

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Webinar

OCTOBER 26-27, 2020

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- 12 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
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1
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8 Jessica Stephen.....NMFS
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PAGE 68: Motion to refer the SEDAR 61 Red Grouper stock assessment back to the SSC so that the SSC can provide further discussion and explanation on the differences between historical recreational landings time series and what the stock assessment model has estimated as recreational landings. The motion carried on page 72.

PAGE 86: Motion to direct staff to combine gray triggerfish with the vermillion snapper framework action for the purpose of adjusting catch levels to utilize the information from the interim analysis. The motion carried on page 87.

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1 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened via webinar on Monday afternoon,
3 October 26, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Martha
4 Guyas.

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

10 **CHAIRMAN MARTHA GUYAS:** We will call the Reef Fish Committee to
11 order. This is a committee of everyone, and so, in case you
12 were wondering if you are on this committee, yes, you are. The
13 first thing on our agenda is Adoption of the Agenda. Are there
14 any additions or modifications to the agenda, other than what
15 Dr. Frazer just described? Kevin.

16
17 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you. I raised my hand digitally a
18 minute ago, but I didn't see my name being typed, and so I would
19 like to add, under Other Business, a discussion about how dead
20 discards are treated in the red snapper assessment in both the
21 recreational and commercial sectors, just probably with Dr.
22 Porch, and, depending upon that discussion goes, maybe develop a
23 motion for further review by the SSC. Thank you.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Kevin. Anyone else? I am
26 not seeing any other hands, and so are there any objections to
27 adopting the agenda as modified? Next, we have the minutes, and
28 I believe those went out as an email yesterday, or early today,
29 and are there any changes to the minutes? Any opposition to
30 approving the minutes as written? Seeing none -- I think there
31 was no objection there, and so, seeing none, the minutes are
32 approved.

33
34 If we could, we can just go through our action guide item-by-
35 item when we get to that item, and I think that might be
36 helpful, especially if we're going to have this committee over
37 two days, and so I guess, with that, I think our next item would
38 be review of the reef fish landings. Peter, are you going to
39 take us through those?

40
41 **REVIEW OF REEF FISH LANDINGS**
42

43 **MR. PETER HOOD:** Yes, I am. If that could be brought up, that
44 would be great, and I think, in the interest of time, what I'm
45 going to do is just focus on commercial landings, and Dr. Cody
46 is going to be talking a little bit about where we are with
47 recreational landings. If you're curious about what's been
48 reported to date, and by whom, our rec data, we have MRIP for

1 January 1 through the end of February, and so Wave 1, and we
2 have the Headboat Survey through June 30, and LA Creel through
3 September 13.

4
5 That information is there, but, again, it's not the full
6 picture, and so I don't know if it's really worth going over in
7 too much detail, and so here is commercial data for gray
8 triggerfish and greater amberjack.

9
10 You can see we're under the ACL this year. For 2020, we have
11 caught about 41,000 pounds for gray triggerfish, compared to
12 62,000 pounds in 2019, and, for greater amberjack, it's about
13 265,000 for this year, compared to -- Sorry. It's hard to read
14 on my screen. It's a little over 356,000 pounds in 2019.

15
16 In the tables below that, we have gag, red grouper, and red
17 snapper, and current landings for gag are about 400,000 pounds,
18 and that's about 43 percent of the quota. For red grouper,
19 it's, 1,703,000 pounds, which is about 56.8 percent of the
20 quota, and then the red snapper is about -- Over five-million
21 pounds have been landed, which is about 75 percent of that
22 quota, and you can see we're sort of probably in landing this
23 year what was landed last year, and maybe we're at little bit
24 behind, and I know, at some point, you'll receive a presentation
25 from Dr. Stephen, who will get into this in a little bit more
26 detail, and so we can scroll down.

27
28 The next page is recreational landings, and, again, I said I
29 wasn't going to get into those too much, and this is for greater
30 amberjack. On this page, we have gag, gray triggerfish, red
31 grouper, and red snapper for-hire. Again, we don't have
32 complete landings, and so we really can't -- It's hard to really
33 talk about any kind of trends here.

34
35 The next page is going to be where we have stock ACLs, and we
36 have it divided out between commercial and recreational. I
37 should probably talk a little bit about some of the things that
38 are going on on the commercial side. For gray snapper and
39 vermilion snapper, so far this year, we have caught a little
40 over half of what was caught during the previous year. For lane
41 snapper, we've caught, this year, about two-thirds of what was
42 caught in 2019, and then, for hogfish and mutton snapper, what's
43 been caught so far in 2020 is comparable to 2019.

44
45 What will be coming up is some figures, and, basically, it's
46 showing what was caught for greater amberjack and gray
47 triggerfish in previous years, and that was presented at the
48 October council meeting. In one more page, you will see some

1 bar graphs, but, basically, similar to what I presented in
2 September, the landings in 2020 are a little bit off for these
3 two species compared to 2017 through 2019, but we're still kind
4 of in the ballpark there.

5
6 Everything else basically is either stock or recreational
7 landings, and the stock landings are basically recreational and
8 commercial landings combined, and, again, I don't know how much
9 information is really there for you, and I think I've hit the
10 high points, in terms of commercial landings, and I will leave
11 it there, and I'm looking forward to hearing Dr. Cody talk a
12 little bit about what's going to happen with recreational
13 landings, and so thank you.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Peter. I see a couple of hands going
16 up with questions. Susan.

17
18 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Maybe I misunderstood, because we're going
19 fairly quickly, but, on the stock complexes, Peter, I understood
20 you to say that gray snapper and lane snapper were in line with
21 2019, but that math does not compute with me, and am I missing
22 something?

23
24 **MR. HOOD:** I'm sorry, and maybe I didn't explain it quite right.
25 For -- Let's see. You said gray snapper and lane snapper?

26
27 **MS. BOGGS:** I mean, that's what I understood you to say. Yes,
28 sir.

29
30 **MR. HOOD:** So where we are right now with gray snapper, what was
31 caught in this year, 2020, is a little bit more than half of
32 what was caught in 2019, and so, for the commercial fishery,
33 we're -- I don't know if we'll catch the numbers that were
34 caught in 2019, the poundage, rather. For lane snapper,
35 basically, about 16,000 pounds has been caught so far this year,
36 and, in 2019, almost 24,000 pounds was landed, and so it's about
37 two-thirds of -- We're at about two-thirds of what was caught in
38 2019.

39
40 **MS. BOGGS:** What you're saying now makes sense, and what you
41 said in the presentation just threw me off. Thank you.

42
43 **MR. HOOD:** Sorry. I was trying to quickly, because I know
44 there's a lot of things that you really want to get it, and I'm
45 just trying to move things along.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I think I see Ms. Bosarge's hand.

48

1 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** I think he just explained what I needed, and
2 I was trying to follow him too, and don't ever try and rush
3 through this. This is important stuff, and it kind of is the
4 basis for a lot of our other decisions. We'll give you what you
5 need in time. The floor is yours.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Leann. Any other hands with questions
8 for Peter? If not, I believe Dr. Cody is on deck to give us our
9 next presentation about how they're approaching recreational
10 landings in 2020. I don't know if staff wants to provide an
11 introduction to that from the action guide.

12
13 **APPROACHES FOR ESTIMATING RECREATIONAL LANDINGS IN 2020**

14
15 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** I can if you would like.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure.

18
19 **MR. RINDONE:** This is actually something that we had added in
20 between the iterations of things getting posted, but,
21 essentially, what Dr. Cody is going to be doing for you guys is
22 talking about the NOAA Office of Science and Technology's
23 proposed approach for dealing with the estimates of recreational
24 catch and effort for 2020 for data from Wave 2 moving forward
25 due to COVID-19.

26
27 You guys might remember Dr. Cody's talks in the past about how
28 the effort side of things for the Fishing Effort Survey had
29 continued largely uninterrupted. However, the dockside sampling
30 that's conducted through the Access Point Angler Intercept
31 Survey was interrupted, and it varied state-by-state, based on
32 local restrictions as it related to social distancing and being
33 precautionous about COVID, and so Dr. Cody will be going into more
34 detail here about the NOAA Office of Science and Technology's
35 approach for moving forward with producing estimates for 2020.

36
37 **DR. RICHARD CODY:** Like Peter said, there have been significant
38 effects on the recreational data, and what I'm going to present
39 today, as Ryan described, is really just what we've been doing
40 to-date and to give you a status update of where things are, in
41 terms of coming up with 2020 estimates of recreational catch.

42
43 You have seen this slide over and over, and we present it every
44 time we give a presentation on our data, but, basically, what it
45 shows you is that we have a mix of different surveys to cover
46 the nation, in terms of recreational data collection, and,
47 depending on how these surveys are conducted, the pandemic has
48 had differential effects, and so, for instance, we have some

1 surveys that are conducted in association with logbook reporting
2 systems, and so logbooks have continued, and we've been able to
3 get data from those, but the dockside part, or the in-person
4 surveys associated with it, have been impacted by social
5 distancing and safety measures.

6
7 For the survey approaches that are used, as I said, we have in-
8 person, but we also have remote, or self-administered, surveys
9 as well, and the remote, or self-administered surveys, have been
10 basically continuing, largely unimpacted, and these are the
11 surveys such as telephone surveys and mail surveys, that there
12 is no need for one-to-one in-person interaction to occur.

13
14 I borrowed these slides, by the way, from the CCC, the council
15 CCC meeting, recently that Cisco Werner presented, and he
16 started off by just setting the stage, and, basically, what it
17 says is that, to our mail and telephone surveys used to estimate
18 effort, we've had minimal impacts to those surveys, and we've
19 been able to continue largely uninterrupted, but, with the
20 shoreside surveys in particular, we've had significant impacts
21 to our ability to collect data. Even with state-developed
22 sampler protocols, safety protocols, and the resumption of
23 sampling, it has continued to be impacted by the conditions in
24 the field.

25
26 This is really just to illustrate the fact that in-person
27 interviews require you getting close to an angler, so you can
28 get information from them on their trip, but also on their
29 catch, and so getting close enough to be able to measure and
30 weigh catch can be problematic.

31
32 The Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, or our dockside
33 survey, is conducted along the Atlantic coast, from Maine to
34 Mississippi in the Gulf, and decisions basically to suspend the
35 -- At the state level, we were kept informed in the process, and
36 the states were very accommodating in letting us know their
37 plans for suspending and then resuming sampler activity.

38
39 Between March and August, seventeen of the states had suspended
40 or reduced or modified their conduct of the APAIS survey, and so
41 what this means is that sampling guidelines had to be adapted to
42 continue sampling, and this impacted the sampler productivity,
43 in terms of the numbers of interviews, the numbers of weights
44 and lengths, and completed interviews that they were able to
45 accomplish, but, as of about August 1, all of the state partners
46 have resumed shoreside sampling. At-sea headboat, and then also
47 our regular headboat, the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey,
48 that has not resumed its field activity, but, again, the logbook

1 has continued throughout.

2
3 The conduct of the APAIS continues to be impacted, even now, and
4 that's largely because of social distancing guidelines and
5 sampler safety protocols, and we were involved with discussions
6 with the states, many of the states, on the development of
7 sampler protocols, and we're very encouraged by the amount of
8 cooperation between the states and coming up with consistent
9 sampler guidelines that I think helped the survey resume at,
10 least if not unimpacted, but at a consistent level of safety
11 protocols.

12
13 We can skip through this, and there's only two things that I
14 want to point out in this slide, and that is, as I mentioned, we
15 have a number of different surveys that have been impacted in
16 different ways, and the Southeast Regional Headboat Survey, as I
17 mentioned, the sampling activities, the dockside sampling, has
18 been suspended, but the logbook reporting still continues, and
19 we have heard from some of the states, especially in the Gulf,
20 that they have made modifications to their sampling protocols.

21
22 The Fishing Effort Survey, as I mentioned, is our main vehicle
23 for collecting information on recreational fishing effort, or
24 numbers of trips, and this is conducted largely Maine through
25 Mississippi, following the distribution of the APAIS survey, and
26 also in Hawaii, and, as I said, the offsite portion of the data
27 collection continued largely uninterrupted. However -- And we
28 do continue to publish the wave-level fishing effort fishing
29 estimates, but there have been some impacts to off-frame
30 adjustments that we get from the dockside survey.

31
32 For instance, the dockside survey is used to account for out-of-
33 state fishing effort, and the Fishing Effort Survey really is
34 done with resident anglers, and is able to account for resident
35 angler effort, but there is some out-of-state effort as well,
36 and we think that this impact, by not being able to get the
37 adjustments from the APAIS, will be fairly -- It shouldn't be a
38 huge factor, because of the travel restrictions and reduced
39 tourism, basically, early on in the survey, and we're not so
40 sure, later on, if that ticked up or if the out-of-state effort
41 may have changed, but we think, early on at least, it would have
42 had a minimal effect on the overall effort estimates.

43
44 Just to give you a status update of where we are, or what you
45 can find on our website, we have published preliminary shore,
46 private boat, and for-estimates for Waves 2 and 3, and,
47 actually, 4 as well that were impacted by the survey, and so,
48 for the entire year, basically, up until Wave 4, which would

1 have been July and August, and those estimates are available on
2 our website.

3
4 These are produced using our standard methodology, but, as I
5 mentioned, it's lacking some of the components that we normally
6 would have picked up from the Access Point Angler Intercept
7 Survey to make adjustments for off-frame fishing effort. The
8 estimates are not available through the query tool, and they are
9 expected to change before they are published as final at this
10 point, but they are available as a downloadable spreadsheet on
11 the website.

12
13 The catch estimates, that's a different story entirely, and, due
14 to the significant data gaps that we've seen, we decided not to
15 publish anything from Waves 2 through 6, because it wouldn't
16 result in an annual estimate, and we would be missing at least
17 Wave 2, in particular, and we've been missing practically every
18 bit of intercept information that we would normally have
19 expected.

20
21 We are working with the Regional Offices and the Science Centers
22 to assess the impacts of this decision, knowing that the
23 councils and other regional Science Centers and offices did use
24 the wave-level estimates to get an idea of the status of catch
25 throughout the year, and one thing I will add is that it's
26 really very difficult, at this point, to get a full appreciation
27 of the data gaps that are in the data that will allow us to
28 produce reliable estimates, and that's really the basis for our
29 decision not to publish, at this point, wave-level estimates.

30
31 Just to give you an idea of the extent of the gaps, these are a
32 couple of different diagrams that we have here. Basically,
33 what's presented here is a ratio of the 2020 data through an
34 average of the last three years, and so 2017 through 2019, and
35 what you're looking at here is the proportion of 2020
36 intercepts, based on the average for the previous three years,
37 and, as you can see, the gray color points to the zero overlap
38 there, and there is basically no data collected, and those
39 colors change until you get to greater than 75 percent, and so
40 that's close to being what it was back for the average for the
41 three years.

42
43 You will see, on the horizontal axis, that you have the months
44 denoted as numbers, and you will see, for April, there is a
45 black line delineating April, and there is practically no
46 intercept data available, and we saw, about mid-March, where
47 states began to ramp down their efforts to collect data, based
48 on guidance at the state level and local levels to commit to

1 social distancing measures.

2
3 You will see that, in the month of May also, there were
4 significant data gaps, and I will point out that Alabama,
5 Florida, and Mississippi are on the right here, the far-right
6 right of the graph, and so that's the Gulf surveys, and you will
7 see that there's been a little bit of resumption of activities
8 past June, and that has continued into August.

