 We have invested a little bit of time and effort in doing a mail
33 survey, very similar to FES, in Mississippi, and I would like to
34 just share, most likely, hopefully with the SSC, of maybe why
35 FES is providing such large numbers compared to other state
36 surveys, as well as Mississippi, and we've talked about it on
37 the record many times at this council, and a lot of folks,
38 including folks at NOAA, don't really know why the numbers are
39 so much larger, but the State of Mississippi has done a little
40 bit of analysis that we would like to share on our hypothesis on
41 why FES really doesn't work in Mississippi. Thank you.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. I've got Kevin and then Leann and then
44 Dale, and then I'm guessing that's going to take us to noon, and
45 then we're going to break. Go ahead, Kevin.

46
47 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to follow-up on Roy's
48 comments and Clay's comments, I appreciate Roy's comments

1 talking about the time it takes to go through these things and
2 to kind of really analyze the data and understand it and be able
3 to get to the point to try to explain and get to a place where
4 you've got more apples-to-apples like conditions or analysis,
5 and I appreciate Clay's comments to look at little wider, or use
6 some different methodologies, to try to get at the issue of
7 estimating effort.

8
9 Florida has that survey, and so, using that information, they've
10 been doing that, or attempting to do that, for the last several
11 years, on the east coast at least. We're going to be installing
12 a camera at Perdido Pass, which probably accounts for 50 to 60
13 percent of all the trips that are occurring in Alabama, and
14 there is software available out there that you can program to
15 tell it what type of shape to look at, and they can provide the
16 length of the shape, based on the distance it is from the
17 camera, and you can point the camera at the pass, and it can
18 count boats coming in, and it can count boats coming out, and it
19 can probably even be good enough to count headboats, charter
20 boats, or big boats, at least.

21
22 We're going to be doing that and trying to gather some estimates
23 on effort here in the coming years, using that method, but
24 that's just a carryover, an extension, of work that Dr. Sean
25 Powers has done for us using cameras placed at boat ramps at
26 coastal locations throughout Alabama, and we've got estimates of
27 effort during snapper season going back to 2012, and Paul talks
28 about the disparities in the data, and we're talking about
29 estimates, trip estimates, through the camera data that are 10
30 to 20 to 30 percent of the trips that are made through Snapper
31 Check.

32
33 We think that we've got some good data sources that are going to
34 try to look at the issue from a different perspective, rather
35 than just a survey-based type thing, when you're trying to deal
36 with anglers and trying to deal with recall bias and all these
37 other issues that come up with the type of surveys and the data
38 that we're dealing with, and so it's encouraging to hear that
39 there's willingness to further explore this issue, so that we
40 can try to better understand the historical recreational data.
41 Thank you.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Kevin. Leann.

44
45 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to say
46 thanks to Clay. Dr. Porch, you always give answers that I can
47 understand, which is very helpful, and you offer real-world
48 solutions that are actually able to be carried out and maybe

1 provide us some information in a reasonable timeframe, because I
2 agree with Dr. Mickle.

3
4 If we have three landings estimates for any given species that
5 were in the realm of each other, that were just a hair off from
6 each other, that would be one thing, but we have this one
7 landings estimate that is light years from the others. I mean,
8 800 percent Dr. Mickle said, and that's extreme, and that is
9 what we've got to explain, and, at that point, when they're that
10 vastly different, we have to figure out which one is more
11 accurate and close to the real number, and I would love to see
12 Dr. Mickle's information on why he thinks there is differences
13 presented to the SSC, to at least spur some discussion, at some
14 point in the future.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Leann. Dale.

17
18 **MR. DIAZ:** I agree with most of what Leann just said and what
19 Paul said. I'm going to ramble for just a minute, because I'm
20 thinking about something that's a little different, and maybe
21 you all can help me a little bit understand some stuff.

22
23 A while back, when FES numbers starting coming to light, I had a
24 conversation with one of the NMFS staff about king mackerel, and
25 they were telling me, and I don't know the number for red
26 snapper off the top of my head, but I do remember the
27 conversation, and they were saying that -- You can look it up
28 online and look all this information up, but that the effort,
29 the recreational effort on king mackerel, according to FES, was
30 about double what we thought it was.

31
32 In that conversation with them, it came out that the stock size
33 might have been a lot bigger than we thought it was all along,
34 if that much effort was -- If effort was that much greater all
35 along, and so what I had thought, after we had that
36 conversation, and that might have even been said on the record
37 some time, and I don't know, but, if somebody disagrees with
38 that, they can say something about it, but I had always thought
39 that we would never figure out this stock size until the next
40 stock assessment.

41
42 We're fixing to get a new stock assessment on mackerel, and I
43 guess these FES numbers will be in there, and we'll see if that
44 affects the stock size, and maybe Dr. Porch could speak to that,
45 but, to me, if FES also has a similar effect, where there's more
46 effort for red snapper, which I'm sure it does, and I've seen
47 that in the past, and I don't remember the numbers right now,
48 but, when we get the next stock assessment, I hope it reflects

1 that in the stock size, and, until we get that -- I mean, I
2 think that's one big part of this equation that's not here.
3
4 When I think about Dr. Porch's example of if you're going to buy
5 something, and you've got U.S. currency and Chinese currency,
6 you've got to come up with a value of it, but, if one of those
7 currencies, if the value of it is based off of extremely old
8 data, that might not reflect accurately what that currency is
9 worth, and I think that's at least something that I can't really
10 come to grips with, and maybe somebody could speak to that.
11 Thank you very much.

12
13 **DR. CODY:** The CHTS has been in place since 2018, and so we're
14 in our third year, basically, of the FES estimates. To make the
15 calibrations for the FES and the CHTS -- (Part of Dr. Cody's
16 comment is not audible on the recording.) -- the less reliable
17 those are probably going to be, and so the projections that
18 would be made based on CHTS for next year, a calibration to
19 adjust the -- (Part of Dr. Cody's comment is not audible on the
20 recording.)

21
22 My point here is that we have an additional step in place to
23 take the different state estimates and, with the FES -- (Part of
24 Dr. Cody's comment is not audible on the recording.) As far as
25 the --

26
27 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Did we lose Richard? Let's go to Greg and then
28 see if Richard reappears.

29
30 **DR. GREG STUNZ:** I just wanted to follow-up on what calibrations
31 might go back to the stock size, and that is really important
32 coming up, but, also, Dale, that was exactly what was driving
33 the Great Red Snapper Count, to get a better idea on -- Just to
34 let everyone know, it might help shed some light on some of the
35 issues that you're bringing up.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Richard, are you on the line? Go ahead, Ed.

38
39 **MR. ED SWINDELL:** (Mr. Swindell's comment is not audible on the
40 recording.)

41
42 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Clay, and then we are breaking.

43
44 **DR. PORCH:** -- the existing assessment, you almost certainly
45 will come up with much higher ABC estimates that will estimate
46 that the population -- (Part of Dr. Porch's comment is not
47 audible on the recording.)

48

1 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Clay. John, are you able to speak now?

2
3 **MR. SANCHEZ:** In terms of effort sampling, it seems to me that
4 all the suggestions I've heard are for sampling everything but
5 fish. We're looking at sampling vessel trips and traffic, which
6 I think technology has evolved to that point. Thank you.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, John. I see Richard is back on the
9 line. We're going to wrap up his comments, and then we will go
10 to lunch.

11
12 **DR. CODY:** Apologies about that. We are involved now with the
13 Marine Advisories Fisheries Committee, MAFAC, reporting for
14 options for fisheries data collection. I will point out that
15 there are some statistical considerations to having every single
16 boat go out there with electronic reporting devices, even though
17 the technology is available, and actually getting them to use
18 it, and that's a challenge, and so I would -- Surveys are a
19 necessary, I think a necessary, way of getting at data, and part
20 of the point that I will make here is that cost has to be taken
21 into the statistical logistics of implementing different survey
22 designs, but we are involved right now with the MAFAC committee,
23 a taskforce, to look at fisheries data collection for the
24 recreational sector. We're hoping that will be ready within
25 twelve months.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks for that helpful information. We are
28 scheduled to come back at 1:00. The next items for this deal
29 with the Ocean Conservancy letter and response.

30
31 **DR. FRAZER:** We will take an hour break, and this is clearly an
32 important discussion, and we will allocate an hour after lunch
33 to the calibration issues, but no more than that, and the goal
34 from coming out of that discussion will be to have a plan moving
35 forward that people are comfortable with, but, again, if we take
36 that hour to do that, if it takes that long, we'll make some
37 adjustments to the schedule, and I will talk to Martha over
38 lunch of how to do that, and so, anyway, everybody enjoy your
39 hour, and we'll see you back at 1:00.

40
41 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on June 16, 2020.)

42
43 - - -

44
45 June 16, 2020

46
47 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

48

1
2
3 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
4 Management Council re convened via webinar on Tuesday afternoon,
5 June 16, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Martha Guyas.
6

7 Note: This section of the minutes, Page 44, line 20 through
8 Page 53, line 5, were transcribed using recordings that were
9 partially inaudible due to local, Tampa, FL internet outages and
10 nationwide cell network outages.
11

12 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Our next items are the Ocean Conservancy letter
13 and NMFS response to that, and we have SERO staff listed on the
14 agenda to cover that, and I'm not sure if that's Roy, Andy, or
15 someone else, but go ahead, SERO.
16

17 **DR. CRABTREE:** Yes, I'll talk about the letter. We did get a
18 letter from the Ocean Conservancy. It was sent to us, and,
19 essentially, it asks that NMFS undertake a temporary rule. This
20 is a comment -- Andy, if you want to go ahead, with Martha's
21 permission.
22

23 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Please, Andy.
24

25 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** There's a couple of things that I want to
26 mention right out of the gate. One is this is very preliminary,
27 and this is our first, obviously, attempt at calibrating the
28 state sub-quotas, and we have already been in coordination
29 contact with both the State of Louisiana and the State of
30 Alabama and discussed these numbers with them, and we are open
31 to continuing to have conversations with other states regarding
32 these calibrations.
33

34 As was mentioned earlier, there's essentially multiple
35 calibrations that have to be conducted here, and so there's a
36 calibration to scale the current sub-quotas, which are in the
37 old MRIP currency, the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, to
38 scale those up to the new effort survey, and we used a time
39 series of data for each state, in order to scale those landings
40 up, and then we then calibrated to the state survey data
41 relative to the effort survey data, and so that was a secondary
42 calibration.
43

44 The one exception was Louisiana, because they had provided a
45 calibration factor that calibrated directly to the Coastal
46 Household Telephone Survey. The bottom line is that the State
47 of Alabama and the State of Mississippi calibrations would be
48 reduced considerably, in terms of their sub-quotas relative to

1 their current sub-quotas. Florida's would go up slightly, and,
2 based on at least conversations we've had with Louisiana and
3 some additional information, it looks like Louisiana's will
4 actually remain fairly close to what their current sub-quota is.

5
6 The reason for that is, when we had calibrated the estimates for
7 this meeting, we were using effort information that the State of
8 Louisiana had provided for the calibration, and that is really
9 used, or based, on data that they're using for calibrating their
10 inshore landings and from the LA Creel data.

11
12 Patrick could probably speak to this better. What they are
13 seeing is that the landings catch rates are the calibration
14 factor needs to account for federal -- higher under LA Creel,
15 but the effort estimates tend to be less, and so the calibration
16 factor needs to account for -- Those will be refined and
17 finalized. That's really all I wanted to cover, and I would be
18 happy to answer any questions.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thank you, Andy. I'm going to give people a
21 few people to put hands up. I'm certain there are some
22 questions.

23
24 **DR. CRABTREE:** What you see from this is that it does make quite
25 a difference, and, if you just implement the calibrations --
26 There are different ways though to get at this, and you could
27 get at this through some re-jiggering of state-by-state
28 allocations, to try and even things up, or you could probably
29 get at this through an across-the-board buffer, or you could --
30 We all, I think, support this program, and I know I certainly
31 do, and it made the last couple of years a lot easier, and I
32 think it's addressed a lot of problems, but this is a challenge
33 that we have, and I think we have to deal with this.

34
35 How exactly we do that, I think you need to figure out, but my
36 advice to you would be to direct your staff to start working on
37 some options to come back and review at the August meeting, and
38 then, in the meantime, the MRIP folks will hold these workshops
39 with the states and finalize the numbers, and then we can come
40 back with some revised estimates in August.