9
10 I mentioned that one of the things that we noticed is that the
11 social distancing guidelines, and the pandemic in general, have
12 resulted in decreased accessibility of the catch, and so it's
13 very difficult, exercising social distancing guidelines, to get
14 adequate length and weight data, and this is basically a similar
15 kind of graph that I just showed you, and the last one was for
16 angler intercepts, and this is really based on the number of
17 length measurements that we get, and, again, you will see
18 similar holes in the data for April, and continuing through May,
19 but you will see that there are significant gaps that have
20 continued since then, with the social distancing guidelines.
21 Things haven't quite gotten got back to normal.

22
23 Then the last slide is really just the weight measurements here,
24 showing you a similar picture to what you saw for the length
25 data, and so that gives you an impression, at least, of the data
26 gaps that we are trying to deal with right now at this point.

27
28 What are our catch estimation options? Obviously, we have
29 significant gaps throughout 2020, and we are looking at
30 different techniques right now, and we're in consultation with
31 Westat statisticians, Jean Opsomer and Mike Brick, and what
32 we've been pursuing are different techniques, a different
33 imputation method, that uses a variety of large domain versus
34 small area estimation approaches.

35
36 In large domain estimation, really, you're just aggregating, but
37 sticking within the survey design constraints. They try not to
38 violate any survey design elements that you have in place, but
39 you're aggregating data to get to a point where you can produce
40 a viable estimate. That's not ideal, because you may have to go
41 to levels that are above the state, in some cases, to get an
42 estimate. Small area estimation is something that we already
43 use, in terms of length and weight data imputation, and we use
44 that technique regularly to fill in data gaps for length and
45 weight information.

46
47 The take-home here is that any estimates that we get will likely
48 need to be revisited once we have had a chance to produce them,

1 and we expect revisions going forward, because the imputation
2 methods basically are better informed with the more data that
3 you have, and so we would expect that, once we have a shoulder
4 year of 2019 and a shoulder year of 2021, that we would go back
5 and revisit the 2020 estimates relative to those two years, to
6 see if we can improve the estimates for 2020.

7
8 Ongoing work, I mentioned a little bit about the work that we're
9 doing with Westat consultants, but, as part of that, what we've
10 been doing, instead of just waiting for all of the 2020 data to
11 get here, is we've been looking at the 2020 data, the gaps that
12 are in there, and using that to use 2019 data to model what we
13 would expect to see for 2020, and, also, this gives us an
14 opportunity to test the programs that we're using to incorporate
15 data and to produce the estimates.

16
17 Those are ongoing right now, and they're, I think, proceeding
18 pretty well, in terms of their ability to handle data, and so
19 the next steps really are to evaluate our options for
20 imputation, and so that means really just where are we going to
21 get the proxy data, or the data that we use, to fill in the data
22 gaps and how many -- What kinds of assumptions are we making in
23 terms of taking data that wasn't collected and using that as a
24 proxy?

25
26 Hopefully, by the time we're finished testing with the 2019
27 data, we'll be ready to apply this to the 2020 data, and the
28 documentation for that will be made available, so that people
29 can see how the process worked. I think that was my last slide,
30 and so, if anybody has any questions, I would be happy to try
31 and entertain them, and I know I left out a lot of the details
32 of how this imputation methodology would work, but I would be
33 happy to provide some of that information in writing, as far as
34 documentation is concerned.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Richard. I will give folks
37 a minute to get their hands up. In the meantime, I've got a
38 couple of questions for you. One is about your impact slide,
39 and you mentioned that you were working with the Regional
40 Offices and the Science Centers to understand the impacts of
41 holding back the catch estimates, for I guess everything Wave 2
42 and on, and are also talking to some of the states about this,
43 since those data are used to monitor state-managed and inshore
44 species?

45
46 **DR. CODY:** We're in regular contact with the states, as far as
47 the conduct of the survey is concerned, and I won't say that
48 we've had detailed discussions with them at this point, because

1 we had to wait for our leadership to approve our plan to not
2 publish wave-level estimates at this point.

3
4 I think the states have been made aware that we're not doing
5 that, and there has been a roll-out time, each wave, for all of
6 the estimates that we have produced, and that has delayed things
7 slightly, but I think that, overall, NOAA communications has
8 done a pretty good job with that, but I think that, going
9 forward, the states would be part of the discussion.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** My other question is are you all looking at
12 exploring each of the supplemental surveys that we have in the
13 Gulf of Mexico to help fill some of the gaps that MRIP is
14 experiencing?

15
16 **DR. CODY:** As I mentioned, those surveys have also experienced
17 some of the same issues that we have with the large federal
18 survey, but, at this point, we're willing to look at whatever
19 data we can get our hands on to try and inform the estimates.
20 We did try, at one point, to try and get an additional survey,
21 an emergency approval, through the White House Office of
22 Management and Budget, but they balked at that, and so, at this
23 point, we are looking at all of our options for informing the
24 estimates, and so we would expect to at least look at if that
25 can be done with the state-level surveys, at least for some
26 species.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Richard. I see Leann's
29 hand is up.

30
31 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think Richard just kind
32 of touched on, and so did Martha, my thought process in this, is
33 how much communication is going on with the states, and it
34 doesn't -- It sounds like it's been somewhat limited thus far,
35 and I just hate that we're operating in this mini bubbles,
36 right, and everybody seems to be going to recreate their own
37 wheel.

38
39 The states have their own data collection programs, and they had
40 gaps too, and I'm sure they're trying to figure out how to fill
41 in the gaps that they had, and so, you know, it would be nice if
42 everybody could collaborate on this, in our kumbaya world that I
43 want to believe we have, but I don't see that happening, and so,
44 in that effort, and in an effort to look at some of that state
45 data as an asset to help fill in the gaps for Dr. Cody, I would
46 love to see a presentation from each of the states on how they
47 are dealing with the holes that COVID created in their data
48 system and what assumptions they're making and what information

1 they're using to inform those gaps.
2
3 Not to mention that FES only covers three of the Gulf states,
4 and so I think it's vital that we also hear from LA Creel and
5 from Texas, for their data gaps, and how are they going about
6 filling that in, because we have to put all this stuff together
7 to come up with recreational landings, and so I don't know if
8 the states could do that by the next meeting, because I realize
9 that's a quick turnaround, but I would like to hear some
10 feedback from states on that kind of presentation.

11
12 **DR. CODY:** Could I just make a comment on that?

13
14 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure. Go ahead.

15
16 **DR. CODY:** Part of the reason there's been limited contact at
17 this point, other than just trying to get a handle on where the
18 states have felt like they've had difficulties ramping up survey
19 activity, is because we haven't had the methods outlined to a
20 point where we could present them to the states, or elsewhere,
21 and I think, as the -- Most states came back online August 1,
22 and there was sort of a wait-and-see, to see how well they were
23 able to respond, or how well they're able to deal with the
24 restrictions that they have.

25
26 I think, from my perspective, I think we've been pleasantly
27 surprised by how much they have been able to collect, and that
28 has helped, in the last few weeks, to flesh out the methods that
29 we're looking at, and so I think that there is promise, at this
30 point, that we will have something, if it's not tested, at least
31 available close to the end of the year, but I think that we
32 would be -- You make a very good point that there needs to be
33 some communication on what forms of data are available, so that
34 maybe both state and the federal estimates can be better
35 informed.

36
37 **MS. BOSARGE:** Can I follow-up, Martha?

38
39 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure. Go ahead.

40
41 **MS. BOSARGE:** You said the methods hadn't been developed yet,
42 and that's why there's been some limited communication, but I
43 guess that's what I'm trying to drive home here, is that I would
44 venture to guess that GRFS has some holes in their data too, and
45 they're coming up with methods on how to fill that methodology
46 and how they're going to deal with that.

47
48 FES is coming up, or the federal system, whatever you want to

1 call it, is coming up with their methodology, and LA Creel is
2 probably coming up with methods for how -- We all need to -- We
3 can't keep operating in our own little bubbles and not
4 communicating until everybody has come up with their methods,
5 and then you have these huge differences.

6
7 I think this is a great time to start collaborating more, and I
8 think the best way to go about that is to have a presentation at
9 the council, and we can listen to all these different methods
10 that each state or FES is using, how they're thinking about
11 this, and we can all learn from each other, and that's what I'm
12 hoping for.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Leann. Are there other
15 thoughts on this topic? Are there any other questions for
16 Richard? Okay. I guess, to Leann's question about future
17 presentations by the states, for the past few meetings, I think
18 each state has kind of run down the status of their data
19 collection, in general, and I don't know how much wiggle room we
20 have in the agenda for November/December, and I'm guessing it's
21 pretty limited, but maybe Dr. Simmons, or Dr. Frazer, and I
22 don't know if you want to weigh-in on that, on another series of
23 presentations from states.

24
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I
26 would say, right now, we have pretty much finalized the
27 November/December agenda, but, with this hurricane, I'm not sure
28 what's going to happen, and it's all up in the air, and I don't
29 know. Is it three strikes and you're out? I'm not sure.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Yes. It wouldn't be a council meeting week if
32 there wasn't a hurricane then. It seems, if there's no meeting,
33 there's no hurricane. If there's a meeting, there's a
34 hurricane. Okay. Well, I guess that idea is out there,
35 potentially, for a future meeting, if we have -- If we find
36 ourselves with some space on the agenda. All right. I am not
37 seeing any more hands on this topic. It's 4:21, and, Dr.
38 Frazer, I'm assuming you want to call it a day at this point.

39
40 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** I think, again -- I mean, we're in a tough
41 spot, and so this is I think how we'll proceed. I mean, we do -
42 - I did call for a hard stop at 4:30, and we've had a couple of
43 folks that have had to drop off already because of a prior
44 commitment, and so I want to be mindful of those schedules, but
45 realize that we do have some business to take care of, and I
46 would like to push through Reef Fish tomorrow.

47
48 We will watch the forecast tonight and get a good idea of what's

1 going on, but I think everybody should be prepared to join
2 promptly tomorrow, in the morning, and then we'll provide an
3 update, right before you get started, about how we're going to
4 proceed, and so I appreciate everybody's effort to try to move
5 some things along today.

6
7 Again, I will -- Up on the screen, there is an opportunity to
8 participate in some of the visioning components of this greater
9 amberjack research program, which is analogous, in many ways, to
10 the Great Red Snapper Count, and so, if you have an opportunity
11 to pop on there, you might find that very interesting. We will
12 go ahead and adjourn the meeting for today, and we will see you
13 all tomorrow morning at nine o'clock. Thank you.

14
15 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed on October 26, 2020.)

16
17 - - -

18
19 October 27, 2020

20
21 TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

22
23 - - -

24
25 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
26 Management Council reconvened via webinar on Tuesday morning,
27 October 27, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Martha
28 Guyas.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I think we are now on the Review of IFQ Program
31 Landings and Fishing Industry Impacts Due to COVID-19. I think
32 Dr. Stephen is going to present that. When you're ready, Dr.
33 Stephen.

34
35 **REVIEW OF IFQ PROGRAM LANDINGS AND FISHING INDUSTRY IMPACTS DUE**
36 **TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

37
38 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** This is the same type of presentation that
39 we saw before, and we've just updated the data through September
40 and then added some additional data through the point that we
41 could in October.

42
43 As a quick reminder, we're looking at six different species to
44 represent the six different share categories, with red snapper,
45 gag, red grouper, yellowedge grouper, scamp, and golden
46 tilefish. I will show you graphs of the landings as well as the
47 allocation, and then we'll finish up with some carryover
48 considerations, moving onward.

1
2 This is a similar graph that we've seen before with the red
3 snapper landings, and, again, I just want to point out that the
4 same structure will be for all of them, and we have the trip
5 count, which is a proxy using our landings confirmations, in the
6 upper-left, and then the upper-right are the pounds landed, and
7 then the bottom-left is total ex-vessel value, and the bottom-
8 right is weekly ex-vessel price per pound.

9
10 The things that I want to point out on the red snapper is that
11 we're seeing a very similar pattern to what I just showed you in
12 the last council meeting, where we see an increase showing there
13 in the number of red snapper pounds landed, which is the light-
14 blue-dotted line, the 2020 value, and the dotted-black line is
15 2019, and the gray is the average of 2017 to 2019.

16
17 In pounds landed, you see that 2020 value is approaching the
18 average, and it is actually above that right now and approaching
19 the 2019 value, and they're very similar to what we've seen of
20 pounds landed before with red snapper. Number of trips, in
21 general, is lower than we've seen before, and so it typically
22 means that they might be landing more pounds per trip, in order
23 to get the number of pounds similar to past values.

24
25 When we're looking at the total ex-vessel value, we've seen that
26 increase as well in 2020, that we're getting very similar to
27 what the average was of 2017 to 2019, but we have not yet
28 approached the 2019 value, in and of itself. One thing to take
29 note of with the ex-vessel price per pound is that this does
30 fluctuate week-to-week, which is dependent upon what dealers are
31 landing and how many transactions they're putting through and
32 how many pounds, and so those are a little bit more fluctuating,
33 but we've seen that the 2020 value is fairly in line, again,
34 with the average 2017 to 2019, but, overall, lower than we've
35 seen in 2019.

36
37 It's the same four graphs, but looking at gag in this case.
38 Again, it's similar patterns to what we've seen before. The
39 ones I want to highlight here is that the pounds landed has
40 approached the average value, 2017 to 2019, as has the total ex-
41 vessel value, and it actually exceeded that there, but we're
42 still below 2019. When we look at the ex-vessel price, we do
43 see that 2020 is higher than the average, even though it's still
44 below 2019, and so it's well within the range that we might
45 expect at this point.

46
47 Red grouper is similar patterns to what we saw before, and I do
48 want to remind everyone that the average 2017 to 2019 value, for

1 the pounds landed, is significantly higher, because the quota
2 was higher, and so it's not really an apples-to-apples
3 comparison, but, if we're looking at it compared to just the
4 2019 value, we are increasing the number of pounds landed
5 compared to 2019, as well as the total ex-vessel value, and the
6 ex-vessel price, which, again, fluctuates over time, is not
7 quite approaching what we had in 2019, but we're within the
8 ranges that we have typically seen for this species.

9
10 Yellowedge grouper, we're using this as a species to be a proxy
11 for the deepwater grouper share category, and it is one of the
12 primary species landed there, and it's a little bit more
13 indicative of what drives the deepwater grouper share category
14 as a whole, and, here we are seeing that be -- Number of trips,
15 like the other species, is a little bit less than we've seen in
16 previous years, and, in this case, that's also resulting in the
17 number of pounds landed being less than we've seen in past
18 years.

19
20 Those two together combine to also make the total ex-vessel
21 value less than we've seen in previous years. Looking a little
22 bit more closely at what the ex-vessel price per pound is each
23 week, again, we see a lot of fluctuation, and we are seeing an
24 uptick at the very end, and we'll be monitoring that, to see if
25 that's going to be a consistent pattern or just part of the
26 fluctuation as a whole. The ex-vessel price per pound is more
27 similar to what we've seen in past years, but a little bit less
28 than what we saw in 2019.

29
30 In this slide, I have used scamp to be a proxy for the shallow-
31 water groupers. Like yellowedge grouper, scamp is the primary
32 species landed within this category, and it typically influences
33 overall share category values moving forward.