41
42 I do believe, even with revisions that may occur, it's still
43 going to remain a not inconsequential amount of fish, and so I
44 don't think this issue is going to just go away, and I think we
45 are going to have to deal with it.

46
47 **DR. FRAZER:** On the discussion that we've had, the comments that
48 Roy made, it's important to have a meeting with the folks at S&T

1 and the states, to make sure that at least understanding how the
2 calibrations were arrived at, the math involved, and, if we can
3 in fact have that meeting in July, and I would urge Richard and
4 his group and the states to work together to make that happen,
5 even if it's in a virtual platform.

6
7 Once we have those data, an understanding of how the
8 calibrations were arrived at, we can take that to the SSC in
9 late July, which I think is an important part of this process,
10 and then, ultimately, as Roy pointed out, if we can direct the
11 staff to develop alternatives how to address the issue, we can
12 take that up in our August meeting.

13
14 Again, it was a big challenge to get the state programs in
15 place, and I think people do want to see those to be successful,
16 and I don't think it's a surprise to anybody that we're facing
17 some challenges, certainly in the short term, and I think
18 recognizing those challenges and being committed to addressing
19 those challenges in a timely manner is the most important thing
20 that we can do right now, and so that's a little bit of preface,
21 and I know there's going to be some discussion here, but I
22 wanted for people to keep their eye on the ball, and I don't
23 want to get too twisted around the bush here for hours and hours
24 and hours, and so we can have some focused discussion for the
25 next thirty minutes or so, and I think that will be helpful,
26 but, again, in August, I think we will hopefully have some
27 options on the table. Thank you.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Tom. I did see a few hands up. I
30 think our next speaker is Kevin.

31
32 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have, I guess, much
33 comment to the numbers, and Tom had asked about the states'
34 comfort level with the numbers, and we're not comfortable with
35 the numbers, and we can understand the math that was used to
36 develop the numbers, but I've got -- I put together a slide
37 presentation that kind of explains some of the thoughts that we
38 considered and some of the data that we see that we discussed in
39 open venues before, with NOAA staff and such, and we feel like
40 it kind of addresses a lot of the points and issues that council
41 members have previously made during discussions before lunch.

42
43 I would like to share that with folks, and I will do that as
44 quick as possible, and it's about ten or eleven slides, but I
45 don't want to -- If people have comments or whatever specific to
46 Andy's presentation or Roy's comments, I would like for the
47 council members to go ahead and do that, and then I can follow-
48 up afterwards, if you don't mind, Madam Chair.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Patrick, did you have questions for Andy
3 or Roy? Did you want to go next?
4

5 **MR. BANKS:** Well, it was really more just a comment. As I
6 appreciate it, and I appreciate Roy's staff sitting down with us
7 and going through all these numbers, and not just the numbers,
8 but the methodology of how the numbers were arrived at, because
9 we've had some big discussions with them, but I just wanted to
10 make the point that, for everybody listening, that these are
11 preliminary numbers, and I appreciate NOAA acknowledging that,
12 that there may be some adjustments that can be made, and we feel
13 like we have a lot of good science that we can put forth to make
14 sure that these calibrations are done with the best science
15 possible.
16

17 I appreciate NOAA working with us on it, and I just wanted to
18 make sure that everybody was aware and reiterate that these are
19 preliminary numbers that were divulged as part of the meeting
20 materials. Thank you.
21

22 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thank you. Greg, do you have a question for
23 Roy or Andy?
24

25 **DR. STUNZ:** Yes, Martha, I do, if you don't mind, and I will be
26 brief. Obviously, Roy, the letter that came in from the OC had
27 a certain level of urgency to it. In my mind, this is not
28 something that can be addressed in a rapid, timely manner, and I
29 agree with what Tom was mentioning, that, obviously, this needs
30 to be run through our SSC, because it's obviously very complex
31 and very confusing, and so I don't know when the time is right
32 for that, but, obviously, I think we need to make sure that they
33 can heavily weigh-in on the issue, to help explain what's going
34 on, in terms of the effort calibration, and I'm not real sure
35 how these mesh together, or are they just completely
36 independent, and then that will affect that, and, in other
37 words, it seems to me like we need to get the MRIP effort fixed
38 first and then come back and deal with some of these --
39

40 **DR. CRABTREE:** -- came from the Coastal Household Telephone
41 Survey, and so that is the currency that the current quotas are
42 in, and so what we tried to do with these calibrations is -- It
43 would be to adjust that currency into state currencies -- That
44 is going to need to be incorporated into an assessment -- I
45 guess that will occur next year sometime, and possibly,
46 depending on when we get new ABCs and things, next year, we
47 might make a middle-of-the-year adjustment to it, but -- Then
48 there is the -- I expect things will continue to evolve, and I

1 hope that gets at your question, Greg, and, Clay, if I got any
2 of that wrong, please correct me.

3
4 **DR. PORCH:** -- an interim analysis based on either what we get
5 from the Great Red Snapper Count or just looking at trends in
6 the indices of abundance, and, really, it will depend on what we
7 end up getting from Greg's study -- the assessment that is
8 completed next year, in time for the season.

9
10 **DR. CRABTREE:** Then, to Greg's other point -- I think, as soon
11 as we pull something together and get through this workgroup
12 that Richard Cody, -- because if you want to tweak the state-by-
13 state allocations, that would be a different format, then, if
14 you just want to adjust catch levels or put a buffer in, one
15 could be done through a framework, and the other might require -
16 - at any event, we have the August meeting and the October
17 meeting, and we need to make some decisions at one of those two
18 meetings.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Roy. I think I see that Tom's hand is
21 up. If there are other people with their hands up, I can't see
22 them.

23
24 **DR. FRAZER:** -- that we'll be interested in, and it will still
25 be all relative to -- I mean, it will be the Coastal Household
26 Telephone Survey, right, and I just want to make sure that --

27
28 **DR. PORCH:** If we get, for instance, absolute abundance
29 estimates by age that everyone feels are defensible, and then
30 it's just a matter of what currency would that be in, and I
31 would say, since the fishing mortality rate estimate came from
32 the assessment, it's implicitly in a CHTS MRIP currency, and so
33 the answer to -- From the Great Red Snapper Count that would
34 somehow allow us to get at the fishing mortality rate that
35 corresponds to the -- , if that makes any sense.

36
37 **DR. FRAZER:** Yes, that makes sense, and I appreciate that, Clay,
38 and so, again, just to follow up -- Make it so that everybody is
39 on the same page, because I want to be fairly efficient with
40 what's on the agenda. Then that will then allow us to talk
41 about it in a more informed way in August and, again, move
42 towards a -- items in August and/or October, to set us up for --

43
44 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** (Part of Dr. Mickle's comment is not
45 audible on the recording.) -- know that Mississippi definitely
46 does not agree with what is going on at this point. However, we
47 are here to understand about the -- What is the word "emergency"
48 in there for?

1
2 **DR. CRABTREE:** It would depend on how you wanted to proceed. In
3 order to be in compliance with the statute, we're going to need
4 to address this in some fashion, or you're going to need to come
5 up with a pretty powerful rationale for how it should go. One
6 way to do that and kind of -- Would be an emergency rulemaking,
7 and then you would have to follow-up with a plan amendment.
8
9 **DR. SPRAGGINS:** If we decide to something that's against the
10 Magnuson-Stevens Act, the way it is now, that you would have to
11 have some type of emergency to have the meetings to be able to
12 address the --
13
14 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Next, I'm going to go to Lance.
15
16 **MR. ROBINSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think this is probably
17 a question for --
18
19 **DR. CRABTREE:** No, because that would still be estimated with
20 the same survey that the assessment is based on, and we're not
21 using the new --
22
23 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Greg.
24
25 **DR. STUNZ:** Thank you, Martha. -- I mean, we've got the best
26 scientists throughout the Gulf working on this, and we will have
27 something very soon, and, Clay, obviously, we can talk offline a
28 little bit more, but, as many of you know -- There is probably
29 some exploitation and effort rates that can be calculated from
30 that as well, Clay, in addition to just the abundance estimates
31 that we'll be coming out with.
32
33 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Greg. Leann.
34
35 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks. -- the two-page document, Tab B-7(d),
36 where we see these preliminary new quotas, I guess, in state
37 currency, as far as landings, this total private angler
38 landings, versus that portion of the recreational quota that is
39 the private angler quota, and, number one, you don't want to
40 overshoot the mark, because you're fishing the stock down, and
41 that does affect the commercial sector and the for-hire sector,
42 and it has ramifications for everybody, but, if you go too far,
43 then you start getting over the calibrations to a common
44 currency.
45
46 **DR. CRABTREE:** Right, and, if I could, Martha, we have looked at
47 that, the Coastal Household Telephone Survey currency, and we
48 did not exceed the overfishing level. We did the ABC, and the

1 private quota was exceeded by about 30 percent. Now, everything
2 would be even higher, but that's not the same currency as the
3 stock assessment, and so, if you look at things in the same
4 currency that the assessment is done in, we were over the --

5
6 **MS. BOSARGE:** Can I follow-up, Martha? -- this past year, and so
7 are we going to put some sort of -- for this year? I mean,
8 that's not much, when you're looking at -- Now we have impacts
9 to the commercial sector, because of this. We got our house in
10 order, and I want to keep it that way.

11
12 **DR. CRABTREE:** Anything you would do would take some time to get
13 in place, and so it would be quite a challenge, I think, to get
14 something done through a rulemaking.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Next, I'm going to go to Patrick.

17
18 **MR. BANKS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to remind
19 everybody that this is preliminary. The conversation between
20 Roy and Leann was the numbers in this are an end-all-be-all, and
21 that's just not the case. 9,000 pounds away from an OFL may not
22 be the case at all, once the calibrations are finalized and
23 complete, and we're not even there yet. -- really the science
24 advisory board that we have for the council, and so I just want
25 to make sure that we all remember that -- Certainly my intention
26 is to keep our house in order, but I don't want us to go down a
27 path based on this --

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Patrick. I'm going to go to Susan, and
30 then maybe we can circle back to Kevin, because I know he's been
31 patiently waiting.

32
33 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you. I'm not sure if I should direct this
34 question to Clay or Greg, but --

35
36 **DR. PORCH:** I can jump in. Yes, it has to be -- if we're going
37 to get ABC advice.

38
39 **DR. CRABTREE:** -- this is just the landings in the Coastal
40 Household Telephone Survey currency, and that is using the FES
41 to CHTS -- I do agree with Patrick that this is complicated, and
42 there are a lot of numbers here, and we all want to make sure we
43 get it right, and we want to make sure that the SSC and everyone
44 reviews the numbers and we're confident that we have this as
45 right as we can get it.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Roy. John, I see your name on the
48 list, and then we will go to Kevin. John Sanchez.

1
2 **MR. SANCHEZ:** So far, the calibration implications seemingly
3 violate the intent of sector separation or -- Those two sectors
4 have been accountable, and they have been fishing -- It seems to
5 be, on a reoccurring basis, overrunning theirs, and yet -- Thank
6 you.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, John. I can't tell if Kevin's
9 presentation is -- Greg, do you want to go, and then, maybe by
10 then, the presentation will be pulled up for Kevin?

11
12 **DR. STUNZ:** That's fine, and I just -- Clay said the SSC members
13 are directly involved in -- They can be the lead investigators
14 on some of this, but, in addition, it will go through our normal
15 scientific peer review process, which is really the gold
16 standard for producing -- Those scientists choose how they use
17 or don't use that information, and it's up to us, the scientists
18 doing it -- We provide that information, and then it --

19
20 **MR. ANSON:** I had sent a presentation into council staff
21 earlier. While we're waiting to get that up -- Put the time and
22 effort into kind of summarizing the data that we see at the
23 state level that helps guide us in our decision and how we
24 intend to monitor the reef fish off of Alabama, because our reef
25 fish fishery is very valuable to the State of Alabama and very
26 important to our anglers.

27
28 -- the 2019 council meeting, where I compared Snapper Check
29 landings to CHTS landings for Alabama, looking at exploitation
30 rates that was estimated off of Alabama from a recent tagging
31 study and then the -- off of Alabama, using those two data
32 sources, as well as biomass off the Gulf, and so I'm going to --
33 I expanded on the time series in this presentation, and I have
34 some other points that are food for thought, so to speak --

35
36 We want sustainable fisheries, but we want sustainable fisheries
37 that are backed by good science, so that managers can make good
38 decisions on how to best manage the fishery and provide fair and
39 equitable access to our anglers, and so -- These points that
40 we've been discussing today, I've got some specific slides to
41 show the data that we have -- It is important, and having
42 calibrations, of course --

43
44 (Mr. Anson's presentation is not audible on the recording.)

45
46 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Let me just make a couple of points to help
47 frame the rest of the discussion for this item. I think it's
48 clearly a work in progress. Louisiana is already working with

1 NOAA, and it sounds like they are -- I guess calibration may be
2 changing, based on discussions that are happening, and these are
3 a work in progress.

4
5 There's a lot of questions about what these mean and if they're
6 the right way to go and how to move forward, and so we've talked
7 about how the states need to talk about this more, and we've
8 talked about this MRIP and states workshop that needs to happen,
9 or workshops, and we've talked about how the SSC needs to review
10 this, and we need scientific review, and then, based on that
11 review, the council may want to consider taking action,
12 potentially in August, and I think what the committee needs to
13 do at this point is we need some sort of motion to push us
14 forward to our next step, sort of a --

15
16 **MR. ANSON:** (Mr. Anson's comment is not audible on the
17 recording.)

18
19 **DR. FRAZER:** I am going to try to help you, Martha, bring this -
20 - Some concerns about the calibration process and how it might
21 be used moving forward, but, again, I -- Together in fairly
22 short order, so that they can have those discussions and the
23 outcome of those discussions can be evaluated --

24
25 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks. We will come back to this later
26 in the week. I think we did have a good discussion, and so it's
27 okay that we're behind, and --

28
29 **DR. CRABTREE:** (Dr. Crabtree's comment is not audible on the
30 recording.)

31
32 **DISCUSSION OF FISHING INDUSTRY IMPACTS DUE TO COVID-19 AND**
33 **POTENTIAL EMERGENCY RULE REQUESTS**

34
35 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** (Chairman Guyas's comment is not audible on the
36 recording.)

37
38 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** (Ms. Muehlstein's presentation is not
39 audible on the recording.)

40
41 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** -- A little explanation of some of these.
42 What you will see is, in each one of them, the 2020 values, and
43 we were doing this by week, just so we can get an idea of how
44 things were changing week to week over the timeframe, but the
45 dotted black line is the 2019, and then the solid gray line is
46 the average --

47
48 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** That does seem to be the case -- Bernie, do you

1 guys need a break?

2

3 **DR. FRAZER:** We will come back at --

4

5 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

6

7

8 **DR. FRAZER:** We are having a bit of a bandwidth issue, and so
9 we're going to keep videos off, at least through this
10 presentation, and we'll go ahead and let Jessica continue with
11 the presentation. It's all yours.

12

13 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sounds good. Go ahead, Jessica.

14

15 **DR. STEPHEN:** Can you move it to Slide 3? As I was talking
16 about before, for three of the key species, I've got four graphs
17 displaying information, and the blue line that is dotted is our
18 2020 values, and this is by week, so that we can see kind of
19 weekly changes that are occurring, and the black dotted line
20 that you see is 2019, the most recent year, and then we did an
21 average of 2017 to 2019, which is the solid gray line.

22

23 What you see in yellow around it are the confidence intervals
24 based on that average of 2017 to 2019, and then there will be a
25 red line in every graph, which is where we kind of considered
26 social distancing first started, at the earliest point, and that
27 was in Week 9, and Week 9 is roughly around the first week in
28 March, and so it may be early for some states, or it might be
29 somewhat closer on target for others, but we needed to kind of
30 figure out where we thought things were starting to change.

31

32 If you go through, the first upper-left graph is the proxy for
33 trip counts, and you see that, since the pandemic hit, we have
34 started to see a decrease in the total number of trips that were
35 going out and harvesting red snapper, but it's still within the
36 confidence intervals for the 2017 to 2019 averages.

37

38 If you look over to the pounds landed, which is the slide
39 directly next to -- If you look at the cumulative pounds landed,
40 you will see a similar thing, where the blue line is well within
41 the confidence intervals, but you start to see it decreasing
42 away from what we've consistently seen in the past, and this
43 particularly happens a little bit more around Week 13.

44

45 Week 13 was closer to the end of March, and so you can imagine,
46 as more states were going into social distancing measures and
47 restaurants and other businesses were starting to shut down,
48 that we would feel an impact to the fishery. Then the bottom

1 two graphs are on the ex-vessel price, and I want to remind you
2 that I adjusted all the values to 2019, so they're all in the
3 same currency of inflation-adjusted 2019 values, and, here, we
4 see a similar pattern in this whole ex-vessel value, where we're
5 within the confidence intervals, but we are seeing kind of a
6 separation from what we've seen before, and, again, it's
7 starting to occur around Week 13.

8
9 What you are starting to notice, and we were able to take these
10 graphs to Week 13, which was about a week ago at this point, and
11 we are starting to see what we think might be the start of an
12 uptick, and I would just like to remind you that we will be
13 tracking all of these landings weekly, to notice what's going on
14 as we continue further into things.

15
16 Then, finally, the ex-vessel average price, and so this is the
17 average price for ex-vessel value during each week, and you will
18 notice that, in Week 1, Week 1 is the first week of the year,
19 and that's not always a full week, depending on what year you're
20 in, and so you get some anomalous values there, but, if you look
21 after that, the red snapper ex-vessel value, or ex-vessel price,
22 was higher than the average 2017 to 2019, prior to the pandemic,
23 and then you see it's kind of on a steady decrease, and we kind
24 of really bottom out somewhere around Week 14, but we're
25 starting to see upticks, but we're on the lower end of the
26 confidence intervals, sometimes coming in and out of it.

27
28 These are the same types of graphs, but this is for gag instead,
29 and you will see similar patterns throughout all of these.
30 Again, we have a reduction in the proxy for trips and total
31 pounds landed, and total pounds landed you will see a little bit
32 bigger difference, but that was also occurring prior to the
33 pandemic, as part of an overall trend with gag at this point.
34 Then ex-vessel value has also decreased, but it is still within
35 the confidence intervals, and what you're noticing is that it's
36 starting to tick up close to that 2017 to 2019 average line.

37
38 Part of the reason for the ex-vessel value was some of the
39 information we saw going on with the weekly average ex-vessel
40 price, and, prior to the pandemic, we were above average, and
41 above the confidence intervals, for 2020. Then, as the pandemic
42 hit, we start to drop down in price, and we see some kind of
43 wild fluctuations, and some of this is due to the number of
44 transactions that are coming through. As I said, we had less
45 trips, and so that means less transactions and less pounds
46 landed, which adds more variability to it.

47
48 This is the third species where I have data like this presented,

1 and this is red grouper. Again, it's similar patterns that
2 you're seeing, with a decrease in the overall number of trips,
3 but a slight uptick coming in the last week or so. When it
4 comes to the pounds landed, I want to caution you that the quota
5 dropped significantly for red grouper. For 2017 and 2018, we
6 were close to 7.78 million pounds. Then 2019 and 2020 were at
7 three-million pounds, and so that's what you see reflected here
8 in this graph, where both 2019 and 2020 are significantly under
9 the average for the 2017 to 2019 value, but, here you see red
10 grouper is lining up fairly well with the past values to it.

11
12 Total ex-vessel value was actually higher than average for a
13 little bit, both pre-pandemic and initially after it, but then
14 it dips down, and, if we look at the weekly average ex-vessel
15 price, we see a similar pattern that you saw in gag, where it
16 was a significantly higher than the confidence intervals, and
17 then it drops within in, but now we're still within confidence
18 intervals for the past three years for average ex-vessel price.
19 I am going to stop and see if anyone has questions on those
20 graphs before I go into the carryover.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Are there any questions for Jessica
23 so far? Thanks for the graphs. I think they were very
24 interesting. Let's give people a minute to raise their hands.
25 It doesn't look like any questions yet, and so why don't you
26 just go ahead and proceed, and, if there are any, we'll just
27 cover them at the end. I see Dale Diaz.

28
29 **MR. DIAZ:** Dr. Stephen, I don't know if you got any information
30 on the leasing prices, and I noticed some of the comments that
31 Emily mentioned were that leasing prices were staying high, and
32 can you speak to that at all?

33
34 **DR. STEPHEN:** I actually looked at Emily's presentation, and,
35 yesterday and today, I worked up some leasing price graphs, and
36 let me start with where I kind of see red snapper. Overall, we
37 did see that there were less allocation transfers occurring, as
38 well as less pounds being transferred, and so that's kind of
39 mimicking what we saw with less trips and less landings, in some
40 aspects.

41
42 Then, when we're looking at the total value cumulatively, we
43 were definitely seeing a lower price for red snapper allocation
44 occurring, and I might be able to send this presentation, and
45 maybe they can load it up there as well. It's not as fancy as
46 the other ones, and I don't have the average of 2017 to 2018.

47
48 In general, for red snapper allocation price transfers, the

1 average over the entire year looks like that we were decreasing
2 by about five to ten-cents, but that ranged, within any week, to
3 greater than the average, at fifty-two-cents pre-kind of
4 pandemic to less than -- To negative sixty-cents lower, and,
5 again, this is just within the allocation price itself and not
6 in comparison to the ex-vessel value.

7
8 Then I have gag worked up as well for that, and the gag
9 allocation value, cumulatively, is significantly lower than it
10 was for 2019, and, when I look at price per pound, it's similar
11 kind of ranges, and the average difference was about negative
12 thirteen-cents per pound, but the range was from positive
13 thirteen-cents per pound pre-pandemic to negative fifty-four-
14 cents per pound.

15
16 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. I don't see any other hands at this
19 point, and so go ahead, Jessica.

20
21 **DR. STEPHEN:** All right, and so, if we can move on to the next
22 part of the presentation, this is going to be about carryover
23 within the IFQ system. Currently, I kind of wanted to update
24 everyone what's going on with the IFQ system. Our current
25 system is at end-of-life, and so the software on it will no
26 longer work by the end of this year, and we started, last year,
27 contracting to transition the software over to new software, and
28 so we are still in the middle of that transition. We anticipate
29 that we'll actually kind of flip the switch and put it on the
30 new system in the fall or winter of 2020.

31
32 There are some really good things that we're getting out of this
33 migration to the new system. One of the aspects is that it's
34 going to be a system that's sitting in the cloud, which will
35 hopefully take care of any kind of times when internet is
36 locally out, and that puts the whole system down, because it
37 will be a redundant system in the cloud and not based on our
38 network.

39
40 The other aspect to this is it's going to have what we call a
41 responsive web design, and so a lot of the fishermen and
42 stakeholders have asked us if they could access the IFQ system
43 on a phone or on a tablet. With this new kind of front-end to
44 it, they will be able to open it, and, on any type of device
45 that has a modern browser, and so we're talking either Chrome or
46 Firefox or Microsoft IE, or even iPhone Safari, and it should
47 work on all of those.

48

1 The other feature that we were able to build into it is we were
2 working with the Fisheries Finance Program, in order to get
3 their loan program and the requirements needed for that set up
4 within our system, and we've got the bare bones of that working,
5 and I think we'll be able to move forward with that within this
6 year, and then the other aspect we're adding is the request from
7 fishermen that we allow to have grading within a landings
8 transaction, and that's when they have a similar species, but it
9 has two different prices per pound, based on the size of the
10 fish. As we're moving forward, we're going to kind of continue
11 to monitor landings, and we're working with migrating the
12 system.

13
14 In thinking of ideas of what carryover can go in, what we want
15 to do is first think about what the carryover timelines can be,
16 and we will not know the amount of remaining allocation that
17 potentially could be carried over to December 31. Our system
18 goes up to December 31 at 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time. At that point
19 in time, we'll know how much allocation was remaining in those
20 accounts, as of that date and time.

21
22 In order to do carryover, we would need to take that remaining
23 amount and going to the SSC to figure out if that amount could
24 be carried over and in what capacity, and so if you guys
25 remember that we had the amendment where we were looking at
26 carryover provisions, and the SSC needs to approve any new ABCs
27 with those carryover pounds in it, and the considerations they
28 have is that it should not be a negative impact on the spawning
29 stock biomass or on the rebuilding time of any species, and,
30 additionally, they need to consider the buffer between the ABC
31 and the OFL.