34
35 Here, we see that the trip count is very similar to past years
36 for scamp, and the pounds landed has actually been increasing
37 over time, and it has increased compared to the 2019, although
38 it's a little bit less than the average value. I want to remind
39 folks that shallow-water grouper, as a category as a whole,
40 fluctuates year to year fairly dramatically, and that's some of
41 the reason that we see these differences.

42
43 When we look at the total ex-vessel value, that has actually
44 increased past 2019, and, in some cases, depending on the week
45 we're looking at, it was greater than what we've seen in the
46 average years, and that can be seen in the weekly ex-vessel
47 price. If you look at the blue line, we're actually exceeding
48 some of the 2019 values during some weeks, in general.

1
2 I do want to point out that we had a kind of downtick in that
3 last week for shallow-water grouper, but I would remind you that
4 ex-vessel price is really dependent on who is turning in
5 transactions within that week and, looking at the overall trends
6 within it, it looks like we're probably going to be similar to
7 what we've seen in past years for the year.

8
9 The last species that we're looking at for landings is golden
10 tilefish, which is, again, the majority of our tilefish landed
11 in general. In here, the number of trips has exceeded what
12 we've seen in past years, even though the number of pounds is
13 less than what we've seen in past years. We're also seeing the
14 lower pounds resulting in a lower total ex-vessel value.

15
16 With golden tilefish, we typically see a lot of variation in the
17 ex-vessel price, and it's been a little bit more apparent within
18 2020, where we're seeing much higher and lower bounds of that
19 vessel price fluctuate between the different years. Again, this
20 is a species that is one of the smallest portions of the fleet,
21 and so we have a much smaller sample size when working with
22 these.

23
24 Here, we're going to move on to the allocation, and allocation,
25 again, is the transfer between the different participants. Just
26 to orient you to the graph, this is only 2020 to 2019, and what
27 we're looking at is the upper-left is the cumulative weekly
28 allocation total value. In the upper-right, it's the weekly
29 allocation pounds transferred, and so the total number of pounds
30 transferred each week. Then the bottom-left is the number of
31 allocation transactions, and I will remind you that a
32 transaction can be anywhere from one pound to a thousand pounds,
33 but not every transaction is equal to the pounds. Then we also
34 took a look at what's going on with the weekly allocation and
35 the price per pound for that.

36
37 For red snapper, in general, what we're noticing is that the
38 total value of allocation has remained consistent to past years,
39 or maybe slightly increasing, currently, and, when we look at
40 the weekly allocation pounds transferred, we do see that that is
41 higher than 2019, but, again, I want to caution you that the
42 reason that cumulative is higher probably occurred pre-COVID,
43 when you see the shaded-blue area, where we increased the
44 number of pounds overall early in the year.

45
46 When we look at how many transactions are occurring per week,
47 we're pretty steady to what we've seen in the past, or maybe
48 slightly less transactions, and that would be something that we

1 would expect if there isn't a lot of back-and-forth between the
2 fishermen transferring allocation to people who might not have
3 red snapper for a trip and then asking for it to be transferred
4 back if they didn't land it.

5
6 Looking at the allocation price per pound, again, fluctuations
7 occur within this, but, when you look at trends lines throughout
8 this, these two values are not very different overall, and we do
9 see that the 2020 allocation price is slightly lower, when we
10 look at a trend line, than compared to 2019.

11
12 This is the same graph for gag. In gag, the total value for
13 allocation is looking considerably different than 2019, but
14 similar to what I've shown you in past meetings showing these
15 different graphs, and, if we're looking at the allocation pounds
16 transferred, we're definitely upticking in 2020 and getting a
17 little bit closer to the cumulative amount that we would have
18 seen in 2019. We're also seeing an increase in the number of
19 transactions weekly in 2020.

20
21 It's a similar story in allocation price per pound, that we see
22 a lot of fluctuation. In 2020, on average, it's probably going
23 to come out slightly lower than what we saw in 2019.

24
25 Red grouper is very similar to what we saw in gag, in the
26 patterns overall with the total value being significantly less
27 than we've seen before, and the pounds being transferred also
28 less, and this might have a little bit more also to do with the
29 quota drops that we've seen in the last few years in red grouper
30 and the market stabilizing from that.

31
32 Similar, with the allocation price per pound, here, we're a
33 little bit more similar than we've seen in the other species,
34 and the trend lines are not very different at all, when looking
35 at allocation price per pound throughout the year so far.

36
37 When looking at the other share categories, we have to look at
38 the categories as a whole, because we don't have allocation
39 prices per species, and so this is the deepwater allocation
40 category, and I don't believe that we've shown these before, but
41 what we're looking at here is that the total value for
42 allocation for deepwater grouper is very similar to what we've
43 seen in past years, although the amount of pounds being
44 transferred is less.

45
46 Likewise, the number of transactions, we have kind of seen a
47 decrease from Week 34 onward, that we're not having nearly as
48 many transactions as we would have typically had in other years.

1
2 When we're looking at the allocation price per pound, we see
3 that they're very similar to before, and you see some kind of
4 peaks occur within both 2019 and 2020, but, in general, the
5 differences are very slight, and we see 2020 probably averaging
6 slightly lower than 2019.

7
8 Shallow-water grouper, as a category for allocation, it's
9 similar to what we've seen in some of the other ones. There's a
10 lower total value and lower number of pounds being transferred,
11 and then, here, the weekly allocation price -- There is not as
12 much fluctuation as we've seen in past years, and the overall
13 kind of trend line for both of these is extremely similar.

14
15 The last allocation one is golden tilefish, and, again, it's
16 similar trends to what we've seen before, with lower total value
17 for allocation, in general, and lower amount of pounds being
18 transferred, and this is also similar to what we saw before,
19 and, in the last few weeks, we're also seeing a sort of decrease
20 in the number of transactions that are occurring from Week 34
21 onward, and then the allocation price per pound fluctuates a
22 little bit more here in 2020 that we've seen in some of the
23 other species, but, when these are averaged out, again, it's
24 very similar between the two.

25
26 This, again, is a comparison that we do on a monthly basis, and
27 so this is all landings, up to September, for each of the years
28 listed, and that's 2017 to 2020. I want to point out here that,
29 when we look at red snapper, red grouper, and gag, we're seeing
30 pretty much values or percentages of the quota landed that are
31 on par with what we've seen in past years, and I want to caution
32 you that red grouper, in 2017 and 2018, has significantly higher
33 quota, and so I'm looking to compare red grouper solely to 2019.

34
35 When we look at the deepwater, shallow-water, and tilefish,
36 we're seeing that they're a little bit lower than we've seen in
37 past years, and shallow-water grouper, in general, fluctuates
38 year to year, and so that isn't really an area of concern,
39 looking at past behavioral patterns within the species, and
40 we're going to be keeping an eye on what the deepwater grouper
41 and tilefish do, since we're a little bit lower than what we
42 would have anticipated, based on past years.

43
44 This is just looking at where we are in 2020, year to date,
45 compared to where we end up at the end of the year for the other
46 species. Again, red snapper, red grouper, and gag are looking
47 like they're pretty much on par and that we'll be able to kind
48 of come to similar percentages of quota landed by the end of the

1 year, and, again, you've seen a little bit of concern here in
2 the deepwater, shallow-water, and tilefish, and so, when we
3 looked at where we were, when we looked at the end of September,
4 and we're about three weeks past that, and we've only increased
5 a couple of percentage points for each one of those three
6 categories at the end.

7
8 I am going to pause here, before I go back into the current IFQ
9 system, and ask if there are any questions on the graphs shown
10 to date yet.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. I am looking for hands. I will
13 give people a minute or two. I am not seeing anybody. I think
14 you're safe to move on, Dr. Stephen.

15
16 **DR. STEPHEN:** All right. The final few slides are just to kind
17 of think about if carryover is still a consideration of where
18 we're going. I just wanted to remind everyone that the current
19 IFQ system is being migrated.

20
21 I do want to tell people that we're getting ready to schedule
22 some outreach virtual sessions about the new system and that
23 we're looking forward to participants within the fishery coming
24 to the outreach, but I also welcome any council member or
25 council staff to start coming to it, and we'll be getting those
26 dates finalized shortly and be sending out notices to people, if
27 they are interested in participating in it. For the fishermen,
28 we are looking for additional participants who would like to
29 help us test the new system.

30
31 With the carryover timelines, you remember that we have to
32 calculate any carryover that is considered on December 31, 2020,
33 and that it will need to go through the SSC, and then, if we do
34 have approval for carryover, we'll be looking at, most likely,
35 dispersing that somewhere within the first quarter of the year,
36 and so we'll need a little bit of time to go through the SSC and
37 figure out the math of where the allocation would go and then
38 create the process to distribute it. They would though, of
39 course, get their normal year allocation on January 1.

40
41 Again, if we consider carryover, these are the same questions we
42 had before, and we would have to determine which share
43 categories, how much of that allocation we carry over, and who
44 are the recipients, and how we distribute that.

45
46 Then the largest one that would have an impact is if we
47 carryover any of the multiuse share categories, making sure that
48 we have consideration of how that impacts things, so that we

1 don't overshoot the quotas by carrying over multiuse versus
2 carrying it over in the straight category, and those, again, are
3 red grouper and gag that typically end up in the multiuse
4 category. I think that is all, and I'm open for any other
5 questions relating to carryover or the other graphs.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Dr. Stephen. Are there any
8 other questions on this topic or thoughts on potentially
9 carrying over some quota into next year? I think we're at the
10 point now, since we're at the end of October, that, if this is
11 something that we want to do, we need to make a decision, I'm
12 guessing at this meeting, so that we could get the SSC together
13 and all that before our meeting at the end of November. Leann.

14
15 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks. I was just wondering if this is something
16 we're going to look at again at the end of November or not.

17
18 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Madam Chair, yes, we have that on
19 the agenda for November in the Reef Fish Committee.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Are there other thoughts or questions on
22 this topic? Leann, is your hand up again?

23
24 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, and I was trying to lower it and raise it, so
25 you would know, and we're not going to have public testimony at
26 this meeting, and is that correct, Mr. Chair, and then I have a
27 follow-up.

28
29 **DR. FRAZER:** Can you repeat that, Leann? I didn't understand
30 that very well.

31
32 **MS. BOSARGE:** We're not going to have public testimony at this
33 meeting, more than likely, I'm assuming.

34
35 **DR. FRAZER:** We're going to kind of evaluate it, and we're going
36 to try to get the agenda completed with the committee reports,
37 and, if the weather allows, then we will make time for that, but
38 it will be at the end of the meeting, if we do have it.

39
40 **MS. BOSARGE:** At the end of the meeting today?

41
42 **DR. FRAZER:** No, at the end of the meeting, probably -- It will
43 still be on Wednesday, and it was scheduled for Wednesday, and,
44 if we get through everything and the weather is still favorable,
45 and people are willing to participate, then we'll make time to
46 hear those comments. If not, then we're anticipating that
47 people will be able to provide those comments in a written
48 format, and we will summarize them and make sure that we get

1 them out to the council. Is that okay?

2
3 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, that's fine, and I hate that we're not going
4 to have public comment at this meeting. I thought we got some
5 actually very good public comment in both Dr. Crabtree and Dr.
6 Porch's listening session at the last meeting and during our
7 regular public comment, and Mr. Jim Zurbrick actually said
8 something which really is what I have been worried about, which
9 is your smaller guys.

10
11 I have been trying to reach out to some of the fishermen, and
12 the bigger guys that are some of your initial shareholders,
13 original shareholders, they've been telling me that, Leann, if
14 you all want to do a carryover, it's fine, and they said but it
15 really doesn't matter to us one way or the other, because we're
16 going to be all right.

17
18 I would venture to guess, and they haven't said this, but they
19 own their shares, right, and they were original shareholders,
20 and most of them don't have a big loan on them, and it's a
21 different situation for those smaller guys, which is what Jim
22 Zurbrick was talking about, and he said that I will be fine, but
23 I worry about these smaller guys that have to lease their
24 allocation at the beginning of the year, and you can see that in
25 just this graph.

26
27 If you go to the graph on red snapper, towards the middle of her
28 presentation, where she has the blue-dotted lines and the
29 orange-dotted lines, right about there where you're scrolling,
30 and so the graph in the top-right corner, and we've got Week 1
31 and Week 4, and so, essentially, the first week in January
32 through the end of January, and look how many pounds of
33 allocation is transferred in that first month. You've got four-
34 million pounds of allocation transferred in that first month,
35 and that's what I've been talking about.

36
37 The lion's share of your leasing is happening at the beginning
38 of the year, which was prior to COVID, and that's your fishermen
39 that don't own any quota that are your -- I don't want you want
40 to call them, replacement fishermen, and is that what we've been
41 calling them, or next-generation fishermen, and so they have to
42 lease it at the beginning of the year, and those are the guys
43 that I'm a little concerned about.

44
45 I was talking to one yesterday, and he said, you know, I don't
46 have a good feeling about you all doing a carryover, and so I've
47 just had to start leasing the quota that I have and trying to
48 find somebody to lease it back to, the pounds that I don't think

1 I'm going to be able to catch, and I'm leasing it at a loss.

2
3 I am leasing it for less than what I leased it originally at,
4 and so let's look at this again in November, and I'm a little
5 worried that, because we've waited this long, that those little
6 guys are already just taking a hit on it, and they're just
7 trying to cut their losses, in case we don't carry it forward,
8 which is -- It bothers me a little bit.

9
10 I see what happens in Washington, D.C., where this country has
11 tried to bail out every other industry that we have, and they
12 have bailed out airlines, and we've bailed out cruise lines and
13 everybody, farmers and everybody, and we're doing everything we
14 can to prop everybody up and get them through this pandemic, and
15 this is something that nobody expected. We're not giving money
16 away here at the council, and all we're doing is allowing you to
17 keep the asset that you borrowed money against and get you
18 through until next year.

19
20 Anyway, it's a little frustrating that we don't have that same
21 empathy for fishermen sometimes, but I can look at your numbers,
22 and it looks like we're online to catch the quota. The problem
23 is who is not showing up in those numbers, and who is the one
24 that is going to get screwed, and I'm a little worried that it's
25 your smaller guys, and I'm worried they might not make it
26 through it, and that's my spiel for today. Thanks for
27 listening.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Leann, and I see a couple more hands
30 up. Dr. Frazer.

31
32 **DR. FRAZER:** I just wanted to clarify, for Leann, and so the
33 intent wasn't really to not have public comment. The intent was
34 to try to move through the agenda and make sure that we could
35 finish all of our business, and just simply get that business
36 finished before we had public comment.

37
38 Like you, I agree that it's a really important part of the
39 process, and we're just kind of shuffling things around, and,
40 because we don't have any real final action items on this
41 particular agenda, if it needed to go away, it could, and we
42 would provide an alternative way for people to provide input,
43 and so I just wanted to make sure that you understood that.

44
45 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, sir, and I didn't think you were trying to
46 avoid public comment at all. I think the hurricane is going to
47 stop public comment, but thank you, sir.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Dr. Crabtree.

2
3 **DR. CRABTREE:** I am sympathetic to the concerns that Leann
4 raised, and this has certainly been a trying year for fishermen
5 all around, but the main thing I see, when I look at it, is
6 really the landings, and I think we are on a path to catch the
7 red snapper quota, or come as close as we do in most years, and
8 so I have a hard time seeing the rationale for an emergency,
9 just based on what I'm looking at, and we'll look at it again, I
10 guess, in November.