32
33 If the SSC would approve moving the carryover into the next
34 year, we could start disbursement potentially within the first
35 quarter of the year, and so some of the timeline issues here is
36 that we would have to have the amount of carryover, and it would
37 need to go to the SSC, and then we would need time to create a
38 mechanism to distribute that allocation.

39
40 This is some additional considerations when we're thinking about
41 carryover, and one of those is whether you want to apply it to
42 just some or all of the different share categories, and,
43 traditionally, in the past, we've had share categories like
44 other shallow-water grouper that haven't even come close to
45 hitting their quota and whether that would be a reasonable
46 consideration to bring carryover to the next year.

47
48 On the other hand, we have red snapper, which normally hits

1 around 99.8 percent of usage, and how to carry that over, if
2 there is anything remaining, or if it's larger than in past
3 years. When thinking about carryover, considerations would be
4 whether you want to carryover the full amount or some proportion
5 or partial amount of that and how you want to divide it up.

6
7 Mechanisms for distribution, this kind of goes into the last
8 question on the slide, and, typically, when we have a quota
9 increase, we distribute to the people that have shares, based on
10 the share percentages, but, if you're thinking of a carryover,
11 there could be other mechanisms where you might want to think
12 about whether you're giving it only to those people who have
13 shares or if you want to give it to the allocation holders, and,
14 if so, how do you want to determine who receives that, and then
15 the final consideration is the fact that we have multiuse
16 categories, and this will be the uses for gag and red grouper.

17
18 It is a formula based on the quotas of each of the two species,
19 so that using multiuse will never exceed either of the species
20 totals, and we would want to think about how carryover applies,
21 particularly if it was carryover in the multiuse category, and
22 whether we convert it to the primary category for carryover or
23 leave it where it is.

24
25 Just a reminder is, in multiuse, before you can use your
26 multiuse category, you have to use all the primary up. For
27 example, all the gag would have to be used before the gag multi
28 could be used, and then, once that's used, red grouper multi
29 could be used, and so it's most likely that we would have
30 carryover within the multiuse categories.

31
32 What I did is I worked up some landings comparisons and compared
33 the -- It was May, the time when I created this, and so we're
34 two weeks into June, and so I can update this, because we need
35 to for another council meeting as well, and thinking about
36 whether to do carryover for all or some of the share categories
37 and how much, what I've done is I've looked at, for the last
38 four years, at that end of May, how much of each quota had been
39 landed.

40
41 Let's just take red snapper as an example. In 2017, 41 percent
42 of the quota had already been landed by the end of May, and it
43 was a little bit higher in 2018 and 2019, at 42 and 48 percent.
44 In 2020, where we're at right now, even with the pandemic going
45 on, we've landed 41 percent of the quota, and you can see this
46 for each of the other key species, and so, with red grouper,
47 we're at 34 percent, which is similar to last year's 35, and
48 keep in mind that the red grouper quota was significantly higher

1 in 2017 and 2018, and so those aren't really good comparisons,
2 percentage-wise, to look at.

3
4 Then, with gag, we're a little bit lower than we were in the
5 past year, and deepwater grouper is a little bit lower, and not
6 by much, and shallow-water grouper, as you can see, we don't
7 typically have a lot of landings by May, and so we're kind of on
8 track with that, as well as tilefish is a little lower than
9 average.

10
11 This is kind of the final set of questions that I want to go
12 over with the thought to carryover, and it's the potential
13 avenues and how we would do carryover, which I talked about
14 before, and do we want to distribute based on shareholdings,
15 which is a similar process that we already have existing within
16 the system, or do we want to distribute back to those people who
17 have holdings at the end of the year, and we should be capable
18 of determining who that is right before we take back all the
19 allocation at the end of the year, and so that's not a problem
20 with identifying who has it, although I have heard of different
21 fishermen have different business practices, for those who have
22 leased out allocation, and what happens at the end of the year,
23 and so that might be something that weighs into consideration
24 later on.

25
26 Then, finally, just the SSC will need to weigh-in on whether
27 multiuse should be carried over or not and in what mechanism. I
28 think that is all I have, and so I'm open for questions.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Dr. Stephen. Let's start with
31 questions about the presentation. Then, after we go through
32 questions on the presentation, I think it would be good for us
33 to have a little bit of discussion about how we might want to
34 move forward here. I think Leann is up.

35
36 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks. Dr. Stephen, I guess, to answer your
37 question, or some of your questions, my thoughts were that,
38 whatever account that allocation is sitting in at the end of the
39 year, those pounds, reduced for mortality or anything else that
40 the SSC feels we need to reduce it for, would go back into that
41 account, and not January 1, but just pretend, for the sake of
42 argument, on January 1, it would go back into that same account,
43 and that, in my mind, was more or less for the fishermen that
44 don't own, and may lease.

45
46 They have leased a bulk of their quota at the beginning of the
47 year, and they've got borrowed money out, in order to lease all
48 that quota at the beginning of the year, and we're hit with a

1 pandemic, and the dockside price went to zero for a while,
2 because nobody was buying, and you couldn't fish, and they are
3 starting to be able to fish some again, but the dockside price,
4 from what I hear right now, is around \$4.00 or \$4.25 a pound.

5
6 The people that I was talking to, if you leased in the upper
7 \$3.00 a pound or low \$4.00 a pound, that's rough, and I talked
8 to a fisherman just this week that -- He is fishing, because
9 he's got leased fish and borrowed money to lease the fish, and
10 he's fishing, but, when he hits the dock, by the time the lease
11 comes out and the cost recovery comes out, he's working on
12 ninety-seven-cents a pound, and that's before he pays the crew,
13 the fuel, the ice, or anything else.

14
15 He's doing it because he's got a loan out, and he doesn't know
16 if it's going to get worse or better, and those fish may
17 disappear at the end of the year, but he's just about to go
18 backwards, and any small fluctuation in that dockside price to
19 the downside, if we do see an uptick in these cases again, these
20 COVID-19 cases, and you see people scared to go to restaurants,
21 and, therefore, you see another downturn in that price, then
22 he's going to be at a point where it's worse for him to go
23 fishing than it is just to pay the interest on the loan and
24 maybe lose it all.

25
26 That's the people that I was trying to reach out to and trying
27 to help with this idea of the carryover. Now, I can play
28 devil's advocate and tell you some reasons we wouldn't want to
29 do a carryover, but that's where I'm at, and so my question to
30 you is, if we're slightly below where we were last year, tell me
31 what we had leftover in pounds for red snapper last year, so
32 that, in my mind, I can increase that, maybe by 10 or 15
33 percent, and I can compare that to the gap we have between the
34 OFL, or between our ABC and our OFL, I guess it is, so I know if
35 we're going to actually have a problem with the SSC going, woah,
36 we can't let you carry that over, and it's going to push us over
37 OFL, or an ABC or whatever, and can you help me with those
38 numbers?

39
40 **DR. STEPHEN:** For last year, we harvested 99.4 percent of the
41 quota for red snapper, and so the red snapper remaining
42 commercial quota was 38,600, roughly.

43
44 **MS. BOSARGE:** Okay, and so, if we only land about 90 percent of
45 our quota, how many pounds is that going to leave us?

46
47 **DR. STEPHEN:** Give me a second here. If we only land around 90
48 percent, we're around 693,000 pounds remaining.

1
2 **MS. BOSARGE:** Is our ABC equal to our ACL in the commercial
3 side?
4
5 **DR. STEPHEN:** That's a good question, and I'm not sure that I
6 have that right here. Let me see if I can --
7
8 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Leann, the commercial ACT and the ACL are the
9 same. There's not like a separate ACT that is used right now
10 for the commercial sector, because it's managed under the IFQ
11 system. The recreational sector though still uses the separate
12 levels, and then the combined recreational and commercial ACLs
13 put together equal the ABC.
14
15 **MS. BOSARGE:** Martha, can I ask one more question?
16
17 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure. Go ahead.
18
19 **MS. BOSARGE:** That's what I'm trying to get at. What is the gap
20 between the ABC and the ACL, because it's the ABC, right, that
21 we can't go above.
22
23 **MR. RINDONE:** There is no gap between the ABC and the ACL. The
24 recreational and the commercial ACLs totaled together for the
25 stock ACL equal the stock ABC, and there's not like a separate
26 recreational ABC and commercial ABC. It's the stock ABC, and
27 then, from there, it's apportioned out. Like the stock ABC
28 would be downgraded to the stock ACL if there was a buffer, but,
29 at this point, there isn't, and so, because of that, the ACL is
30 equal to the ABC, and then the difference between the ABC and
31 the OFL right now I think is like 2.55 percent, or something
32 like that.
33
34 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Ryan. That's what I was wanting to
35 know.
36
37 **DR. STEPHEN:** I've got the combined recreational and commercial
38 ABC at 15.1 million pounds and the stock OFL at 15.5 million
39 pounds, and so it's a very tight buffer.
40
41 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Next in the queue I have Roy and
42 then Mara.
43
44 **DR. CRABTREE:** Jessica, what I see in it is we're not really
45 much behind past years, and I'm guessing that we're catching up
46 as the economy reopens and restaurants reopen, and guys are
47 going back fishing, but I wonder if it's not uneven in the Gulf,
48 and I'm wondering if you were able -- I guess this would be more

1 with red snapper, but were you able to look at -- Are there
2 geographic areas that are way off and others that aren't, or is
3 at that kind of level?

4
5 **DR. STEPHEN:** We didn't look at that kind of level, and I'm
6 trying to think about conversations we've had with fishermen on
7 the phone, and we know when kind of most of the restaurants shut
8 down, and it was typically only the larger dealers that were
9 still up and accepting, and they had to get, I think, somewhat
10 careful of who they were accepting from, just in the sense that
11 they wanted to make sure they could move the product and not
12 have it go bad when they were having it, and so, even though we
13 had some of the larger dealers operating, they were at reduced
14 capacity.

15
16 **DR. CRABTREE:** Okay. Thanks.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Mara.

19
20 **MS. LEVY:** It's okay. I was just going to answer the question
21 about the difference between the ABC and the OFL, but it got
22 answered.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Got it. Any other questions for Dr.
25 Stephen, or any comments on that presentation?

26
27 **MS. BOSARGE:** Well, I do, Martha.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Go ahead, Leann.

30
31 **MS. BOSARGE:** Can it be done, Dr. Stephen? Can that be done?
32 If we decide to go that route, can we capture the amount of
33 allocation that's there, December 31 at 6:00 p.m. or whatever it
34 is, and let the SSC vet what we can or can't carry forward, and
35 then have it go back in those same accounts at some point the
36 first quarter of the following year?

37
38 **DR. STEPHEN:** If we keep it on the simplistic side, I think we
39 can easily capture who has what in their accounts, and we would
40 just take a snapshot of the data before we do our typical reset
41 of allocation for the year, and then we would have what accounts
42 it came out of, and so we would know what accounts to put it
43 back into, assuming those accounts were still there at the point
44 in time when we put it back in, which is a high probability.

45
46 It would have to be a manual process at this point, but I think
47 we could also have a time, from when we give it to the SSC and a
48 decision is made, to be able to figure out how to go about doing

1 that, and, like I said, we're in a new system, and so we're on a
2 little bit of a learning curve ourselves as we go into this new
3 system.

4
5 Again, it's on the simplistic side, and so that allocation would
6 go in, and it would go in, and you would not be able to
7 distinguish it then from 2021 allocation. If that becomes a
8 concern of the council, to distinguish it, it would take a lot
9 more work to get it done.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I see Roy has his hand up.

12
13 **DR. CRABTREE:** Jessica, from a timing perspective, would it work
14 if the council came back to this issue in August and made a
15 decision at that time as to whether they wanted to request an
16 emergency rule, and that would allow us to see a couple more
17 months of landings and see if we're catching up more and if we
18 think this is even necessary, or would that give you time to --

19
20 **DR. STEPHEN:** I think, by August, that would give us time to see
21 what trends are doing a little bit better and see what's going
22 on. Right now, we're starting to see what looks like upticks,
23 but, also, as a lot of the different states are opening, we're
24 hearing of restaurants, in particular, shutting down again, and
25 so, to really see where we're at, I think August would be a much
26 better depiction of where we've gotten to.

27
28 **DR. CRABTREE:** I think that would be my recommendation. I mean,
29 to do this, we would have to request an emergency rule and do a
30 rulemaking, and it's something that probably has a lot of
31 unintended consequences and downstream impacts, and so I would
32 rather not do it unless it's really necessary, and, if the
33 economy does well and opening up works and restaurants are back
34 in business, that's one scenario. If there's a second wave, or
35 if restaurants close down again, that's a completely different
36 situation, but I think, in August, we would have a little more
37 insight as to what's likely to happen.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Kevin.

40
41 **MR. ANSON:** I guess that sounds like a good plan, what Roy has
42 suggested, and, based on an August meeting and emergency
43 rulemaking, there would be enough time to get it in place for
44 the start of next year, if it were warranted, but is there
45 anything that we could expedite it on our end, and I know the
46 SSC is busy, and they probably already have a full schedule, but
47 is there room on the next meeting or so for the SSC to review?

48

1 That means we probably need to maybe give some bounds as to what
2 it is we would like for them to review, but I'm just curious
3 about the timing relative to the SSC review, to give more, if
4 you will, to the review process, rather than emergency rule and
5 such, and so I'm just wondering if maybe Roy can comment on
6 that.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Go ahead, Roy, or maybe that's a staff
9 question.

10
11 **DR. CRABTREE:** Well, I think the SSC part is a staff question,
12 and I think there's an SSC meeting in July, and so I assume we
13 could get something on it. In terms of an emergency rule, if
14 you requested it in August, we could do our best to get it done
15 by January, but, even if we were late, that would just mean that
16 the allocation wouldn't reappear in their accounts until maybe
17 somewhere after January 1, and so it could be February 1 or
18 something like that, but we could still, I think, get it done.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** That's helpful. Carrie or staff, can somebody
21 weigh-in on the timing of the SSC discussion?

22
23 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** We have two SSC meetings in July,
24 and the first one is the MRIP FES workshop, and the Federal
25 Register notice has already published for that, and the second
26 meeting we have scheduled is the 21, 22, and 23, and, right now,
27 that is filling up quite a bit, because we're looking at trying
28 to get the MRIP-FES state calibrations on there, and we have
29 several assessments to review on there, and, tomorrow, we're
30 going to talk about, I think, the shrimp assessment terms of
31 reference as well, and so we do have that meeting. The Federal
32 Register notice is due for that SSC meeting next Thursday, June
33 25, and so that meeting is pretty full, and so I might suggest
34 something maybe after the August council meeting, if possible.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Dale, I see your hand.

37
38 **MR. DIAZ:** I had lowered my hand, and Kevin basically echoed
39 what I was thinking. I mean, I agree with the path that Roy
40 laid out, and I think that's reasonable, and it would give us a
41 chance to get to see some more landings, and, if there's any
42 inkling of a second wave, and maybe we'll have more information
43 by then, and we'll know more information, and that's all. Thank
44 you.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Dale. I tend to agree. Kevin, is your
47 hand up again?

48

1 **MR. ANSON:** It is, Madam Chair.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Go ahead.

4

5 **MR. ANSON:** I am just trying to get back into the groove, so to
6 speak, of the council and the process, and is there any value,
7 seeing that we've just seen the presentation, and Jessica has
8 gone through some of the salient points, but is there any value
9 in the council weighing-in on where they would lean, based on or
10 relative to the questions that Jessica asked now, at this
11 meeting, in order to be more prepared in August, even though the
12 SSC probably doesn't have a chance to review it, and at least
13 there would be something maybe a little bit more specific that
14 NOAA staff could bring at the August meeting with the new
15 information, plus they might have some of our thoughts down on
16 paper for folks to see, the public to see, as well as council
17 members to see, in advance of the August meeting.

18

19 **DR. CRABTREE:** If I could, Martha, I think as much direction as
20 you can give, in terms of answering Jessica's questions, and as
21 many specifics as you can give now, that probably makes it
22 easier on folks and saves us time down the road.

23

24 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Do you have something, Kevin?

25

26 **MR. ANSON:** Well, I was trying to catch up and get back to the
27 presentation with the slides that had the questions that Jessica
28 asked of the council, and I do have some thoughts, and Leann is
29 up, and she maybe has more answers to that question.

30

31 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Let's see if we can get that slide on the
32 screen, and then, Leann, if you want to go first, and then we'll
33 come back to Kevin.

34

35 **MS. BOSARGE:** My comment was to the SSC reviewing it, and I
36 realize that agenda is filling up fast, but I think, in the
37 environment that we're in, we're going to have to prioritize
38 what has to be looked at right now and what is time sensitive
39 and then what can wait.

40

41 I have been begging for common currencies for three years now,
42 and so it kind of frustrates me to hear that the SSC can't look
43 at something that might benefit commercial fishermen, because
44 now we're finally going to look at the common currency and
45 that's got to take precedence, and so that's a little
46 frustrating, and sorry if I'm a little sensitive about that. I
47 think we need to find a way to get it on that agenda, and that's
48 all I've got to say about that right now.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Noted. Thank you. Okay, Kevin.
3

4 **MR. ANSON:** The considerations slide is the one that I'm looking
5 at, and I guess, although there might not be a need, per se,
6 because of the small amount of underage, or quota that's
7 available for carryover, I think all share categories should be
8 eligible, if they're all impacted for the same reason, and
9 certainly the SSC could weigh-in as to the health of the stock
10 and other information related to the particular stock, but I
11 would answer the question that way, and I don't know, Madam
12 Chair, if you want to make motions to do this, or if it's just
13 make a statement, and, if there's anybody that has any negative
14 comments to it, allow them to speak, but I can go down and offer
15 my thoughts on these questions here and the considerations page,
16 but how do you want to handle this?
17

18 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Well, I think it might be good just to discuss
19 now, and maybe we can get to the point of making some motions
20 and having some more discussion at Full Council, and I say that
21 because I think people might need to think about this a little
22 bit more, and it probably would be good to get some public
23 testimony as well, and, of course, we're running out of time,
24 and so, if you just want to provide your thoughts, Kevin, and
25 then maybe we can circle back some more to this later in the
26 week.
27

28 **MR. ANSON:** That sounds good. Thank you.
29

30 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Did you want to go through your thoughts,
31 Kevin, or do you want to save it for Full Council?
32

33 **MR. ANSON:** I was just agreeing with your thought process that
34 it sounds good to allow maybe some public testimony, and then
35 maybe we'll have some more time at Full Council on Thursday to
36 address these questions.
37

38 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Cool. Susan, I see your hand. Go
39 ahead.
40

41 **MS. BOGGS:** Martha, thank you, and I agree with all that's being
42 said, and I just kind of wanted to put this in a little bit of
43 perspective, and I understand that the Alabama Gulf coast is
44 only one section of the entire Gulf coast, but I get these
45 reports almost on a daily basis now from our tourism board, and,
46 in reference to kind of the commercial fishermen, I feel like
47 we're a little premature, because I'm looking at the track of
48 the tourism in the area, and we're on a great increase,

1 especially after July 4.

2
3 I know things can change, and they can change quickly, and we're
4 in the middle of our tropical season, and that also has to be
5 taken into account, and various things like that, but I don't
6 want us to jump the gun and make these decisions, and I think
7 Roy said it, that are going to have unintended consequences,
8 because we're trying to help, and I just wish we would slow this
9 train down a little bit. Thank you.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Susan. All right, Leann. I see you
12 one more time, and then I think we're all on the same page that
13 we need to talk about this more in August, and I'm hoping that
14 maybe we can talk a little more about these considerations later
15 in the week, but go ahead, Leann.

16
17 **MS. BOSARGE:** I just wanted to voice my support for Roy's idea,
18 and I do want to revisit this in August, and keep it as an
19 option in the toolbox, to possibly do an emergency rule, and, in
20 light of that, I would like the SSC to give us some feedback,
21 and they have looked at a carryover for IFQ species once before,
22 and said it would be as simple as account for natural mortality
23 and roll the rest, and what we could ask them to do is to go
24 back and revisit that topic again and tell us, logistically, how
25 that would be implemented, given concerns with OFL and ABC, and,
26 if they can just run through a quick example of that, then we'll
27 know what we're up against when we come to our August meeting.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Leann. Okay, and so we'll
30 talk about this more in August, and I think we're all on the
31 same page there. We've got about a half-hour left, and I'm
32 hoping that we can knock out the review of SEDAR 67 in that
33 time.

34
35 **REVIEW OF SEDAR 67: GULF OF MEXICO VERMILION SNAPPER STOCK**
36 **ASSESSMENT**

37
38 **DR. JOE POWERS:** This was a presentation that was reviewed by
39 the SSC at the June 1 meeting, and it was a webinar in one
40 afternoon, and so, essentially, there was only one agenda item,
41 which was this, the review of vermilion snapper SEDAR 67.

42
43 The presentation is going to be fairly quick, and I will try to
44 get you back on time a little bit, and, if you go to the next
45 slide, the bottom line is that the results suggest that the
46 stock is not overfished and not undergoing overfishing, and so
47 how did we get there?

48

1 Essentially, the spawning stock biomass went through a period of
2 decline until about 1998 or so, 1996 or something like that,
3 where it would be considered overfished, relatively stable or
4 being overfished, until about 2005, and then the stock started
5 increasing again. If you go to the next slide, the reason for
6 this is that the fishing mortality rate was just the opposite.
7 There was an increase during that time period, a period where it
8 was considered overfishing, and then a decline in the fishing
9 mortality rate since then, and so you have it below the MFMT
10 threshold.

11
12 If you combine those two things together, then you get this
13 historical transition, where, if you start out on the lower-
14 right-hand corner, it kind of goes up, the fishing mortality
15 rate goes up, and it is both overfished, slightly overfished,
16 and slightly overfishing, and then management was implemented,
17 and the stock responded in the way that one would expect, and so
18 the expectation in 2017, which was the end of this data for this
19 particular assessment, SEDAR 67, and it was in the green zone
20 there, and it was clearly in the green zone.

21
22 There is a fair number of things that have changed since the
23 last assessment, and the last assessment was SEDAR 45, and the
24 last assessment included data through 2014, and then there's a
25 number of things that were included in this update. The basic
26 thing is the time series goes through 2017, and, in fact, they
27 had the updated commercial catches for 2018, but the bigger
28 things were the recreational catch estimates, and the intent was
29 to transition to the new FES-MRIP estimates.

30
31 This was affecting the historical catch estimates. It affected
32 the historical catch estimates, the estimates since the last
33 assessment, and the associated size distribution, and so, as
34 Clay mentioned this morning, when he was talking about what
35 happens when the whole time series of catches is increased, all
36 else being equal, and that means your estimate of the amount of
37 fish that were out there, in this case the spawning stock
38 biomass and recruitment, and it increase the estimates of
39 status.

40
41 That is one of the things that came out of this, because of the
42 new estimates, and I will show you the slide in a minute, but
43 the results were as expected in that regard.

44
45 Also, in this assessment, discards were included, which they
46 weren't in the prior one, and there was a technical aspect to
47 this, in that discards are included in the model, in the sense
48 of you accounted for the catches that are being discarded and

1 subsequently die, but they weren't included in the fitting
2 process, and this is more of a technical sort of issue, and the
3 implication of that is that we know that there is these discards
4 out there, and that they affect the overall scale of the
5 removals, but the variability from year to year is -- It's hard
6 to believe that individual yearly estimates are very precise,
7 and so it's providing some baseline information there, but
8 there's still a fair amount of uncertainty.

9
10 Another thing was they included the combined video index, which
11 was somewhat different from the last assessment, but it really
12 didn't affect things until you start talking about recent
13 recruitment estimates, and, in fact, the recent recruitment
14 estimates are relatively high, and so that's some of the reason
15 for the changes, and then, finally, the updated CPUE indices of
16 abundance for commercial was truncated, for the reasons that
17 there wasn't a real good way to account for the behavior via the
18 ITQ, and so, in essence, the decision made by SEDAR 67 was to
19 truncate the data only in those periods where there was a good
20 indicator of this for the index of abundance.

21
22 If you look at the recreational landings, the difference between
23 the new and the old, you can see what you have there is the
24 trend is pretty much the same, but the scale is a little bit
25 different, and there is increases in the more recent years, and
26 so that was -- As we mentioned before, that higher catch level
27 is being interpreted by the model as there were more fish out
28 there, but it doesn't change the scale, or change the trends,
29 very much.