11
12 Bear in mind too that, if you did carry over a substantial
13 amount into next year, it would create a number of distortions
14 and problems with the marketplace for next year, and so it's not
15 like there is no downside to it, but, mostly, I'm just not
16 seeing a large enough loss in landings that I think -- Not
17 enough to justify an emergency, at this point at least.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Roy. Anyone else on carryover? I am
20 not seeing any hands right now. We'll come back to this again
21 at the late November council meeting, and so we potentially do
22 have another look at this for the year.

23
24 All right. Our next agenda item is Tab B, Number 5, Draft
25 Framework Action on Red Snapper. Ryan, do you want to walk
26 through the action guide on this before we do this presentation?

27
28 **DRAFT FRAMEWORK ACTION: ADJUST STATE RECREATIONAL RED SNAPPER**
29 **CATCH LIMITS**

30
31 **MR. RINDONE:** Sure. Let me pull that up. For this particular
32 item, you guys are going to get walked through the document by
33 myself, with a little bit of help from John, and it's a look at
34 draft options to modify the Gulf state private angling annual
35 catch limits for recreational red snapper, and it's necessary to
36 correct discrepancies between data currencies currently used to
37 monitor the landings and effort from private anglers.

38
39 There will be an option for using ratios to adjust the state
40 survey collected landings back to MRIP'S Coastal Household
41 Telephone Survey, which is the data currency against which the
42 quota is currently monitored and against which a lot of the
43 state surveys have been built, and these ratios have been
44 determined appropriate for this particular purpose by the
45 council's SSC.

46
47 The other option is to create essentially an annual catch
48 target, or an alternative annual catch limit, for each state's

1 private angling component, which would be set at some
2 percentage, in this case 23 percent, lower than what is
3 currently on the books. The council should consider these
4 options and recommend modifications, as appropriate. Martha.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. I think we're ready to go through
7 this document, whenever you're ready.

8
9 **MR. RINDONE:** All right. This is Tab B, Number 5, and, in the
10 interest of time, there's a lot of background here in the front
11 of this thing, and so I'm going to breeze through a lot of the
12 history that you guys already know, and so we kind of start with
13 the splitting of the recreational sector into the private
14 angling component and the for-hire component, and then we move
15 into the discussion about -- This is on page 1, by the way.

16
17 Then we talk about how the disparity between the state and the
18 federal seasons and the federal season getting shorter and the
19 state seasons being longer than the federal seasons and trying
20 to find solutions to that, and, eventually, that leads into the
21 genesis of Amendment 50.

22
23 We also talk about, on page 2, the evolution of the NMFS
24 recreational data collection program from the original one,
25 MRFSS, which started in 1979, into MRIP, which was born in 2008,
26 and we also talk about some of the components of that, like the
27 Angler Point Angler Intercept Survey that Dr. Cody talked a
28 little bit about yesterday and the Fishing Effort Survey, which
29 took over for the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, which you
30 guys have heard a lot about over the last few meetings and the
31 SSC had a couple of workshops on.

32
33 Generally, the landings and effort estimates coming out of MRIP-
34 FES are greater than those from MRIP-CHTS, and this is due to
35 sample coverage and accounting for some biases from CHTS, like
36 the wireless effect.

37
38 Then we talk about Amendment 50, and, in Table 1.1.1, it shows
39 the current percentage of the total private angling ACL that is
40 allocated to each state and what that means for that state in
41 pounds for 2020 below that, and then we go and we talk about the
42 different state data collection programs. For Florida, it's the
43 Gulf Reef Fish Survey, which is now, as of July, the State Reef
44 Fish Survey, and Alabama is using Snapper Check, Mississippi
45 Tails 'n Scales, and Louisiana is using LA Creel, and Texas
46 Parks and Wildlife is using the Marine Sport Harvest Monitoring
47 Program, which is also a creel survey.

48

1 Why is this calibration to a common currency necessary? It's
2 because the different states are collecting these catch and
3 effort data, using their surveys, and these surveys, because of
4 the way they collect this information, they're not directly
5 comparable to one another, but, in the case of Louisiana,
6 Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, these surveys were developed
7 against, and calibrated against, the MRIP Coastal Household
8 Telephone Survey, and all four states have had their particular
9 surveys certified as appropriate for their purpose by MRIP.

10
11 Again, it's important to remember that certification by MRIP
12 does not mean that NMFS considers these to be the best
13 scientific information available, but rather that they are
14 appropriate for the purpose for which they are being used.

15
16 What needs to happen here, in order to be able to monitor the
17 catch and effort against the currency in which the quota has
18 been established, and, again, that was MRIP-CHTS, based on the
19 projections from the SEDAR 52 stock assessment, some sort of
20 calibration, or adjustment, is necessary, or some amount of
21 buffering is necessary, to ensure that states don't exceed their
22 ACLs and then end up triggering accountability measures.

23
24 There's been some workshops held by the NOAA Office of Science
25 and Technology and hosted by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries
26 Commission to try to take some swings at this and come up with
27 some solutions. The most recent was on August 5, and that was
28 to clarify processes and methodologies, and I'm still on page 5
29 by the way, that was to clarify processes and methodologies for
30 developing these ratios, and this was a collaborative effort
31 between the NOAA Office of Science and Technology and the Gulf
32 states.

33
34 The SSC, subsequently, reviewed these ratios, on August 11, and
35 they found them to be appropriate for the purpose for which they
36 were intended to be used, and we talk a little bit about each
37 state's approach in there as well. Ultimately, the
38 recommendations from that workshop are shown in Table 1.1.2.

39
40 The purpose of this action is to reduce the likelihood of
41 exceeding the red snapper private angling component ACL by
42 adjusting the state catch limits to account for the monitoring
43 programs used by each Gulf state. The need for this action is
44 to use the best scientific information available to prevent
45 overfishing while achieving optimum yield, consistent with the
46 red snapper rebuilding plan.

47
48 The lengthy history of management for red snapper follows next,

1 which I will not go through, and that brings us to our
2 management alternatives in Chapter 2, and I will pause there,
3 Madam Chair, to see if there are any questions at this point.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Are there questions for Ryan? I am
6 not seeing anything.

7
8 **MR. RINDONE:** All right. Well, then we will keep moving
9 forward, Madam Chair. Action 1 here is to modify the Gulf of
10 Mexico state-specific red snapper private angling component
11 annual catch limits, and so Alternative 1, the no action
12 alternative, would retain the state-specific red snapper private
13 angling component ACLs established in Amendment 50A of the Reef
14 Fish FMP, and those are all shown below in that table, and those
15 are in pounds whole weight.

16
17 Alternative 2 would modify the state-specific red snapper
18 private angling component ACLs using the ratio corrections
19 developed by NOAA OST and the respective Gulf states, and these
20 ratios and the resulting ACLs in each state's currency are shown
21 in that table.

22
23 Then Alternative 3, which is on the next page, would modify
24 state-specific red snapper private angling component ACLs by
25 establishing a state management ACL that is 23 percent below the
26 private angling component quota and applying the allocation
27 percentages established in Amendment 50A. The resulting state
28 ACLs would be as shown in the table under Alternative 3, and
29 each of those ACLs is in that state's respective data currency.

30
31 Generally speaking, Alternative 1 is what brought us here in the
32 first place, and so you guys should presume that that
33 alternative is not viable, because it would continue to allow
34 monitoring of some states' landings in a currency that is not
35 comparable to the ACLs, which could result in total landings of
36 red snapper exceeding the ACLs for those states, and the total
37 private angling component ACL, and so, knowing now that we know
38 that, we can't continue to do that, because it would be in
39 violation of Magnuson to allow that to continue, and so
40 Alternative 1 is not viable.

41
42 Alternative 2 would apply the ratio adjustments, and, in Table
43 2.1, you can see the difference there between the current state
44 ACL and the converted ACL in the state's currency, using that
45 conversion ratio. Based on the ratios, some states would end up
46 with more fish than they are currently counting, and some states
47 would end up with less, and, in the case of Texas, it would go
48 unchanged. Alternative 3 would establish that state management

1 --

2

3 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Hang on. I think Susan has got a question on
4 something you just said. Susan.

5

6 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, it's kind of a general question, because we
7 had some discussion, at the last meeting, and we haven't heard
8 anything on this Great Red Snapper Count, and so I just don't
9 feel that we have all the details to be making these decisions,
10 because, if that's going to change what we do here -- I know we
11 need to do something, and don't misunderstand what I'm saying,
12 but it's just are we jumping the gun before we get the results
13 of the Great Red Snapper Count, and I don't know when we're
14 supposed to hear a presentation on that.

15

16 I have been hearing rumblings that the numbers are great, and
17 there's more fish out there, and so I don't know how it affects
18 this, and I just don't know if we have all the pieces and parts,
19 and then, of course, at the end, when we get all the details, if
20 you will, we'll be looking to see how is this going to affect
21 the charter/for-hire fleet when we make this decision, and I'm
22 just curious about the Great Red Snapper Count and how it feeds
23 into this. Thank you.

24

25 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I think that question is on a lot of people's
26 minds, and I'm hoping that we can talk a little bit about that
27 today. That's just one of the many things that are in play
28 right now that essentially affects this amendment. Roy, I see
29 your hand is up.

30

31 **DR. CRABTREE:** So think back to the last council meeting, and I
32 can't remember if this was in the motions, but the council
33 expressed that its intent was to deal with the calibrations and
34 the revised catch levels based on the interim assessment that is
35 to be based on the Great Red Snapper Count simultaneously. I
36 think that you could ask Greg and Clay, maybe, for an update on
37 timing.

38

39 Generally speaking, my understanding is that the Great Red
40 Snapper Count indicates that the population is quite a bit
41 larger than previously believed, and so it seems not
42 unreasonable to believe that the quotas will be increasing.

43

44 At any rate, Susan, the intent of the council right now is to
45 have all of this information before you when you make a final
46 decision, which hopefully will occur either at the January or
47 the March/April meeting, and then, if the catch levels are going
48 up, it would be more palatable, I would think, to implement a

1 buffer or something like that, because you may be able to deal
2 with that and still have more fish available than you've had in
3 previous years, but, at any rate, I think it is reasonable to
4 expect that the quotas are going to be increasing, and I don't
5 know by how much, and I think, in order for you to increase the
6 quotas, you will have to make sure the plan is compliant with
7 all of the aspects of the Magnuson Act, and that means, as we
8 laid out in Amendment 50, you have to deal with the calibration
9 issue, or I don't see how you can raise the quotas.

10
11 I think they're all part and parcel of one thing, and hopefully
12 you will be able to deal with those fully next year and in time
13 to get the new catch levels in place going into the 2021 fishing
14 season.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Susan, did you want to respond to that?

17
18 **MS. BOGGS:** Yes, and thank you for that, Roy, and that makes me
19 feel a little bit better, and I'm not trying to -- I know you've
20 got to get through the document, but I was concerned that we
21 were going to make some fairly hard decisions today, but it
22 sounds like we have a little bit of time, meaning the January
23 council meeting, and so thank you very much.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Paul.

26
27 **DR. PAUL MICKLE:** Based on Roy's comments dealing with
28 calibration, I wanted to dive into that, just briefly, and I
29 know that everybody is eager to hear what Greg has to say, and
30 so I will tee it up, but I would like to ask about calibration
31 of -- There was discussion of a calibration panel or something
32 being put together, and I just wonder if there's an update we
33 can get from that, if not today, by Richard Cody, or maybe
34 tomorrow at Full Council, of where we are in that process,
35 because, as you all know, Mississippi is very eager to look at
36 alternatives for the current calibrations that have been going
37 on.

38
39 We feel that we have been -- Our survey has been a little bit
40 misrepresented, and there have been comments, and there were
41 comments on the record by the SSC, which drives the best
42 available science, and the Tails 'n Scales program is really not
43 even a survey, and it's more of a census, and I feel that it
44 needs to be represented in a different calibration methodology.

45
46 I did my best to come up with new methodologies during the
47 workshop, as well as the SSC meeting, and, also, we just feel
48 that -- I understand the rush and everything, but it's obvious

1 that the Tails 'n Scales system is not being properly
2 represented in the calibration process, and we are looking at
3 the largest hit, the largest reduction, and potential paybacks,
4 and we just really feel that we need to have a little bit more
5 delving in, and I'm not talking about the Great Red Snapper
6 Count yet, as far as this topic, and I'm talking about
7 calibration, which Roy brings up that we have to deal with, and
8 I'm sorry to talk about just my little state, but I just feel --
9 I've been frustrated, and I have voiced my concerns, and I would
10 like to see --

11
12 I think NMFS has made a good effort to keep working on it, and
13 they have made a lot of statements that this is a process, and
14 this was a first cut calibration, but, again, there's a lot more
15 fishing holes to fish in to look at, as far as methodologies for
16 calibration itself, and having the Tails 'n Scales system
17 properly, in a quantitative sense, being represented, as far as
18 accuracy within the calibration process. Thank you.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Paul. Richard, can you respond to
21 that?

22
23 **DR. CODY:** Sure. I will try to. I think what Paul is referring
24 to is the transition team working group for the Gulf, and so
25 that would be made up of representatives of the Science Center,
26 the Regional Office, S&T, but also the states and the Gulf
27 States Commission. Those are members that are already on the
28 transition team for the MRIP survey, and so they have experience
29 with calibration processes.

30
31 The things that that working group were hopefully going to
32 address is looking at, as more data become available, the
33 potential to revisit calibration at a later date, and then also
34 accessibility of data, research plans, and we talked a lot about
35 looking at the drivers for the differences between the surveys,
36 to get a handle on why you get different estimates, but I don't
37 know if that answers your question.

38
39 The other thing is that the plan is to wait for this meeting to
40 finish and then to convene a meeting with our transition team
41 working group, possibly I would say the latter half of November,
42 at this point.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Richard. I'm going to go to Greg,
45 because I think everybody is waiting for Greg to give us a
46 little update on the Great Red Snapper Count.

47
48 **DR. GREG STUNZ:** Thanks, Martha, and, if everyone recalls the

1 last time, we were just ahead of some congressional briefings,
2 which I had some obligations to meet about informing them and
3 briefing them on the Great Red Snapper Count that I couldn't do
4 before the last meeting, and so I'm happy to generally update
5 you here.

6
7 Of course, I am working with -- Our team is working with Clay
8 and his shop, as well as I'm happy to present formally to this
9 group whenever the Chairman thinks we're ready to do that, maybe
10 at our next meeting or something like that, and I don't know,
11 but, to give you an idea, before I tell you sort of where we're
12 at, and I mentioned this last time, I don't think -- Putting
13 more fish to this problem isn't going to fix things. It
14 certainly would make the controversy go down, because maybe
15 there wouldn't be short seasons or something, but it's still not
16 really affecting the underlying problems.

17
18 I guess, to give you some idea of where we're coming in, we're
19 looking at roughly tripling the federal estimate of abundance
20 that's roughly around thirty-six million fish, is the federal
21 estimate of how many fish are out there, and so we're going to
22 be substantially above that.

23
24 We're putting the finishing touches on our final report, and we
25 should be done here in a few weeks to a month, and I've had a
26 lot of communications with Clay and his team about what's the
27 best way to integrate that, and, obviously, this needs to go
28 through our SSC and all that kind of thing, and so there's some
29 procedural things that will need to happen, but the good news is
30 that there is a lot more fish out there.

31
32 The other thing though is I'm just a little skeptical about
33 using that to fix these other problems, and then, to add one
34 last thought to that, by having this real abundance estimate,
35 it's a big difference in the way that we can do assessments, and
36 Clay is really the person to talk about that, but we have a lot
37 of moving parts going on, with the effort adjustments in these
38 particular fish and different ways to do when the next big
39 research track full assessment comes along, and so there's a lot
40 of moving parts in the air to sort of move hastily, and so
41 that's why I've been very cautious about this framework action
42 here and not getting too ahead of ourselves.

43
44 The last thing is, you know, at some point -- It seems like
45 we're always changing down these recalibration issues on a
46 variety of fronts, rather than really stepping back, when we get
47 all this new information, and maybe coming up with some
48 different assessment methodologies and running those side-by-

1 side, and I clearly understand there's a need for these long
2 time series, but, at some point, we've got to figure out are
3 those really accurate and where we need to be going and start
4 creating some new time series and running these estimates side-
5 by-side and sort of ease in all this new information.

6
7 I will go ahead and stop there, but it's all positive news, but
8 I just don't want us to get in front of ourselves by not really
9 utilizing some of the new information that's out there and just
10 temporarily fixing a problem.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Greg. I appreciate that update. We've
13 got a number of hands up, and so I'm just going to work our way
14 through the list here. Next, I have Dale Diaz.

15
16 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** Thank you, Ms. Guyas. Thank you, Greg, for that
17 update, too. I guess I have a question. I think some people
18 might be wanting to hear from Clay, and so I don't know if you
19 want my question now or you want Clay to respond or follow-up on
20 what Greg said, and it's up to you, Martha.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I guess if your question is for Clay, go ahead
23 and ask it.

24
25 **MR. DIAZ:** It's for Dr. Cody, and it's based off of some of the
26 stuff that Dr. Mickle was talking about earlier, and so it's
27 changing topics.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Gotcha. Okay. Well, let's go to Clay real
30 quick then, and then we'll bounce back up to you.

31
32 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you.

33
34 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Thank you. As Greg mentioned, we've been in
35 conversation with he and his team, and, as he also said, the
36 Great Red Snapper Count estimates about three-times as many red
37 snapper as the assessment did, but I feel like I want to manage
38 expectations a little bit, because two-thirds of the red snapper
39 population is estimated to be outside where most of the fishery
40 operates, basically on that uncharacterized bottom, which a lot
41 of it is very low relief, or no relief, what the fishermen say
42 is out on the mud, and then there just may be little pieces of
43 stuff, little holes here and there, that red snapper will
44 congregate around, but it's a low-density area that fishermen
45 don't usually fish in, but it's huge in area, and so you
46 multiply low density by huge area and you get big numbers of red
47 snapper.

48

1 Even though the population is three-times bigger, it won't
2 necessarily translate into a three-times bigger ABC. The
3 picture we're starting to get is that there's a lot of local
4 recruitment in the red snapper population, and it's this sort of
5 Gulf-wide recruitment, and that's why we saw the serial
6 depletion that went on since the inception of the fishery, where
7 they would fish down areas, and it would take a long time for
8 them to come back, and so they just started fishing farther and
9 farther away.

10
11 In fact, places like the Dry Tortugas still haven't quite come
12 back, and there are some red snapper there, but, if you go back
13 to the early 1900s, that was one of the centers of the fishery,
14 at least in U.S. waters, and so it's more complicated than it
15 sounds, but certainly this has been a fantastic study, and we're
16 all really excited about it.

17
18 We have some suspicion, based on commentary from folks like
19 Wayne Werner and Donnie Waters, who used to always tell us there
20 were fish out on the mud, but we didn't have any way to really
21 prove how many there were out there, and so this is the first
22 study to do it.

23
24 In fact, it's really unprecedented. Nobody in the country has
25 done anything like this, to get an absolute estimate of
26 abundance of any particular species in the way that they had to
27 do it, because, although in a few places on the west coast
28 they've gotten counts of animals out there, it's been kind of a
29 homogeneous environment, and they could use one gear to do it,
30 whereas, here, they had to use multiple techniques, because the
31 Gulf is so different, in terms of visibility and such, that they
32 had to use cameras, and, in some places, where the water is
33 clear, acoustics.

34
35 Where it wasn't so clear, in other places, where acoustics
36 didn't work, they had to use depletion studies, and they
37 stitched them all together and came up with some really
38 fantastic information that I think the assessment will benefit
39 from tremendously, but I say all of that just so that people
40 kind of understand that this is -- It's not that there were more
41 fish in the areas where fishermen were saying, and the
42 assessment actually got that number really closely, and the
43 assessment and the Great Red Snapper Count agree very closely,
44 in terms of the number of red snapper that exist in places where
45 people fish, the artificial reefs and the high-relief natural
46 bottom. It's just what the assessment missed is where people
47 don't go much, and that's that low relief.

48

1 Having said all that, the only thing that I would add is we're
2 working very closely with Greg, and he's going to, I think, and
3 he can clarify, but I think he's planning to put out a report
4 sometime in November, and report at the next council meeting on
5 it.

6
7 At the same time, our staff will be working with him to get a
8 better idea of all the nuts and bolts that went into that study
9 and what exactly they have. For instance, right now, we've seen
10 estimates of age-two and older total abundance, and what we need
11 to do now is partition that up by age class, and then we'll have
12 a way to move forward to get ABC estimates, and so I don't think
13 we'll have it by the January council meeting, since we don't
14 actually have the data yet, but I anticipate that we'll have
15 estimates sometime in March, certainly in advance of that next
16 council meeting.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Clay. That's helpful to our timeline
19 here, and I appreciate that. I'm going to go back to Dale.

20
21 **MR. DIAZ:** My question is for Dr. Cody, talking about the
22 transition team that's going to be doing some work. Dr. Cody,
23 in one of the meetings that was held over the summertime,
24 leading up to the calibration -- In the report provided by the
25 meeting, it talked about unique problems for small states and if
26 there needed to be some work done to deal with some of the
27 unique issues that small states have. Is this transition team
28 the team that's going to take care of that, or do we have a plan
29 to get a group together to look at that recommendation?

30
31 **DR. CODY:** Dale, I would say that the transition team working
32 group -- That would be on the table for them to discuss, and, as
33 I said, there should be representation from each of the states,
34 and so, if that's a priority to discuss, in terms of
35 calibration, and I assume it is, then that would be something
36 that that team could tackle.

37
38 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Dr. Cody.

39
40 **DR. CODY:** Sure.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Dr. Mickle.

43
44 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to thank
45 Richard Cody for giving the update on the next steps and the
46 integration team, I guess we're calling it, and I think it's a
47 good thing to delve in and take a more quantitative approach in
48 looking at some transition calibration efforts, at least for

1 small states such as Mississippi.

2
3 Then, last, I will just circle very quickly to Clay's comments,
4 and it sounds like -- I haven't seen the study, and I tried to
5 listen to the briefing, the congressional briefing, and, without
6 getting too far down in the weeds, it sounds like a possible
7 inference, with any data, and just anecdotal from what I've
8 listened to thus far, is that maybe all these snapper in very
9 low density on very, very large spatial areas of bare bottom
10 could help explain why the snapper population bounced back so
11 quickly, and I guess caught us all off-guard, and we were all
12 wondering why it came back so fast, and trying to explain that,
13 and I know there's nothing behind that statement, but, again, as
14 a scientist, I like to think about why we're seeing things and
15 trying to explain possible early results, where I've caught
16 pieces here and there.

17
18 The slow rebounding of the Tortugas is maybe some regional
19 complexities there, but, with those comments of density and
20 fishing and different types of habitat, and it's very hard to
21 catch them in these bare-bottom areas, and those are all
22 accurate, I guess, but, last time I checked, it's managed as a
23 Gulf-wide stock.

24
25 I wish it wasn't, but it is, and I don't think what matters what
26 habitats there are, if I'm correct in the MSA about how to do
27 management, and it's a Gulf-wide stock, and it doesn't matter
28 the density by habitat, I'm assuming, and a lot of those
29 comments seem to lead toward regional management, and, if we're
30 looking at density and biomass by region, then we should,
31 because it sounds like NOAA has the data to do that.

32
33 If we're going to manage that way, I guess we need to talk about
34 it, but it seems like it's coming up now, and maybe we need to
35 delve into it down the road after all, just looking at different
36 biomass densities by region, because it seems to be coming up on
37 its own, and so I just wanted to make that comment.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Paul. Next, I have Dr.
40 Crabtree.

41
42 **DR. CRABTREE:** Just a couple of comments, to Paul a little bit,
43 and, yes, I think the outcome of this study does have a lot to
44 say about why we saw such low recruitments when the stock was
45 fished down to very low levels, and so I think we learned a lot
46 about that.

47
48 I think, Paul, that you're right that there will be further

1 refinement of the calibrations, because the surveys will
2 continue to go side-by-side, and, as we get more and more data,
3 I'm sure that they will be refined and things, but that's not
4 going to change the fact that we have the best we can do at the
5 moment, and we're going to come in next spring, and you're going
6 to want to adjust these catch levels, because, based on
7 everything we're hearing, the expectation is that the quotas are
8 going to go up, and they may go up substantially, and that's
9 going to mean not just the private rec quotas go up, but the
10 commercial quota and the for-hire quotas will go up.

11
12 I think you're going to have some urgency behind getting this
13 done quickly and getting it done in time to affect the next
14 year's fishing season.

15
16 Now, it doesn't have to be that the calibration affects any one
17 state much harder than the others. I know, if you just apply
18 the straight ratios, it affects Mississippi and Alabama the
19 most, but that's not the only way to do this, and you could
20 effectively buffer it across the Gulf, and everyone takes a
21 similar reduction, but, if the catches are going up, it may not
22 be a reduction.

23
24 What it may be is the way to look at this is the catches are
25 going to go up, and they may not go up quite as much as they
26 otherwise would have, because we're going to need to buffer it
27 to adjust for the fact that we have all these different surveys,
28 and they are not all comparable with each other, and so, while I
29 agree with Greg's statement that just having more fish doesn't
30 fix everything, if what you mean by that is that it still leaves
31 us with multiple surveys, and the issue of how we compare them
32 all and what we use in the assessments in the future, those
33 issues are there, but having more fish may mean that no one
34 takes a cut, and, in fact, everyone's catches go up, and all we
35 have to be is a little more precautionary and factor in a little
36 more uncertainty to account for this. Thank you.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Kevin.

39
40 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a question for Dr.
41 Stunz, and that was the primary reason for raising my hand when
42 I did, but there have been a couple of folks who have made some
43 comments, and I will address those. I want to comment on those
44 first.

45
46 The Great Red Snapper Count shows that there are more fish out
47 there, and they are fish that they weren't sampling in, or
48 didn't take into account, and so the way I look at it is it's

1 almost a de facto MPA and that those fish are essentially just
2 going to be out there, and, when we raise, or when the OFL is
3 raised for everybody, we might come to a point, for some
4 reasons, that we could have nearly a year-long fishery, because
5 folks are not going to go and try and drift around waiting to
6 hook one of those few fish that are scattered about in those
7 uncharacterized bottoms, and so it's going to be very
8 interesting to see how the fishery then changes with the change.

9
10 At least for Alabama, there's a lot of fish that are caught on
11 artificial reefs, and our data is showing that, once those fish
12 are kind of dropped down in numbers, it disincentivizes a lot of
13 folks to go fishing, and they go find other things to do,
14 because they're not so easy to catch. The effort goes down, and
15 your season goes up, and so it will be interesting.

16
17 I take a little bit of exception to the comment about those fish
18 just weren't there, and nobody had any information about it, and
19 Alabama has been doing a habitat-based survey since 2011, and
20 we've been sampling those uncharacterized bottoms, and we
21 identified that there were fish out and about, scattered about,
22 and so we had some data.

23
24 I am picking up on Paul's comment about this provides, or opens
25 the door, for us to look at things differently, and it allows
26 managers to look at the fishery differently, potentially, and it
27 allows the scientists to look at the fishery differently and to
28 take into account some of the biological parameters that are
29 used in the assessment and some of the assumptions that are made
30 about this fish, which oftentimes are correlated with other
31 snapper fish in other parts of the world, and this may not be
32 the appropriate thing to do, but it's good to have this data as
33 a backdrop and as a reference, so that those things can be
34 reevaluated.

35
36 My question, I guess, goes back to this issue of timing, and it
37 was, at the last meeting, stated that it was the desire of
38 several of the folks around the table to wait for the numbers
39 from the Great Red Snapper Count to be incorporated into this
40 interim analysis and then brought back to the council as part of
41 this conversation with calibration.

42
43 I appreciate that Dr. Stunz and all the researchers that put the
44 time and effort into studying the fishery, or at least the fish,
45 and creating the abundance estimates, and I appreciate his
46 concern for making it right and everything, but I'm just
47 wondering, Dr. Stunz, if you can answer why -- Or what's the
48 issue of just providing the data right now?

1
2 Oftentimes, scientists are concerned about sharing data when
3 things aren't published yet, but I don't think the Science
4 Center has any desire to take the data and publish with it,
5 although there are some employees that are on there that could
6 co-author currently, but I'm just wondering why can't the data
7 be transferred right now, and why does it have to wait until the
8 report is completed? Thank you.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Greg, do you want to --

11
12 **DR. STUNZ:** Kevin, the reason is because we want to make sure
13 that we've dotted every I and crossed every T and that our
14 estimates are thoroughly vetted and that sort of thing. We've
15 got a final report that lists all the nuances of the project and
16 what are the pros and cons and where are we very confident and
17 where are we not and that sort of thing.

18
19 That is where we are at with the team, and so our team was very
20 skeptical to release any detailed data ahead of that, but we're
21 getting very close here, and that's why I mentioned that I would
22 be happy to present this at the next meeting. I don't think
23 that would have time to have gone through the SSC, because,
24 obviously, we want to have a final report and something that
25 they can look at. There is much more to it for an evaluation
26 like that, in terms of how it was done and that sort of thing,
27 that I think needs to get done, but that's the short answer to
28 your question.

29
30 I just wanted to briefly comment to what Paul said. The
31 estimate will come back -- We were charged with looking at a
32 density by region by habitat, and we'll have that information,
33 and our regions, loosely, or not -- More than loosely, and they
34 are almost perfectly matched up with state regions, and so that
35 will be useful, from that perspective, and I also want to say
36 that, because those fish -- The story really is that the fish
37 are in high abundance over that uncharacterized bottom, but it
38 doesn't mean the fish aren't still in very high abundance on
39 your traditional high-relief snapper banks that everyone knows
40 about, and, of course, artificial reefs, and that's still the
41 case.

42
43 Also, we're talking about fish, and I agree, Kevin, that it's
44 sort of you've got a de facto marine reserve out there,
45 essentially, but those fish aren't evenly dispersed over that
46 bottom. They are still reef fish and structured oriented.

47
48 There's a lot of zeroes out there, and then, all of a sudden,

1 there's a lot of fish that's holding over some unknown structure
2 that happens to occur there, but, when you average that out,
3 it's generally low densities overall, but they're out there over
4 high densities, but it's just very, very patchy, and fishermen
5 can exploit that.

6
7 I mean, that's why they guard their books so hard. They
8 probably know about these so-called secret spots that just are
9 unmapped, or unknown, and that's what makes up that
10 uncharacterized bottom, and I don't want anyone to think that
11 these snapper are just evenly dispersed over a mud bottom, and
12 so I just wanted to clarify that too, Martha.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thank you, Greg. All right. Leann has been
15 waiting patiently.