30
31 In terms of discards, note the scale, and, the actual discards,
32 there aren't that many, in terms of the effect on the population
33 themselves, and you can see there the values that have been
34 included, and it's 0.15 million pounds, compared to what the
35 overall catches are.

36
37 As I mentioned before, there is variability from year to year,
38 and it's not -- There is a great deal of uncertainty in that,
39 but they were still included, because that gives you some scale
40 associated with these, and so it's important to view that.

41
42 Then this is in terms of the landings in millions of pounds for
43 both the commercial and the recreational, and this is just a
44 graph of those, and so you can see, roughly speaking, what the
45 differences are between commercial and recreational, and then
46 you combine the two, and it gives you what the overall landings
47 were.

48

1 This is the -- This table is in the SSC summary, which you have
2 been given, but, essentially, in the top part, it gives you all
3 the reference points and what criteria are being used, based on
4 the assessment and using proxies for FMSY and so on, and the
5 assessment itself then says where were we in 2017, at the end of
6 2017, at the end of this assessment time period, and, as you can
7 see there, on the lower-right-hand side, the current benchmarks,
8 and key ones are the SSB 2017 relative to SSB zero, and that
9 says 0.52, and this is basically saying that the stock size is
10 about 50 percent of what it was when it was unfished, and that's
11 pretty good.

12
13 SSB 2017 relative to SSB SPR 30, that's basically saying where
14 is that relative to the overfishing limit, and you're basically
15 saying the stock size is 75 percent higher than that limit, and
16 then, if you take it down to MSST, the actual overfishing limit,
17 it's three-and-a-third times as high of that limit, and so, no,
18 the stock is not overfished, and it's not undergoing
19 overfishing.

20
21 One of the things to note with this assessment is there was a
22 great deal of effort put in in terms of what they call
23 continuity models and base models and looking at what the data
24 were like in 2015 and using the current models with those data
25 and then, vice versa, the old model with the new data, and so it
26 gives you an idea of what the effect of changes are, but,
27 largely, the changes were due to items that I mentioned in the
28 slide before.

29
30 At this point, then you have to move toward the projection of
31 the status for over the period of 2021, and, essentially, what's
32 the status over the next few years, so that you can make
33 determinations of the ABC and OFL and so on, but it has to go in
34 kind of two stages, because remember the data from the
35 assessment ended in 2017, and so you have to get from 2017 to
36 2020, where we are currently now, and then project ahead from
37 2021 on.

38
39 You have to remember that, when you project ahead from 2021 on,
40 those projection are done, in this case anyway, with two
41 different options, and one of them is using the overfishing
42 limit, the F 30 percent SPR, which is a proxy for FMSY, or,
43 alternatively, using the optimum yield criteria, which is 75
44 percent of F 30 percent SPR.

45
46 What happened in the interim projection period, 2018, 2019, and
47 2020? You will see there that it's about, in 2018, about 4.8
48 million pounds, and then the other was an average of the

1 previous three years, for 2019 and 2020, which is four million
2 pounds, and so it's fairly stable during that period.

3
4 You plug those into the projections, and you will see that in
5 the table before, and you will note there that the actual
6 projection starts after the 2020, and the projection under the F
7 30 percent SPR, or 75 percent of F 30 percent SPR, occurs after
8 the 2020 period. On the left is the yield, and on the right is
9 the relative spawning stock biomass, and, particularly if you
10 look on the right, the horizontal dotted lines relate to the
11 overfishing level, and the SSB at 30 percent SPR, which is the
12 higher horizontal line.

13
14 You will notice there, and this is an issue that was taken up at
15 some length by the SSC, that you get a huge jump there in both
16 the spawning stock biomass and the yield in those first few
17 years. Why is this?

18
19 Essentially, there's a number of things that are going on here
20 that cause this, and pretty much all of them cause the
21 projections to move in this direction. One of them is the
22 actual yield that occurred, the catches that occurred, were less
23 than the ABC that was actually estimated in the previous
24 assessment, and so, in that context, there was underfishing
25 going on, even relative to the prior ABC.

26
27 You have then the recreational landings increase throughout the
28 time series, because of the revisions that we're talking about
29 there, and, as indicated before, what this does is it scales up
30 the biomass throughout the time series, and so you're saying
31 that the biomass is higher.

32
33 You also have recent recruitment has been above average, and so
34 the net effect is that the stock size is better than was
35 previously thought, even projecting ahead to 2021, and better
36 than previously thought in the SEDAR 45, and so SEDAR 67 has
37 produced these results which are better than SEDAR 45.

38
39 Also, these projections are done at F 30 percent SPR, but the
40 recent fishing mortality rate is almost just about 56 percent of
41 that, and we're saying that the recent fishing mortality rate is
42 quite a bit less than F 30 percent SPR, and so, when you do
43 projections at F 30 percent SPR, you're saying that those
44 catches will be higher with a higher fishing mortality rate, as
45 occurred in recent years, and, effectively, what this is doing
46 is you have a surplus biomass that has been built up, and then,
47 if you actually did fish at F 30 percent SPR, then you would get
48 this fishing down process, where you can see it in the two

1 pictures below, where the peak is high, and then it kind of
2 settles down to a new equilibrium, which would relate to the
3 expectation of what the requirement was thought to be, and so
4 you have a transitional period with these projections, and then,
5 after that, the stock slow approaches F 30 percent SPR, in terms
6 of an equilibrium.

7
8 This was discussed at some length, both the causes of it and
9 then how to interpret it, and one of the things that there is
10 inherently uncertainty in this assessment, and, in fact, one of
11 the recommendations that were made, in terms of SEDAR, was the
12 uncertainty estimates that came out of it were probably
13 underestimated, and, in other words, things were more uncertain
14 than it would indicate by those estimates.

15
16 Also, it was felt that the projections and this transitional
17 period, where, if you specified the overfishing limit and the
18 ABC as the time series, where you have a very high level and
19 then followed by the transition, that really isn't justified,
20 given that level of uncertainty, and so, therefore, the SSC
21 resolved to specify OFL and ABC as an average over that period,
22 and so you're basically specifying, over the period of 2021
23 through 2025, an ABC and an OFL that averages over those
24 particular projections.

25
26 The motion that was made, that's in your notes, and also here on
27 the screen, for the OFL is that the OFL is the yield at F 30
28 percent SPR, and the ABC is the yield at -- The ABC equals OY is
29 the yield at 75 percent of F 30 percent SPR, and, for the
30 constant catch for the years to 2025, the OFL and the ABC are,
31 respectively, 8.6 and 7.27 million pounds. That was the essence
32 of the SSC's recommendation for this, and, with that, are there
33 questions? You may want to go back to one of the other figures
34 as you discuss things.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Dr. Powers. Are there any
37 questions about that presentation from the committee? I will
38 just pause there, and I will also note that, in this part of the
39 briefing book, and I think it is Tab B, Number 9(c), I think the
40 Science Center put together another one of these executive
41 summaries, and I think they're looking for feedback on that as
42 well, but I see Kevin's hand is up. Go ahead.

43
44 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Dr. Powers, for the presentation. I was
45 the council liaison for that meeting, and so don't laugh too
46 hard when I'm asking these next questions, but, Dr. Powers, you
47 have on your slide here -- I don't see a number for it, but
48 you've got a couple of graphs that show the yield in millions of

1 pounds for the base model projected at F 30 percent SPR and the
2 optimum yield at 0.75, and you have some bullet items, as far as
3 summary, of the initial jump in yield and biomass, and so yield
4 is -- Recreational landings resulted in an increase in estimated
5 biomass throughout the series.

6
7 You've got a model that is saying, hey, there's a lot more
8 catches going on, and so, therefore, there is more fish, and the
9 stock is more productive, and yet the comment is made that
10 surplus biomass will be fished down eventually, and high catches
11 are not expected to be sustained, and so I just -- I find it a
12 little hard, and I do -- I understand this is all projections,
13 or this particular aspect is about projections, but I just find
14 it hard to justify those that you've got, and is it because you
15 just don't have, I guess, the recent history with the FES data,
16 and it's not fully impacting the model?

17
18 You showed the one slide where there was a difference between
19 the FES and the old data, if you will, the old recreational
20 data, and that they were similar in trends, and it seemed to
21 make a bigger jump in recent years, as you look just solely at
22 FES data and not any calibrated data, and wasn't there model
23 projections that were done without the recreational data for the
24 vermilion assessment?

25
26 **DR. POWERS:** Without the recreational data?

27
28 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I thought there were some projections that
29 were made with just looking at the indices from the fishery-
30 independent.

31
32 **DR. POWERS:** That's not really projections, but, the indices
33 from the fishery-independent, yes, there were certain model runs
34 that were made in which just the indices of the fishery-
35 independent were done, to estimate the status at the end of
36 2017.

37
38 One of the things that I should mention here is that basically
39 any projections, for any stock, you are projecting what the
40 recruitment is going to be. In this case, because they focus on
41 before 2025, you're estimating that recruitment from 2021
42 through 2025, and that's based on a stock-recruitment, but, of
43 course, any individual year, there's going to be a very high
44 variability around that.

45
46 As it turns out, the recruitment that was estimated in the
47 assessment for the period of years between about 2015 and 2017
48 were very high, compared to the historical, and that's

1 attributing this peak, so to speak, in the period 2021 or so,
2 and so there isn't an expectation that that recruitment will be
3 maintained at a high level, and so that's why that's also
4 contributing to this particular peak.

5
6 I mean, there's always this question, and you had focused on the
7 fishery-independent, and there's always this question of indices
8 of abundance and how well they are actually proportional to what
9 the stock size is, and, of course, that's essentially what
10 you're trying to do, and a good deal of effort was put in
11 through SEDAR 67 to standardize the fishery-dependent estimates,
12 but you also had fishery-independent indices, and I think those,
13 if they were longer term and more expansive, people would be --
14 That is the preferred method, but, in the reality of stock
15 assessment, it's always kind of --

16
17 Now, as far as when you say -- I mean, you have to have fishery-
18 dependent data in an assessment, because that's what catch is,
19 and, I mean, you can look at indices, but, in order to get some
20 idea about the scale of the biomass, you need to have what
21 estimates of the catch are, and so, ultimately, you're always
22 going to have fishery-dependent data, if for no other reason
23 than just the catch. Thank you.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Ryan.

26
27 **MR. RINDONE:** This is from the stock assessment report, and this
28 is in Section 3.1.1.5.7. This talks about the jack-knife
29 sensitivity, or the jack-knife diagnostics, that are done, where
30 individual indices are removed and the model is rerun to test
31 for stability, and so, for SEDAR 67, each fishery-independent
32 index was removed, and the model was rerun, and the model was
33 sensitive to the combined video index, because that was what was
34 informing a lot of the information, and the fishery-dependent
35 CPUE, or catch per unit effort, indices were also removed, and
36 so that would be the recreational effort and the commercial
37 effort, but the other datasets, like the recreational and the
38 commercial landings and the age and length compositional data,
39 were deemed fundamentally necessary to stabilize the assessment,
40 and so those were not removed.

41
42 **DR. POWERS:** Thank you.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Leann.

45
46 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks. Just a comment going forward, and, as far
47 as truncating some of these commercial indices, especially when
48 you start looking at CPUE in IFQ species, and I understand there

1 is a host of reasons that we look at to say that maybe we
2 shouldn't do that, and sometimes it's hard to pick out the
3 directed trips for a certain species, and sometimes we think
4 maybe it's economics that are driving the volatility in those
5 CPUEs, rather than the stock itself, but I would caution against
6 nitpicking these commercial indices to death and leave them in
7 the model going forward.

8
9 I say that because we're putting recreational data in there
10 that, based on the conversations we had around the table
11 earlier, we don't have a high level of confidence in these
12 numbers at all, and we're really worried about them, and we want
13 somebody to do some digging into them.

14
15 We're putting that into the model, and it looks like SEAMAP has
16 been suspended this summer, and so you're going to have a
17 fishery-independent index of abundance that's going to have gaps
18 in it coming up pretty soon, and, if you keep truncating the
19 commercial indices as well, all the model has -- The model is
20 getting more and more reliant on then the recreational catches
21 that we don't have a lot of confidence in, because we are losing
22 some of these other indices that, although we may not be
23 confident that it's the stock that's driving it, we're not sure,
24 and it could be, and we're nitpicking it to death and taking it
25 out of there, and I just worry that we keep taking more and more
26 things out of the model that we have a lot of confidence in, and
27 we don't have huge confidence intervals around them, and we
28 leave in the stuff that we have huge confidence intervals
29 around, but that's all the model has got left to try and fit to.
30 I just worry about that going forward.