16
17 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have several questions.
18 I will start with Greg, and so he's on the hot seat, I guess.
19 Greg, what I hear you saying -- I guess you gave like a
20 preliminary report to Congress, and so now you're trying to put
21 the finishes touches on the final report, which is similar, I'm
22 assuming, to the final reports we get from a stock assessment,
23 and so that is what we would have for the SSC to review, and it
24 sounds like Clay and his shop would need the final report, and
25 then it sounds like they need quantities of fish divided up by
26 year class, and I don't know if you've done that yet, and so
27 that's my question.

28
29 When will the final report be out, and then how much longer
30 after that will it take you to get the data partitioned the
31 way Clay would need it, so that we can kind of use it for
32 management?

33
34 **DR. STUNZ:** Martha, do you want me to answer that?

35
36 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure. Go ahead.

37
38 **DR. STUNZ:** Leann, yes, you are correct, and so we were charged
39 with looking at the abundance of age-two-plus snapper, and,
40 while that's useful, that doesn't help Clay from the interim
41 assessment, and he needs that broken down by age class, and we
42 have that data pretty handy and ready to go, and that's not a
43 time constraint.

44
45 Our issue is getting the final report done for exactly what
46 you're saying, and our target date right now is to pretty much
47 have that done before Thanksgiving, and, as I have mentioned
48 many times, there is no one in the entire Gulf of Mexico that

1 wants to get this report out and done faster than I do, and so
2 we want to wrap this up, but, just so everyone knows, in a
3 perfect world, we wouldn't have done those congressional
4 briefings ahead of time, but we were getting too much pressure,
5 and that pretty much just had to be done, for all the reasons
6 we're talking about here and the contentiousness going on in the
7 fishery.

8
9 That's been done, and, of course, once we have our final report,
10 there will be a big roll-out program, and I will present to the
11 council here and explain this in detail and what it means and
12 that sort of thing, and then, in the meantime, working with Clay
13 and his team, so we're ready to go and integrate this into the
14 process, once it goes through the SSC procedures.

15
16 One last thing is, Leann, not technically, no. This is not a
17 stock assessment, and so it will be similar, in terms of
18 abundance by habitat by region, but this was not a stock
19 assessment, in the true sense of an assessment that's generating
20 yield streams and that sort of thing.

21
22 This was just characterizing the abundance of red snapper in the
23 Gulf of Mexico, and so it will have similar outputs, and very
24 fancy graphs and things, but it's not a stock assessment like
25 that. Clay will integrate that abundance in an age-structured
26 format that will go into an interim assessment.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Leann, did you have more questions, or a
29 follow-up?

30
31 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, and thanks, Greg. I didn't think it would be
32 those type of outputs. My thought process was it's similar to a
33 stock assessment report, in the sense that it's probably going
34 to be several hundred pages, and all the pieces of data that you
35 gathered and then stitched together will be there for people to
36 parse through, if they would like to, similar to a stock
37 assessment report, and then, Madam Chair, can I follow-up with
38 my second question?

39
40 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Go ahead.

41
42 **MS. BOSARGE:** This one is for Dr. Cody, and it's, again, on
43 timing. The transition team, or integration team, and I'm not
44 sure what you call them, but I'm wondering when your next
45 meeting is going to be, and I am looking at the red snapper
46 research track that's going to start in 2/1/2021, and so that's
47 about two months from now.

48

1 I haven't gotten a good read yet on whether we're going to be
2 using state landings data streams, back-calibrated, in that
3 stock assessment or we're going to use FES in that stock
4 assessment and then, once we get FES out, we're going to have to
5 do this whole conversion thing again and get conversion ratios
6 for FES to the state currencies, but, regardless of which way
7 we're going, I think this integration team better hit the ground
8 running pretty quickly. I mean, we don't want to be, at the
9 last minute, trying to figure and hash all this stuff out.

10

11 **DR. CODY:** Leann, I would agree. I mean, we were hoping to get
12 a meeting together by the end of mid to late November, to get
13 things rolling, but the group itself is really advisory in
14 nature. I mean, they will look at things, like, for instance,
15 the desire to revisit calibrations as more data become available
16 and those kinds of questions, as well as the accessibility of
17 data and transparency and other things like that.

18

19 I would defer to Clay for decisions related to what is going to
20 be looked at, and Roy also, in terms of the assessment process,
21 but I would imagine that, realistically, since the two data
22 streams are going to continue for at least the foreseeable
23 future, the team will have a role in determining what are the
24 drivers for the differences and other research-related
25 questions, and, if there is a value in having input to the
26 assessment process, maybe that could be addressed as well, but I
27 would think that the real thing is to have coordination between
28 the states and NOAA with respect to questions that remain out
29 there in terms of calibration.

30

31 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, sir. If we're hoping to get something
32 on the books by March or April, then it's got to be done by
33 January, so that we can see it, and so I would encourage you to
34 get that team together and meet as soon as possible. Otherwise,
35 we've just got what's in this document and that's it.

36

37 **DR. CODY:** We will do that. I will say that, for the purposes
38 of the 2021 catch information, we've done all we could do, and
39 what we had was what was available to us, in terms of
40 calibrations. Going forward, there are other options that might
41 be available, if the desire is there on behalf of the states to
42 revisit those calibrations.

43

44 **MS. BOSARGE:** Madam Chair, I have one final question.

45

46 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Go right ahead.

47

48 **MS. BOSARGE:** All right. This one is for Roy. You're up. Tell

1 me again -- We know we went over the OFL last year, and that
2 would have been 2019, and did we go over the OFL in 2018, or is
3 it just 2019? I am trying to figure out how many years we
4 overfished.

5
6 **DR. CRABTREE:** Well, if I could, Madam Chairman, we were over
7 the OFL in 2019, and I do not recall, and I do not believe, that
8 we were over in 2018, and so that's the problem. Technically,
9 that means we were overfishing in 2019. Now, clearly what comes
10 out of this interim assessment and the Great Red Snapper Count
11 has bearing on that and may change our picture of that.

12
13 The other problem you have though is we have exceeded the
14 recreational quota, I believe, for four straight years, and
15 recall Section 407(d) of the Magnuson Act, which says you have
16 to have quotas, and you have to close the fishery when they're
17 hit, and so that's another problem that we have that we need to
18 address.

19
20 Then I want to agree with Richard. What you have in this
21 document is what you're going to have to make your decision on
22 in the spring when you're changing quotas, and I don't think
23 that anyone should expect much to change with respect to the
24 calibrations in this timeframe, and so we're going to get new
25 catch levels that come out of this interim analysis, but I think
26 this is what we're going to have, in terms of the calibrations.

27
28 Now, you may get new information a year from now, or when you
29 get the next benchmark assessment, that enables you to re-look
30 at all this, but, between now and the spring, I don't envision
31 that happening.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Roy, you mentioned -- Obviously, we went over
34 the OFL in 2019, and we've talked about that, but you also said
35 there was overfishing in 2019, and is that now -- Has that been
36 officially determined by NMFS at this point?

37
38 **DR. CRABTREE:** There has not been an official determination, nor
39 has there been a notification to the council at this point.
40 That may happen, but I don't know when, but I think what you
41 need to focus on is we have to deal with the calibration issue,
42 and we need to do this as quickly as we can.

43
44 I understand the desire to deal with the Great Red Snapper Count
45 and the calibration simultaneously, and okay, but we need to
46 move as quickly as we can and get it done, and we need to think
47 through the decisions we're going to make and how you want to do
48 it and what you want to look at, so that staff is able to pull

1 it together, so that, when you get the new catch levels in the
2 January or the March meeting, you're able to make a final
3 decision and move forward, and I suspect what you will end up
4 doing is some sort of temporary rule, or interim rule, in order
5 to implement the new catch levels in time to affect the season.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Roy. Leann, I think that's the end of
8 your questions, and is that right, or do you have a follow-up?

9
10 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, ma'am. I'm good. Thank you.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Clay, I see your name on the list, and I
13 don't know if you've already made your points or you have more.

14
15 **DR. PORCH:** I have a couple more, in response to some that were
16 made, and so thank you, Chair. One is to Richard's point and
17 the question about what currency we would use in the interim
18 analysis, and I don't see us going to FES for that, because it
19 could be that we'll use some elements of the stock assessment in
20 combination with the Great Red Snapper Count, for instance the
21 estimate of the fishing mortality rate that gives a 26 percent
22 SPR, which is the MSY proxy that's on the books.

23
24 That could come from the assessment, and, if that's the case,
25 that's really in a CHTS currency, but we'll kind of -- We'll
26 give you more information on that as we start working with the
27 Great Red Snapper Count data.

28
29 When we get to the stock assessment, currently, the only time
30 series that is calibrated back in time is FES, and that's not to
31 say that there won't be any further developments by the time we
32 do that research track stock assessment, but it gets very tricky
33 though, because some of the state surveys, for instance Alabama
34 Snapper Check, only give us the landings during the open season,
35 and so we don't know what the discards are throughout the year,
36 and so we end up having to use something like MRIP for that, and
37 so it's going to be a long and complicated discussion, when we
38 come to the stock assessment, and I don't know for sure which
39 way that's going to go.

40
41 The other thing that I wanted to comment on was Mr. Anson's
42 point about the uncharacterized bottom, and I didn't mean to
43 imply that none of us knew anything about there being fish out
44 there, if only for the fact that we've been running a longline
45 survey out there for over twenty-five years.

46
47 In fact, many of you may know that we've been criticized about
48 that for many years, and why are you fishing out there, and

1 there's no red snapper out there, and it turns out that's where
2 most of the red snapper were. The problem is, until the Great
3 Red Snapper Count, we had no way to quantify the relative
4 abundance of fish out there. We knew they were out there, and
5 we would catch them on longlines, but there was no way to
6 calibrate it with our measures of abundance inshore, and that's
7 the trick.

8
9 We knew there were fish out there, but we just couldn't prove
10 that there were more fish out on that uncharacterized bottom
11 than there were on the high-relief areas, and that's what I was
12 trying to say, and so thanks.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Clay. Leann, is your hand
15 up again?

16
17 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, and it's just to make sure that I understood
18 Clay, if I can ask him real quick.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure.

21
22 **MS. BOSARGE:** Clay, you said, for the upcoming red snapper stock
23 assessment, we might use state data, the different state data
24 surveys, but we'll have to use a little bit of FES to fill in
25 the holes, like you said, if they don't have discard data that
26 is all year long, and you will have to use FES to fill in those
27 holes, but it is possible that you'll be using state data
28 landings for that?

29
30 **DR. PORCH:** I emphasize the "is possible". I don't want to
31 guess exactly where we're going to go by the time we are
32 conducting that assessment, and hopefully a lot of water will
33 run under that bridge and we'll learn some things between now
34 and then, but it's possible that we could use some of the state
35 data, but it won't be as simple as just using state data,
36 because there's gaps in the state data, but, to do that, we
37 would have to find a way to calibrate the catch estimates from
38 the states all the way back in time, and, to this point, there
39 hasn't been a whole lot of work there, and I'm not even sure
40 exactly how that would be done, but it would have to be done if
41 we were going to use state data in the stock assessments.

42
43 You can't use say FES back in time and then suddenly shift to
44 the state data, where the estimates are much lower, because that
45 just looks like you had a decrease in fishing mortality, when,
46 really, you're just changing metrics, and so there's a lot of
47 technical things wrapped up in that, and I don't want to go into
48 too much detail here, except to say the research track

1 assessment will look very carefully at those sorts of details
2 and how best to use the state and federal data.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Clay. I think we're at the end of our
5 speaker list here, and so let me just try to summarize, I think,
6 where we are here. Clearly, we're waiting on a lot of
7 information from the Great Red Snapper Count and the details of
8 that, and we're waiting on this interim analysis.

9
10 We've noted that we could have Greg give a presentation on the
11 Great Red Snapper Count at our next meeting, and so check on
12 that, and that interim analysis -- Maybe we would be able to
13 look at that either in January or March/April, and it sounds
14 like the timeline is still a little bit in flux there, and then
15 the council potentially would be taking some sort of action on
16 this document at either of those meetings, again dependent on
17 the results of when the Great Red Snapper Count stuff is
18 available. We also have a potential overfishing determination
19 maybe in sight here, but nothing yet on that. Roy.

20
21 **DR. CRABTREE:** Well, it seems to me that the biggest decision
22 with respect to this document that you're going to have to make
23 is do you want to go down the approach of applying the
24 calibration ratios directly, which will hit Alabama and
25 Mississippi the hardest, or do you want to do something like a
26 general -- I guess a 23 percent buffer that reduces the overall
27 catch level down to account for the inherent uncertainties of
28 having all these different ratios.

29
30 I guess we're going to go through the rest of the document and
31 see that, but it be worth having some discussion of the merits
32 of those two approaches and any others you can think of that you
33 want staff to try and look at, or is there any other way of
34 looking at it that you would like.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Right. We didn't get all the way through the
37 document, and I think we cut Mr. Rindone off to have this
38 discussion, and I was going to go back to him, to see if there's
39 anything else that he wants to take us through in this document.
40 We don't need to make a decision about which alternatives today,
41 but certainly, if there are others that people want to bring to
42 the table today, I think staff would welcome that, and so, Ryan.

43
44 **MR. RINDONE:** Still here. There's something that I did want to
45 poke a little bit about, is the recommended 23 percent buffer in
46 Alternative 3, and just to ask that SERO expound a little bit on
47 how that particular percentage was determined and what data were
48 used, et cetera, just for you guys' edification. I am lobbying

1 that particular one towards Roy and his shop.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Right. Roy.

4

5 **DR. CRABTREE:** I can tell you generally what I think was done,
6 is you look at what's the overall reduction you get if you apply
7 the straight ratio, and then that comes out to be approximately
8 23 percent, and so, if you apply that across the board, like the
9 other one, but, in terms of the default of how it was
10 calculated, I don't have that, and I can't see the whole list of
11 who is on that could explain that more fully, but there may be
12 some of my staff on. I think, Ryan, as we develop this and come
13 back next time, that's something that needs to be fleshed out
14 and described in the document.

15

16 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** That would be nice, and I see Peter Hood's hand
17 is up, and hopefully he can give us a little bit more
18 information. Peter.

19

20 **MR. HOOD:** Thank you. Could staff scroll down to Alternative 3?
21 I don't know if there's a table down below there, but,
22 basically, what was done is our staff, Jeff Pulver, basically,
23 iteratively, started reducing, or creating, a buffer, and so he
24 started at 10 percent, and he went to 15, and so forth, and,
25 after you apply the buffer and calibration, if you take
26 basically the totals, in CHTS units, at 23 percent, you get just
27 below what the private angling ACL is,

28

29 Basically, it was just a situation where, at 20 percent, you
30 were over the ACL. At 21 percent, you were still over the ACL.
31 At 22 percent, you were over the ACL. At 23 percent, you were
32 just under the ACL. Of course, at 24 percent and so on, you
33 would then be even more reduced from the ACL, and so it was a
34 simple iterative process, and 23 percent is the level that got
35 you just under the private angling ACL in the CHTS units. I
36 hope that makes sense.

37

38 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Are there any questions for Peter about that?
39 I am not seeing any. Kevin.

40

41 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. It may not be to Peter, but just a
42 general comment or question, and I guess it is a question. One
43 thing, after going through the calibration workshop and looking
44 at the CHTS data, and to some degree the FES data, and so it
45 might still play, it appears, for red snapper, the longer the
46 season, the more stable, and I know, when we looked at the
47 calibration, we looked at the most recent years, and more for
48 stability, but we also had, I think, a little bit more days,

1 relative to what we did back in 2013, 2014, and 2015.

2
3 I am just wondering if in fact the calibration changes because
4 we're afforded more fish, and therefore a longer season, and
5 what would be the process for us to come and reevaluate this, in
6 case this buffer in fact is too much, a couple of years from
7 now? Do we come back and do the same thing and just do an
8 amendment and change the buffer?

9
10 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Great question.

11
12 **DR. CRABTREE:** I mean, I think that is what you would do, Kevin.
13 You would have to go through the SSC and the reviews and all
14 that, but, if you found evidence that the basic science had
15 changed, then I think you would come in and make modifications
16 accordingly.

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

19
20 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Mara.

21
22 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Roy answered it. I think that's right. I mean,
23 you would make changes as you see fit and as the science and
24 your information indicates.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Mara. Okay. Let's go back to Ryan and
27 let you continue, and then hopefully we can wrap this up and
28 take a break.

29
30 **MR. RINDONE:** I am wrapped, Mr. Chair. I don't have much else
31 to follow with. There is a table that you guys haven't seen pop
32 up on the screen yet, Table 2.2, and this shows the Gulf state-
33 specific private angling component ACLs and ACTs, as adjusted,
34 using that 23 percent buffer, and applied to the 2020 fishing
35 season, and so you can see those data there. Based on the
36 current calibration ratios, the total predicted assumes that
37 each state catches its exact ACL, and so that's the only caveat,
38 really, right there.

39
40 Then there is some comparison information there as to how
41 Alternative 2 and 3 match up, and, as you guys can undoubtedly
42 surmise, depending on which alternative you choose, some states
43 would see their ACL increased or decreased or unchanged, and
44 that's it.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. I think, with that, then -- We've
47 had a lot of good discussion on this, and we've really talked
48 through a lot of the things that I think are going to be on our

1 minds. Kevin, is your hand still up?

2

3 **MR. ANSON:** No, it's not.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Just making sure. All right. I think
6 we can wrap this up then. Clearly, we're going to talk about it
7 more at our next meeting, with a little more context with the
8 information about the Great Red Snapper Count, and so I think,
9 at this point, let's take that break that's on the schedule.
10 Dr. Frazer, I don't know how long you want to break, given our
11 adjusted schedule today, and I do see that Greg just put his
12 hand up.

13

14 **DR. FRAZER:** I will wait to see what Greg has to say, and then
15 we'll go from there.

16

17 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Greg.

18

19 **DR. STUNZ:** Martha, I can make it pretty quick, since we're
20 right ahead of a break, but something that I'm getting confused
21 on, regarding all these buffers, and especially if we're talking
22 about applying another 23 percent buffer, is, the next time we
23 talk about this, at the next meeting, is it possible to have
24 staff give us some guidance on what's the total buffer that the
25 recreational sector is under right now, because, obviously,
26 there's the other 20 percent buffer, right, and then we also
27 have just the regular buffers that you get with ACL management,
28 in terms of reductions from the overfishing limit down to ABCs
29 and that sort of thing. I am trying to get a general handle on
30 what that looks like, but I don't know. I tried to look it up,
31 but I am having a little difficulty with that.

32

33 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Noted, and I think it would be nice to have all
34 that pulled together. Good point. Dr. Frazer.

35

36 **DR. FRAZER:** Real quick, let's take a ten-minute break, and I
37 just want to make a few quick comments. Martha, I think you
38 were right on with regard to where we are. We've got a lot of
39 things that are still in the hopper, and Greg needs to get that
40 report out, and Clay needs to kind of integrate it into an
41 interim assessment, and so we have some time to think about
42 things, but we do not have the luxury of years to do this, and
43 so we need to be kind of looking hard at what our alternative
44 actions might be in this document coming up.

45

46 I think Clay made a really good point, and I just want to hammer
47 that home, that we need to manage expectations, right, because a
48 general perception that we have three-times as many fish is very

1 unlikely to equate to three-times more quota in any of the
2 sectors, for lots of reasons.

3
4 Again, we're unlikely to alter, in a large way, fishing
5 behavior, and so people are still going to be fishing on the
6 places where they have access to, high-relief bottoms, et
7 cetera, et cetera, and, also, and I did talk to Clay about this
8 before, but the fact that we have three-times as many fish means
9 that we probably overestimated the productivity of that stock,
10 and, if we fish longer, we're going to have more discards, and
11 all of these things are going to play into how many fish we can
12 catch, and so we're going to have to temper those expectations
13 and probably meter things out.

14
15 Then, finally, I would say, with regard to the buffer situation,
16 we can certainly have staff put together a presentation about
17 the various scenarios moving forward, and so we'll plan for
18 that. Let's take -- It's 10:45, and let's take a ten-minute
19 break and come back at 10:55. Thanks.

20
21 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

22
23 **DR. FRAZER:** Martha, it looks like, before you get started, it
24 looks like there might be a holdover with Mara having a
25 question.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Mara, are you back on?

28
29 **DR. FRAZER:** We might have to wait just a couple of minutes, to
30 make sure that we get a few more folks. I will let you start
31 the discussion as you can see them.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** It looks like we're getting there, and I would
34 like to get Mara's hand before we get into red grouper, because
35 I'm assuming it was about red snapper. Mara, are you on?

36
37 **MS. LEVY:** Yes, and you can take my hand down. We can address
38 the buffer thing another time.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks. All right. Let's move into our
41 next agenda item then, which is Agenda Item V, Public Hearing
42 Draft of Amendment 53. I think Dr. Freeman is going to take us
43 through that, and can we start with the action guide for that,
44 to remind us what we need to do today?

45
46 **PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT AMENDMENT 53: RED GROUPER CATCH LIMITS AND**
47 **SECTOR ALLOCATIONS**

48

1 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** Sure, and so we're on Public Hearing Draft
2 Amendment 53, and staff will review the actions and alternatives
3 in the public hearing draft. The committee should then discuss
4 actions making modifications and consider the recommendations
5 from the Reef Fish Advisory Panel, and then the committee may
6 select preferred alternatives and direct staff to hold public
7 hearings.

8
9 As a reminder, the purpose for this document is to revise the
10 red grouper allocation between the commercial and recreational
11 sectors using BSIA and to modify the total and sector ACLs based
12 on the results of the recent stock assessment and subsequent OFL
13 and ABC recommendations from the SSC.

14
15 The need is to use the best scientific information available to
16 establish Gulf red grouper sector allocations and ACLs, ensuring
17 that the historical participation by the recreational and
18 commercial sectors is accurately reflected by the sector ACLs
19 and that the recreational ACL is consistent with the data used
20 to monitor recreational landings and trigger accountability
21 measures.

22
23 Again, as a reminder, acknowledging that the status quo sector
24 allocations for red grouper are based on the older, no-longer-
25 used MRFSS data, the council requested that the SSC examine
26 alternative sector allocation scenarios, considering the
27 contemporary FES-calibrated MRIP data.

28
29 As a reminder, the SSC reviewed these scenarios and recommended
30 the projections included in Alternatives 3 through 5 of Action 1
31 as scientifically-valid estimates of OFL and ABC. The OFL and
32 ABC included in Alternative 2 of Action 1 had been previously
33 recommended at the September 2019 SSC meeting.

34
35 As a reminder, and this is in the document, any allocation, or
36 reallocation, must be consistent with the Reef Fish FMP
37 objectives, and so I have included those on this slide and the
38 next slide, just in case the council chooses to discuss that at
39 the end of the presentation.

40
41 Dr. Diagne covered some of this yesterday, but, as a reminder,
42 the councils were requested to establish allocation review
43 triggers, and the council selected two, the time-based and
44 public input. In terms of recreational and commercial
45 allocations of red grouper, the review will occur every seven
46 years, but, and this being an example, the council can initiate
47 supplementary allocation reviews at any time.

1 As an overview, Action 1 will determine commercial and rec
2 sector allocations based on the data used. In the case of
3 Alternatives 1 and 2, that's with MRFSS. With Alternatives 3
4 through 5, that's MRIP-FES and using average landings across
5 various time ranges.

6
7 Alternative 1 is the no action, which would maintain 76 percent
8 commercial and 24 percent recreational and would maintain the
9 current OFLs, ABCs, and ACLs. However, Alternative 1 is not
10 legally viable, because it would not be based on the best
11 scientific information available, and it would retain OFL and
12 ABC above values produced by SEDAR 61.

13
14 Alternative 2 would maintain the current sector allocations of
15 76 percent commercial and 24 percent recreational. However, the
16 OFL and ABC would be revised, as recommended by the SSC, and
17 then the stock ACL would be equal to the stock ABC.

18
19 Alternative 3 would revise the sector allocations, again using
20 MRIP-FES, for the years 1986 through 2005, which would result in
21 59.3 percent commercial and 40.7 percent recreational. Similar
22 to Alternative 2, the OFL and ABC would be revised as
23 recommended by the SSC, and, again, the stock ACL would be set
24 equal to the stock ABC.

25
26 Alternative 4 would revise the sector allocations, in this case
27 using landings from the years 1986 through 2009, resulting in
28 60.5 commercial and 39.5 percent recreational. Again, OFL and
29 ABC would be revised, as recommended by the SSC, and, again,
30 stock ACL would be set equal to stock ABC.

31
32 Alternative 5 would use the longest timeframe, in this case 1986
33 through 2018, resulting in allocations being 59.7 percent
34 commercial and 40.3 percent recreational. Again, the OFL and
35 the ABC would be revised, as recommended by the SSC, and the stock
36 ACL would be set equal to the stock ABC.

37
38 This is an overview of the resulting OFLs, ABCs, total ACLs,
39 commercial ACLs, and recreational ACLs that would result from
40 these five alternatives, again keeping in mind that Alternative
41 1 is not a legally-viable option. The column right below
42 Alternative 1, again, shows the rec ACL, the MRIP-FES
43 equivalent, and then that's carried through for the total ACL,
44 and that's there simply for the analysis in Chapter 4, so we
45 would have basically an apples-to-apples currency. I will pause
46 at this point, in case there is any questions, before going into
47 Action 2.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Are there any questions on Action
2 1? Dale.
3
4 **MR. DIAZ:** I just want to make sure that I'm 100 percent right
5 on this. Alternative 3 is the alternative that has this set as
6 close to where it could be, had we never implemented the new FES
7 into the stock assessment, and is that correct?
8
9 **DR. FREEMAN:** Dale, sorry, but could you repeat that for me?
10
11 **MR. DIAZ:** I just wanted to clarify that Alternative 3 is the
12 alternative that sets us as close to what the allocation would
13 be had we never implemented FES into the new stock assessment,
14 and is that correct?
15
16 **DR. FREEMAN:** Alternative 3 does use the MRIP-FES landings, but
17 it uses the same time range as Alternative 1, the no action.
18 Does that answer your question?
19
20 **MR. DIAZ:** I think it does. That is basically the same
21 parameters that were in place to come up with the percentages
22 for Alternative 1 are the same parameters that are used for
23 Alternative 3.
24
25 **DR. FREEMAN:** Correct. Right. So it's using the same average
26 landings from 1986 through 2005, and Alternative 1 was based off
27 of MRFSS data, and Alternative 3 is based off the MRIP-FES
28 landings.
29
30 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Alternative 3 puts us in an apples-to-apples
31 situation with the quota and the data collection system that is
32 being used, I think while essentially also keeping what's
33 caught, I guess, by each sector more or less the same. It looks
34 like an allocation shift, because the numbers change, but I
35 think, based on the switch to FES, what happens on the water
36 doesn't change, I think, if that makes sense.
37
38 **MR. DIAZ:** It does, and that's important for some of the
39 comments, and I just read through the comments in the last
40 couple of days, and so there is at least an alternative that
41 keeps things very close to where they were, and so that's my
42 only point. Thank you, Martha.
43
44 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure. John Sanchez.
45
46 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** I just have a question, and I don't know who
47 would be best to answer it, but, given the difference between
48 GRFS and FES, does anybody have an idea which one could be

1 perceived as better?

2
3 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I could answer that, but probably someone else
4 needs to. I am guess Mara's hand, and Richard's, since they're
5 going up, they will address that. Mara.

6
7 **MS. LEVY:** I just wanted to point out what Matt already pointed
8 out, and it was in that table, and the reason that we have the
9 MRIP-FES equivalency under Alternative 1 is so that you can make
10 that apples-to-apples comparison, and so, looking at the status
11 quo for the rec ACL, if you're looking at what it is now, it's
12 one-million pounds. If you look at it in the MRIP-FES
13 equivalency, it would be 2.1 million pounds.

14
15 Then you look at what the resulting ACLs would be under the
16 alternatives, and so any one is going to be a potential
17 decrease, some more than others, and it's the same for the
18 total, right, and so the total, if you look at MRIP-FES --
19 There's going to be a decrease in all of the total ACLs, some
20 more than others, again. Thanks.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Richard, did you have your hand up to address
23 this?

24
25 **DR. CODY:** Yes, and I wanted to address the question, but,
26 realistically, there's no good way to compare surveys. We do
27 know that the supplemental surveys, such as the GRFS, were
28 designed to do specific things, and some of those are different
29 than what MRIP is designed to do.

30
31 In the end though, you have two different surveys, two different
32 designs, and you have to have some way to compare those
33 estimates. That's one of the jobs of this transition team
34 working group, will be to look at drivers for differences
35 between the surveys, so we can get a better understanding of why
36 there are differences.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Richard. Leann.

39
40 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I wanted to follow-up on
41 what Dale's question was, and can we pull up page 23 of the
42 document, because he asked about GRFS versus FES, and I asked,
43 at the last council meeting, if we could have that put into the
44 document, and so it's on paper page 23 of the actual amendment.

45
46 There is a -- between GRFS and MRIP, and Dr. Cody said that they
47 were designed to capture different things. Well, I think that
48 GRFS was trying to get at offshore species, and so, if it was

1 designed with that intent, and its methodology has been
2 approved, then it should be taken into account, and I think,
3 unfortunately -- You know, we just had a conversation on red
4 snapper, and it sounds like, when we get to the stock assessment
5 on red snapper, we are going to at least entertain the idea of
6 using some of this state data, see if we can piece it together
7 and make it work.

8
9 With red grouper, and I'm not blaming anybody for this, but red
10 grouper was the first species that we plugged FES data into a
11 stock assessment for. In fact, it got delayed several times
12 because we still didn't have historical landings in the FES
13 currency, and we were trying to back-calculate all those
14 landings, and the assessment team had to wait on that.

15
16 The council was never presented those landings streams before it
17 got plugged into a stock assessment. Had we been presented
18 those, and seen how drastically different they were for red
19 grouper, versus GRFS, which GRFS has been in existence just as
20 long as FES, and they are the same. If you want the age of
21 those two children, it's the same.

22
23 Then we might have said, hey, you know, when you plug this into
24 the assessment, it would be nice if you at least did a
25 sensitivity analysis with this GRFS data and tried to look at
26 these and see which one is probably closer to the mark, because
27 I'm going to be very frustrated if, a couple of years from now,
28 two years from now, when we start the operational assessment for
29 red snapper, we use state data in that assessment and we end up
30 going back into this red grouper and having to plug state data
31 in and do this allocation twice.