31
32 **DR. POWERS:** Well, I don't think we're there yet. For one, to
33 me, this is an interim decision. In other words, people aren't
34 giving up on using that data. For this particular assessment,
35 which was updating what was previously gone on, it was just felt
36 that there was not enough information to try to revise how to do
37 that, and so I think the assessment people are not giving up on
38 it at all, and they will try to revise this in the next go-
39 round, in terms of assessment.

40
41 I do share your concern about the amount of variability that
42 goes into these sorts of things, and that is, from an assessment
43 scientist's standpoint, what you try to do is, given a set of
44 data, you try to estimate what that variability is, so you get
45 an idea in terms of what kinds of risk that are taken, and so I
46 think all these things, when the next assessment is done, for
47 vermilion snapper or for any stock assessment, you try to
48 incorporate that amount of variability, for both recreational

1 and commercial, into the estimation process, and so we're
2 cognizant of that.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Clay.

5
6 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you, Chair. Joe answered the first question
7 that I was going to respond to quite well, and the only thing I
8 would add to that is fishery-independent surveys are kind of the
9 gold standard, because we conduct those surveys in the exact
10 same way year in and year out, and we try and cover a broad
11 range of the stock, and so what you're seeing, when you see a
12 trend in those surveys, is an actual trend in abundance.

13
14 The problem with catch per unit effort is fishermen are smart,
15 and they change the way they fish depending on the local
16 abundance of the fish populations, and so, consequently, the
17 catch rates of fishermen tend not to vary as much as the fish
18 population does, and so, in other words, if the fish population
19 went down by half, usually fishermen's catch rates don't go down
20 by quite so much, and I know that from personal experience, back
21 when I was an aquarium fish collector and had a commercial
22 license, and I changed the way that I fished all the time,
23 depending on the abundance of the fish that were there, and
24 everybody does that.

25
26 The other issue is that fishermen in general, particularly
27 recreational fishermen, are getting better and better, simply
28 because they have the advanced technology, and we don't adjust
29 those CPUE indices to account for that, because we don't know
30 exactly how, and so that's why, ultimately, we would like to
31 move more and more towards fishery-independent surveys.

32
33 The problem is that we don't have those surveys back in time,
34 and so I can see us continuing to use fishery catch per unit
35 effort data for the historical time periods, earlier in the
36 assessment period, but, ultimately, we would like to go to more
37 fishery-independent surveys, so we can get away from all these
38 vagaries that Joe and I just talked about.

39
40 The other point I wanted to raise was to reemphasize that issue
41 about why we see this big spike in the first few years, and Joe
42 said it, and I just want to emphasize it, that the main reason
43 for that is that we underfished the vermilion stock with respect
44 to the F 30 percent level, and so the stock was basically at a
45 level that was higher than the level that corresponds to a 30
46 percent SPR, and so the projections just basically allow you to
47 fish it back down to the 30 percent level, and that's why you
48 see that initial high peak in yield, because the assessments are

1 allowing you to fish it down.

2
3 The SSC, or the council, could decide not to fish the stock
4 down, if they wanted, and then the catch levels could be at some
5 lower level, and that's all I have. Thanks.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Clay. Kevin.

8
9 **MR. ANSON:** I know we're past time, Madam Chair, and so thank
10 you for recognizing me again, and so, just to follow-up on Dr.
11 Powers' discussion right before Clay came on, assessing that
12 variability with the recreational data, or any dataset in the
13 model, is that the CVs that are associated to account for
14 uncertainty, and are you talking about the same thing,
15 variability in uncertainty, as you try to identify that, or
16 associate that, data relative to one another?

17
18 **DR. POWERS:** That's a component of it. The CV stands for
19 coefficient of variation, because it's the amount of standard
20 deviation around a mean estimate, and so that's part of it, but
21 there's also more variability that is related to the stock-
22 recruitment relationship, and that's kind of -- It's not like
23 estimation variability. It's the fact that nature itself is
24 very variable, and the technical term that people use is what's
25 called process error, and all that means is that nature -- The
26 number of fish that are spawned each year is going to be very
27 variable, based on a whole slew of things, of which we don't
28 know about.

29
30 We can have reasonable estimates of what the average is, but
31 year-to-year variability we don't know, and so those are the
32 kind of components, and then there's other sources of
33 variability, which is that -- It's what is referred to as
34 structural variability, and that's basically are you using the
35 wrong model, and is this model that is being used appropriate
36 for this particular set of data and so on, and these are the
37 questions that are always asked in an assessment, and, when you
38 come down to the bottom line, it's a pragmatic decision of how
39 to balance these things, but recognize that all these sources of
40 variability do occur.

41
42 **MR. ANSON:** If I could follow-up, Madam Chair.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure. Go ahead.

45
46 **MR. ANSON:** So, looking at your suite of data then that goes
47 into the model, you said you had your structural variability and
48 your process variability, and I would tend to think that that

1 was equal, or the variability would be treated equally amongst
2 all of the data sources, and so you're really then left with the
3 variability within each of the datasets, and so, as we get a
4 better understanding of FES, and we try to rationalize the
5 estimates of FES with this higher estimation of effort and how
6 that translates into actual trips on the water, shouldn't that
7 account for or give pause to someone looking at that data, to
8 maybe, even though statistically the variability is through the
9 CVs, the coefficients of variation, wouldn't one want to try to
10 put a little bit more higher CVs on that, which would then
11 desensitize or take some of the weighting of that dataset in the
12 model?

13
14 **DR. POWERS:** Well, the CVs on those estimates are part of the
15 statistical estimation, and they probably are underestimated,
16 and I grant you that, and what you're asking is how in the
17 modeling do you weight the different sources of variability, and
18 there is -- Within the stock assessment, when you get into the
19 nitty-gritty of the model, generally you try to weight things
20 equally based on the amount of known variability, and, okay, I
21 worded that wrong, and not weighted equally, but you try to
22 weight them based on the known level of variability, and that
23 was done in this particular case, too.

24
25 Now, your question, I think, is more broad than that though, and
26 what you're really asking is how much do you want to really
27 believe the recreational estimates, and that is a concern,
28 because, as is shown there, if you scale those estimates up or
29 down, you end up with trends in the stock that are more or less
30 the same, but where you are relative to that horizontal
31 overfished line does change a little bit.

32
33 For this particular stock, the conclusions of both the SEDAR and
34 the SSC were those sorts of concerns were not enough to
35 disregard our conclusion that it's not overfished and not
36 overfishing, and so we are happy with that conclusion, but, of
37 course, as I mentioned, there are issues with the data, as there
38 always is. Thank you.

39
40 **MR. ANSON:** Martha, one last question, if I can.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure.

43
44 **MR. ANSON:** So, relative to the vermilion assessment, if the
45 weighting, and I will just use the term "weighting", but, if the
46 weighting were appropriate for the recreational data, and you're
47 confident in the recreational data to accurately represent the
48 trends in the fishery, or trends of the stock, one could then

1 argue, or it would seem plausible, that, based on those higher
2 levels of harvest, that an SPR of a proxy of 30 could be
3 reduced, correct?
4

5 **DR. POWERS:** I am not -- You are kind of convoluting several
6 things there. I am not sure. I mean, the decision of using an
7 F 30 percent SPR as a proxy, that's a different sort of modeling
8 issue, and, basically, what is it that you're trying to get at?
9 I don't understand the question, I guess.

10
11 **MR. ANSON:** Well, I guess I was just merely trying to -- If,
12 again, the confidence is high enough, or at least it translates
13 into high confidence in the model and the parameters that are
14 used in the model, that you can sustain those higher catches and
15 that recruitment, and you can verify that, or have some
16 semblance of confidence that recruitment will not be impacted or
17 can sustain a higher level of fishing effort, and, again, it
18 goes back to productivity. You can produce the same amount of
19 recruits with higher levels of harvest, and that's essentially
20 all I'm trying to make the connection there.

21
22 **DR. POWERS:** Yes, it's possible, but, ultimately, this balance
23 that we tried to achieve was through this recommendation about
24 the OFL and the ABC, which is basically averaging those
25 situations of where we expect to be over the next four or five
26 years, and that was the essential conclusion of the SSC, is
27 that's the best way to approach this definition of OFL and ABC.

28
29 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. The question before the committee, that
32 I think we're going to deal with in Full Council, is what to do
33 with this information. In other words, we have this big bump in
34 yield, albeit a short-term bump, and whether the council would
35 like to adjust annual catch limits, and I'm hoping that we can
36 address that in Full Council. Thanks, Dr. Powers, for that
37 presentation.

38
39 **DR. POWERS:** You're welcome.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I don't see any more hands, but I think Tom
42 wanted to speak, since we're a little bit over. Tom.

43
44 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you, Martha. You're exactly right there. We
45 can circle back in Full Council, and I think we will need to
46 consider a motion as to whether or not we want to adjust the
47 ACLs here in this particular case.

48

1 I know it's after 4:00, but what I would like to do, actually,
2 is I think we should go through the presentation for the red
3 grouper allocation, the ACLs and ACTs, and so we can be
4 prepared, again in Full Council, to give some direction moving
5 forward, but we'll stop after that.

6
7 We'll hear the presentation and see what type of input we're
8 going to need, and then we can move the lane snapper actually to
9 the August meeting, and so let's work through the red grouper,
10 and we'll finish up for the day after that. It's all yours.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Sounds good, and so we've got a
13 couple of presentations for red grouper, and the first one is
14 Dr. Freeman is going to give us a presentation on Amendment 53,
15 just an overview, if we can get him queued up, and it looks like
16 his presentation is up, and so, Dr. Freeman, whenever you're
17 ready.

18
19 **UPDATE ON THE RECREATIONAL CLOSURE ANALYSIS FOR GULF RED GROUPER**
20 **REEF FISH AMENDMENT 53 OVERVIEW PRESENTATION**

21
22 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** If it's okay, let me read through the action
23 guide for this item first. SERO will present on predicted
24 recreational closure dates for Gulf red grouper based on
25 recreational ACTs being considered in Reef Fish Amendment 53.
26 The committee is expected to discuss the presentation in the
27 context of the amendment and then provide guidance if any new
28 recreational management measures should be considered either in
29 Amendment 53 or in another document.

30
31 The timeline and next steps for Reef Fish Amendment 53 are
32 dependent on the committee's recommendations. In addition, the
33 committee should discuss if they want to hold virtual or in-
34 person public hearings for this amendment. If in-person public
35 hearings are desired, the locations in Florida should be
36 selected during this meeting, as red grouper are rarely landed
37 in other areas of the Gulf of Mexico.

38
39 Prior to SERO's presentation, I've got a short presentation, and
40 it's an overview of the two actions in Amendment 53, and, again,
41 that will provide some context for SERO's presentation.

42
43 As a reminder, Amendment 53 is being developed to revise red
44 grouper allocations between commercial and recreational sectors,
45 as well as modify total and sector ACLs based on the results of
46 the SEDAR 61 stock assessment, as well as subsequent OFL and ABC
47 recommendations from the SSC.

1 Acknowledging that status quo sector allocations are based on
2 the older MRFSS data, the council requested that the SSC examine
3 alternative sector allocation scenarios, considering the
4 contemporary FES calibrated MRIP data. The SSC reviewed those
5 in January, and, after affirming that the MRIP-FES recreational
6 landing estimates represent the best scientific information
7 available, they recommended the projections included in
8 Alternatives 2 through 4 of Action 2 as scientifically valid
9 estimates of OFL and ABC.

10
11 In Action 1, there are four alternatives, and these will
12 determine the commercial and recreational sector allocations,
13 based on the data used. Alternative 1, which is our no action,
14 continues to use the MRFSS data and would retain a 76 percent
15 commercial and 24 percent recreational split, based on data from
16 1986 through 2005.

17
18 Alternatives 2 through 4 use the MRIP-FES data across various
19 time ranges. Alternative 2 would look at 1986 through 2005, and
20 so the same timeframe as Amendment 30B in Alternative 1.
21 However, the allocations would be 59.3 commercial and 40.7
22 recreational.

23
24 Alternative 3 would expand the timeframe from 1986 through 2009,
25 and so right prior to the commercial IFQ program, and the
26 allocations, in this case, would be 60.5 percent commercial and
27 39.5 percent recreational. Alternative 4 looks at the timeframe
28 from 1986 through 2018, which is the start of this document was
29 the most recent landings, and, in this case, the allocations for
30 red grouper would be 59.7 percent commercial and 40.3 percent
31 recreational.

32
33 In Action 2, Action 2 will determine the OFLs, ABCs, ACLs, and
34 ACTs based on the allocations selected in Action 1 as well as
35 the commercial and recreational buffers that get set in Action
36 2, and so, in Alternative 1, which is our no action, you would
37 maintain the current OFL, ABC, ACLs, and ACTs, using the current
38 commercial and recreational buffers, which is 5 percent for
39 commercial and 8 percent for recreational.

40
41 Alternative 2 would revise the OFL and ABC, as recommended by
42 the SSC, and maintain the current buffer between the ACL and the
43 ACT for each sector, and so we would retain the commercial
44 buffer of 5 percent and the recreational buffer of 8 percent.

45
46 I will note that, in the document, with Alternatives 2 through
47 4, just as a reminder, each of those has four outcomes for the
48 OFLs, ABCs, ACLs, and ACTs, because Alternatives 2 through 4

1 would depend on which of the four alternatives are selected from
2 Action 1.

3
4 In Alternative 3, again, we would revise the OFL and ABC, as
5 recommended by the SSC and consistent with the allocations
6 selected in Action 1, and, here, applying the ACL/ACT control
7 rule to revise the buffer would lead to a zero percent
8 commercial buffer and a 9 percent recreational buffer.

9
10 Alternative 4 came from a motion that the council made in
11 January, and, so, here, the only difference from the previous
12 alternative is that the commercial buffer is 5 percent, and so
13 we would be retaining the current commercial buffer, in essence
14 to mediate the impact that a zero percent commercial buffer
15 would have on the multiuse program. However, the recreational
16 buffer would be revised and reflect that 9 percent.

17
18 The alternatives in Actions 1 and 2 result in a range of ACTs
19 for the recreational sector, and, based on the MRIP-FES data,
20 historical catch rates for the recreational sector are now
21 higher than previously estimated, and SERO will be presenting on
22 predicted closure dates for the recreational sector based on
23 historical landings, as well as the range of potential ACTs that
24 are derived in Action 2.

25
26 Again, as a reminder from the action guide, the council may
27 choose to consider recreational management measures to address
28 this, either in Amendment 53 or in another document.

29
30 I will note that, in SERO's presentation, the predicted closure
31 dates are designated by the alternative from Action 2 that is
32 paired with the alternative from Action 1, and so, as an
33 example, if Mr. Pulver refers to a closure date of 3-2, that
34 would be referring to an ACT linked with Alternative 3 of Action
35 2, with Alternative 2 of Action 1. As seen as the Amendment 53,
36 as well as in SERO's presentation, some ACTs do repeat across
37 alternatives, and in that case, SERO has grouped these
38 selections in their presentation.

39
40 If there is no questions at this point, I will let Mr. Pulver go
41 ahead and give his presentation, and I will be available for any
42 questions as well after his presentation.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Dr. Freeman. While we're
45 getting Mr. Pulver's presentation on the screen, I'm just
46 scanning to see if there are any hands, and it doesn't look like
47 there are any right now, and so I think we can move into Mr.
48 Pulver's presentation.

1
2 **RED GROUPER ACT PRESENTATION**
3

4 **MR. JEFF PULVER:** Hello, everybody. I know it's been a long
5 day, and so thank you for giving me the opportunity to present.
6 I'm an analyst at the Southeast Regional Office, and I'm on the
7 IPT for Amendment 53. This presentation discusses annual catch
8 targets that are currently in Amendment 53, based on recent
9 years of recreational data.

10
11 Just to stress that these analyses only apply for the ACTs that
12 are currently in Amendment 53, and Amendment 53 is based off of
13 SEDAR 61, which uses the new MRIP Fishing Effort Survey, or FES,
14 landings. The current ACT is being tracked with the older MRIP
15 Coastal Household Telephone Survey, or CHTS, equivalent
16 landings, and so it only would apply when this amendment, if it
17 does, goes into effect.

18
19 Recent MRIP-FES catch, or landings, was used to determine
20 different options for projecting future landings. At SERO, we
21 generally use recent landings, and, in this case, we use the
22 most recent landings, and, in this case, we use the most recent
23 three years of landings, from 2017 to 2019, and you can see the
24 table below. Those landings have ranged from a little over 1.6
25 million pounds to a little over two million pounds, and the
26 average is right around 1.8 million pounds per year, which is
27 larger than some of the ACTs currently in Amendment 53.

28
29 To determine future landings, if this amendment was to take
30 effect, we took the average of these three most recent years of
31 data, and there were some changes to the fishery in 2015, and
32 there was a reduction in the bag limit, and so using years prior
33 to 2017 for an extended time series would be difficult without
34 adjusting landings prior to 2016.

35
36 Recreational landings are collected by wave, which is a two-
37 month period, and this is January and February. We assume
38 uniform landings within each of those waves, and so, for
39 instance, landings for January and February are evenly
40 distributed between each of those months, to provide a daily
41 catch rate.

42
43 This figure here represents the landings by wave that we use to
44 predict future landings, and, on the left axis, we have landings
45 in pounds gutted weight, and, once again, this is in the MRIP-
46 FES currency, which is higher than the current CHTS currency.
47 On the bottom, on the X-axis, we have each of the waves. This
48 is January/February, March/April, and the blue line represents

1 2017, and the green line is 2018, and the black line represents
2 last year, 2019, and, from each of these, we predict, for each
3 wave, average landings, and that's represented by the red line.

4
5 That is what is used to sum up a daily catch rate, and you can
6 see that, for these three years, and as well for the prediction,
7 and there's a high seasonal component to the fishery, with
8 landings typically peaking in May or June and decreasing in the
9 fall, and, in some years, there was a slight uptick at the end
10 of the year, but, generally, the landings peak in the summer
11 there.

12
13 Taking those predicted future landings, we can sum the daily
14 catch rates over time, beginning January 1, and I just picked
15 2021 for these analyses, and so that's the red line there, and
16 the dashed lines represent the confidence intervals associated
17 with the landing rate, and you can see over time, by the end of
18 the year, the projected cumulative landings of the average,
19 which would be about the 1.8 million pounds. Once again,
20 landings are on the left, or the Y-axis, and then the date is on
21 the bottom.

22
23 This table here is the predicted closure dates for each of the
24 ACTs that are currently in Amendment 53, and I need to thank Dr.
25 Freeman for doing a good job of explaining how the alternatives
26 and actions are set up.

27
28 In this table, on the far-left column, for instance, 2-1
29 represents Alternative 2 in Action 2, which would be the 8
30 percent recreational buffer, paired with Alternative 1 in Action
31 1, which would be the current 76/24 percent allocation, which
32 results in an ACT of 1.09 million pounds gutted weight, which,
33 using those predicted landings, results in a predicted closure
34 date of July 26.

35
36 There is quite a bit of uncertainty in these analyses, and you
37 can see the season length, for that particular second row down,
38 ranges from 157 to 365 days, and 157 is early June, and so early
39 June to no closure needed.

40
41 For the next line, the 2-2, the higher ACT of 1.59 million
42 pounds gutted weight, we would still have a closure in late
43 November, and, once again, there's still substantial
44 uncertainty, with the season length predicted from late July,
45 once again, until to no closure needed.

46
47 These are all the different combinations, and you can see, at
48 the bottom there, for some of the alternatives and actions, in

1 Action 2 and Action 1, they resulted in the same ACT, and so
2 those are all grouped together, since the same ACT results when
3 those options were selected, and that's all I had, and so, if
4 there's any questions, I will take them at this time.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks so much for that presentation.
7 Are there any questions for either Dr. Freeman or Mr. Pulver?
8 Dale.

9
10 **MR. DIAZ:** I don't know how deeply you want to get into
11 discussing the document now, or if you want to hold that until
12 Full Council, but I would relay kind of how I'm thinking about
13 this, but, if you want to hold it until Full Council, I would be
14 glad to do so.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Why don't you go ahead?

17
18 **MR. DIAZ:** All right. I think I might ramble a little bit, and
19 so, running thirty minutes over, I know some folks might be
20 impatient with me, but, before we started this whole process, my
21 whole goal with this was for us to be able to be fair to the
22 different user groups, and that's all that I really wanted to
23 happen out of this, and I'm trying to figure out what that is.

24
25 In my mind, I think, if we could bring everybody back to where
26 they were just prior to using FES and plugging it into the stock
27 assessment and the numbers going up, in my mind, that would be
28 the fairest way to do it, and I do remember Dr. Crabtree saying,
29 at one of the meetings, that, if you don't do anything, in a
30 sense, you have reallocated, because more effort was there on
31 the recreational side, and it bumps the numbers up, and, if you
32 don't do anything, then more fish go to the commercial than
33 should go, but I don't want the commercial to lose the pounds,
34 and I really don't want the recreational to gain the pounds, and
35 I want everybody to be even.

36
37 When I read through the alternatives in Action 1, and there's
38 some reasons why I would not normally pick this alternative,
39 but, in trying to keep in line with the spirit of how I would
40 like this done, it seems like Alternative 2 seems to get us as
41 close to where I'm trying to get as possible.

42
43 Normally, I would want the most data, the most up-to-date data,
44 and all those types of things would be the things that I would
45 be asking for, but, in this situation, it seems like Alternative
46 2 -- It uses the same years that Alternative 1 uses, and,
47 anyway, that's where I am leaning right now, and that's my
48 rationale of why I'm leaning there, and I will be quiet, so

1 other folks can have their chance to speak. Thank you, Madam
2 Chair.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Dale. Thanks for kind of
5 putting that out there, and I think that may help get people
6 thinking about this, and so I don't want to pick alternatives,
7 preferreds or anything, right now, but, if there are questions,
8 I am happy to take those.

9
10 I will say I would just kind of an explanation point, I guess,
11 on that table of Mr. Pulver's presentation on Slide 6, that
12 there are some real consequences to the recreational sector,
13 depending on which options we choose here, and so heads up,
14 recreational folks, if you want to provide public comment to us
15 on this tomorrow. I don't see any more hands at this point, and
16 so I think that means we can take up the rest of this discussion
17 at Full Council.

18
19 **DR. FREEMAN:** Martha, sorry to interrupt, but just a reminder,
20 and perhaps, if nothing else, you all can bring it up during
21 Full Council, but, again, if you all could discuss the
22 possibility of virtual or in-person public hearings, as well as
23 locations, if you all do decide on in-person public hearings for
24 Amendment 53.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Yes, we can do that. I think it might
27 be good to talk about that in Full Council too, and let me ask
28 you this. When is the soonest you think these public hearings
29 would be?

30
31 **DR. FREEMAN:** Some of that would depend on if the council
32 decides to add any additional actions to Amendment 53. I think,
33 potentially, the soonest would be -- I would take a guess, and
34 perhaps Dr. Simmons or Dr. Froeschke would want to chime in,
35 would be after the October council meeting.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. That's helpful. All right, and so I'm
38 going to ask everybody to think about that, particularly the
39 Florida folks, and so, if we do in-person meetings, they would
40 definitely need to be in Florida, and so anything else on this
41 amendment for the moment? Okay. I don't see any more hands.

42
43 I do want to, before I turn it back to Tom, just thank everybody
44 for hanging in there and for staff for managing all of our
45 technical issues today, and I know that it is not easy on their
46 end to do this, and so thanks, everybody.

47
48 **DR. FRAZER:** Yes, I would echo those comments. Thanks,

1 everybody, for hanging in there, and thanks to the staff for
2 king of persevering through our technological challenges today.

3

4 Again, just to circle back on this particular amendment, I
5 think, when we get to Full Council, people will need to be
6 thinking about preferreds for those two action items, and I
7 think, after talking with Carrie and John here, depending on if
8 there are any additions to that amendment, it will affect when
9 we might go out for public hearings. In the absence of
10 additions, probably in September, possibly, and then, if we add
11 something, it would certainly be later than that, but be
12 prepared for that in Full Council, and we will see everybody
13 tomorrow at 9:30 in the morning. Thank you.

14

15 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 16, 2020.)

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