32
33 We need to back up right now and look at these numbers and
34 figure out what direction we're going to go. Red grouper,
35 health-wise, is not in a good position, but that actually gives
36 us a little bit of leeway, as far as what we do with this
37 document, and we're not catching the quotas. Neither sector is
38 catching its quota, and so we don't have this huge pressure on
39 us to hurry up and increase these quotas and do -- No, and we've
40 just got to make sure that we put in place an OFL and an ABC
41 that was recommended.

42
43 We don't necessarily have to start reallocating real fast,
44 because we might catch -- Here, they have finally got this page
45 up, and look at GRFS. That's the first column. The second
46 column is what I call the old MRIP, the MRIP-CHTS. All right,
47 and so that's what we are all used to, and now the third column
48 is this new MRIP-FES.

1
2 GRFS and old MRIP, in 2016, are 900,000 pounds, round about, and
3 the new MRIP is 2.2 million pounds, and it's not a little
4 difference. This is huge differences. In 2017, you've got GRFS
5 and old MRIP at about 300,000 or 400,000 pounds, and you've got
6 new FES-MRIP at 1.3 million pounds. They are big differences,
7 and, if you look on the whole, if you go back and just look at
8 the first two columns, GRFS and MRIP-CHTS, old MRIP -- We didn't
9 -- There was a couple of things that we had going on that needed
10 to be fixed, and we weren't sampling long enough into the day at
11 the boat ramps, and we were using the landline telephones that
12 nobody uses anymore.

13
14 We figured -- Generally speaking, commonsense would tell you
15 that you were probably missing some recreational landings and
16 effort, and so probably recreational landings and effort should
17 have been a little bit higher than what CHTS was estimating,
18 and, if you look at GRFS, that's pretty much what you get, with
19 the exception of the first year there, and it's a little bit
20 higher than old MRIP, and that makes sense to me, in my simple
21 world.

22
23 MRIP-FES is orders of magnitude different, and it's not a little
24 more. I mean, it's -- I can't even do the math. It's 400,000
25 pounds going up to 1.3 million, and that's a lot of difference,
26 and I think it's time to back up and take a hard look at this.
27 I don't think you need to rush into an allocation shift until
28 you get this right, until you send this information to your SSC
29 and to the Science Center and say, hey, you go back, and let's
30 look at these landings streams and figure out which one should
31 have been plugged into that assessment, and let's figure out
32 what we can do from there.

33
34 I don't know if you can do a sensitivity analysis, and I don't
35 know if you've got enough information on your conversion
36 formulas that you use for Florida for red snapper that you can
37 simply use that conversion ratio and plug some stuff into this
38 red grouper assessment, but we need to stop for just a minute
39 and take a look at this.

40
41 We've already got the cart before the horse in not presenting
42 this to the council before we plugged it into an assessment, and
43 that's the council's fault too, because we pushed on the Science
44 Center to get it out, get it out, get it out, and we should have
45 checked up. These are big changes, and we haven't gone through
46 them and really discussed them.

47
48 We're starting to discuss them in red snapper, because you have

1 five states pushing back on you and saying, woah, woah, woah,
2 uh-uh. We're not going to just take this and you hand it to us
3 and that's it. We need to talk about this.

4
5 Unfortunately, I mean, you've got a couple of commercial people
6 on the council, and I guess we don't have enough clout for
7 people to check-up and take a look at it when it affects us.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Leann. Clay, I don't know -- Clay or
10 Roy, if you want to address some of this, and so, I mean, I can
11 say, when this assessment was done, it includes data through
12 2017, and the Gulf Reef Fish Survey didn't start until partway
13 through 2015, and so I think, at the point the assessment was
14 done, there were not enough data to run this in the Gulf Reef
15 Fish Survey. At that point, we may not have even been
16 certified, and certainly we didn't have calibrations at that
17 point.

18
19 We do now, of course, but -- I hear what you're saying, Leann,
20 and it is very frustrating, because we have this data collection
21 system running in Florida that we think is more accurately
22 capturing what's happening in the reef fish fishery, but it's
23 certainly not, in this case, being used for management or
24 assessments, but there, I believe, a number of steps that we
25 need to go through for that to happen, and so, Roy, I see your
26 hand up, if you want to -- Can you talk us through this a little
27 bit? I think Clay's hand has gone up as well. Thanks. Roy.

28
29 **DR. CRABTREE:** When you look at the numbers on the screen, Leann
30 is right that GRFS is a little higher than MRIP. Well, we knew
31 that, and we knew our calibration ratios -- That's consistent
32 with what we saw with red snapper, and the FES numbers are
33 double the old MRIP-CHTS, or maybe a little more in some cases,
34 which that's what we've known for some time was coming out of
35 this, and I don't understand the going back to the SSC.

36
37 The SSC has already reviewed this and accepted it, and it's been
38 through them, and they were aware that it was based on FES, but,
39 I mean, the FES numbers are higher, and so, I mean, I'm not sure
40 where we're going with this, and I guess I would like to hear
41 what Clay has to say, and I'm gathering you are interested in
42 re-looking at it with the GRFS numbers, and it seems to me that
43 you could convert the outcomes of it into GRFS units, if you
44 wanted to, or something, but maybe Clay could comment on that.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Clay.

47
48 **DR. PORCH:** Sure. Thank you, Chair. Two issues to think about

1 here, and, in the first case, when we did the red grouper
2 assessment, the Chair is absolutely right that, at that point,
3 we had no way to calibrate GRFS back in time, and so FES was
4 really the only game in town, in terms of having numbers that
5 went all the way back in time, because you have to have a
6 consistent time series when you're doing a stock assessment.

7
8 You can't use one metric and then use another that is supposedly
9 measuring the same thing, but has a lot lower value, because
10 what it would look like is a big drop in the fishing mortality
11 rate, when it's really, again, you just change the metric that
12 you're using, and so it's more important to be consistent
13 through time.

14
15 Having said that, since then, I know the State of Florida is
16 working on trying to come up with calibrated measures back in
17 time for the gag stock assessment, and so we will be looking at
18 both an assessment with FES and with the calibrated GRFS
19 estimates back in time, or at least that's the state of play as
20 I understand it now.

21
22 Then we'll get different ABC estimates, one in the GRFS
23 currency, for the most part, and one in the MRIP currency. Now,
24 that may not actually make much difference, in terms of
25 management, because you will get a higher ABC using FES than you
26 will with GRFS, and it's just the way the assessment is going to
27 come out, because you're saying you've got the same trends in
28 abundance with higher catch with FES, and so that implies the
29 stock must have been bigger and you can take more, and, when you
30 use GRFS, it's going to have the opposite, and it's going to say
31 the stock must have been smaller, and you will get a lower ABC.

32
33 All that probably will come out pretty close to a wash, once you
34 make the conversion from FES to GRFS, and so, on the one hand,
35 you do the assessment in GRFS, and you get a lower ABC, and, on
36 the other, you do it with FES, and you get a higher ABC, but, if
37 you're going to use GRFS for management purposes, then you will
38 have to apply the calibration, and it will probably come down
39 rather close to as if you did the assessment in GRFS to begin
40 with.

41
42 I won't say that it will come down to the pound the same, but
43 they will be in a similar ballpark, and so it's really just
44 which is most defensible, a GRFS-calibrated time series back in
45 time, which we haven't seen yet, and it hasn't been peer
46 reviewed, or the FES version that was calibrated back in time,
47 which has had some level of peer review and the SSC has
48 discussed. I mean, that's what it comes down to.

1
2 Ultimately, I'm with everybody else here, and I would really
3 love to see some independent way to gauge which of these
4 surveys, and all the state surveys, are getting the numbers most
5 closely, and we don't have that right now. It is a project that
6 we at the Southeast Center and the Office of Science and
7 Technology at NOAA and the states have been talking about, and
8 we're trying to put together a plan for that, because, right
9 now, the best we can do is start explaining why they're
10 different, and we can't say which one is more correct in any
11 objective way.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Clay. I guess we're back to I think
14 what Leann was trying to bring up. For us to be able to use
15 Gulf Reef Fish Survey, certainly for this document, to determine
16 how to set quotas and how to allocate that quota, essentially,
17 my understanding is that we need -- We would basically need
18 another red grouper assessment, and it's not just another run or
19 anything like that, and you are nodding your head yes, I think,
20 and so I just wanted to make that clear.

21
22 **DR. PORCH:** Yes.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I think that's laid out in that white paper as
25 well, and then, of course, it would need SSC review and all
26 that, but I think that's a struggle for a lot of us here, but,
27 based on our SEDAR schedule -- I think we have another
28 assessment on the books, but it's a few years out, and so I
29 think we are where we are, more or less, right now with this
30 stock. Is that accurate, Clay?

31
32 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, that's accurate. The only way we could use
33 GRFS now is with a calibration factor, and so the estimates come
34 out in FES now, and the ABC, and so we would have to do
35 calibrations, similar to what we're talking about with red
36 snapper, except, of course, it's simpler, because it's mostly
37 involving one state.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Right, and so I think we're working on those
40 calibrations, or we have those in hand now, but they would have
41 to be applied in a new assessment. Is that right?

42
43 **DR. PORCH:** If you wanted the ABC to come out in GRFS currency,
44 yes. We would have to run a new assessment. Otherwise, we have
45 to convert the FES to GRFS from the previous assessment.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. We've got lots more hands here. John
48 Sanchez.

1
2 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My concerns are this
3 fishery, by all accounts, seems biologically compromised, and
4 it's in question, and to reallocate right now -- I am not sure
5 that I 100 percent embrace the discard mortality percentages
6 that are thrown out with the recreational reallocation, and
7 especially when you confound it given shark predation and all
8 these things that we're experiencing on the water and people are
9 complaining about at every public testimony.

10
11 I think we should hold off on the reallocation on this until we
12 do feel more confident. We're certainly kind of taking a pump-
13 the-brakes approach with red snapper, and I think it's more
14 warranted in this case, and then it begs the question of, if we
15 were to reallocate, what happens to the commercial IFQ? Is it
16 going to be held back, in terms of some kind of a reduction,
17 anticipated reduction, and, if so, how would that be handled? I
18 mean, all of these things, to me, support let's make sure we're
19 doing the right thing here, and this fishery is not in great
20 shape. Thank you.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, John. J.D.
23

24 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Just a question, maybe for staff. Alternative
25 3, 4, and 5, how were the percentages determined? How did the
26 59.3 and the 40.7 -- How did those numbers come about?
27

28 **DR. FREEMAN:** Bernie, could you go to Action 1? Perfect. Those
29 Actions 3, 4, and 5 are using -- I lost my screen. Sorry. Just
30 one moment. I'm having technical difficulties.
31

32 Alternatives 3 through 5 are using the MRIP-FES average landings
33 based off of different timeframes, and, Bernie, if you can
34 scroll down, and there's a table of landings, and, at the very
35 bottom of it, it shows these percentages. It's in that table,
36 and, if you go all the way to the bottom, it shows, for the
37 various alternatives, how those percentages are calculated.
38 Does that answer your question, Mr. Dugas?
39

40 **MR. DUGAS:** Yes, sir. Thank you for clarifying.
41

42 **DR. FREEMAN:** Certainly.
43

44 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Next, I have Dale.
45

46 **MR. DIAZ:** I am just trying to think through where we should go
47 with this document and what we should do, and I do agree with
48 Leann. I mean, there's not an urgency with this species, and

1 this is the first stock assessment we've had with FES, but, with
2 a lot of other ones coming up that we're also going to be
3 working on that have some allocation issues that are going to be
4 using FES -- So, I mean, pretty soon, we're going to have make a
5 decision on how we're going to handle this.

6
7 I know there's a lot of folks that have not been very
8 comfortable with those numbers. However, I think the SSC did
9 deem that it's best available science, and so I'm just trying to
10 figure out where we need to go, and, if there's a path forward,
11 I would like to make sure that council members are comfortable
12 with we're doing too, and especially since we're not in a hurry
13 to do anything, and I am just trying to figure out where we
14 should be going to get where folks think we have the right,
15 accurate numbers.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Roy, do you want to weigh-in on that?

18
19 **DR. CRABTREE:** Yes, and I get that folks have some discomfort
20 with the numbers, because they are higher than we're used to,
21 but that's the survey that is in place, and it's the only survey
22 in place for a lot of the species that we manage, and so I don't
23 see how we're going to not use the FES numbers for some of
24 these.

25
26 Now, you might -- We're talking about reallocation, but -- I get
27 how you see it that way, but, really, we're taking the same time
28 period and just adjusting what the mix in the fishery was back
29 then, and, now, it may be that we have -- Because we have
30 conversions of these things, I think you could take the
31 recreational ACL that's here and convert it into GRFS currency,
32 and then you could monitor it using GRFS, and it may be that you
33 could take some calibration or conversion factor and apply it
34 back to the time series, in order to get the allocation, and
35 what that would do would be to reduce the recreational landings
36 back in time, and the allocation would come out something closer
37 to what it has been.

38
39 Of course, the recreational ABC would come down by about half as
40 much too, but I think any sort of conversion back in time is
41 going to be relatively crude, and I'm not really sure that
42 you're going to gain anything or pick anything up from that.

43
44 The reality is that we have a whole host of different surveys
45 going on now, and people have opinions about which one is
46 closest to the true estimate, but the fact is that nobody really
47 knows which one, because we don't know what the true catch level
48 is. We have estimates of it, and that's the difficulty we have,

1 but I'm not sure just saying we're not going to use FES -- I
2 don't know how we're going to be able to do that.

3
4 The other part is the SSC has gone through this, and they have
5 accepted this as the best available science, and it's not clear
6 to me how we can decide that we're not going to use this.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I am going to go to a few more hands. Mara.

9
10 **MS. LEVY:** I mean, I just want to point out that, right now, we
11 have an OFL and an ABC that are much higher than what the
12 current assessment says, and the current ABC is much higher than
13 the current recommendation from the SSC, and so, right now, we
14 need to adjust those things to account for the best available
15 science and the SSC recommendations.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Noted, Mara. John Sanchez, or, Roy, is your
18 hand still up? I guess not. John.

19
20 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I agree with Mara, and I always thought that maybe
21 these things should have been in separate documents. I
22 understand the need to make the adjustments to OFL and ABC, and
23 we should do that, but I don't think putting them together with
24 the reallocation, which I think is being done in haste, in the
25 same document maybe is justified.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, John. Leann.

28
29 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks. John said exactly what I was going to
30 say, but, yes, we need to take action on the OFL and ABC, but
31 you don't necessarily have to rush to reallocate, in this
32 particular instance. I like what I heard Clay say about the
33 upcoming gag assessment, where they're actually going to use a
34 historical time series of GRFS and a historical time series of
35 MRIP-FES and plug both of those into the assessment and see what
36 things look like.

37
38 I would like to see us sit right where we're at on allocation
39 and keep the allocation just like it is and take no action on
40 allocation in red grouper until we get some outputs from that.
41 That will tell me a lot about what the scientists think may be
42 more plausible as a landings stream back in time, which one of
43 those they choose to actually hand over in a final stock
44 assessment, whether they use the GRFS historical landings back
45 in time or they use FES historical landings back in time on gag.
46 That will tell me a lot and keep us from doing this reallocation
47 twice.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Leann. Mara.

2
3 **MS. LEVY:** Just to point out that this idea of decoupling them -
4 - They're linked, right, because the assessment uses the
5 allocation, and the outcomes, the OFLs and the ABCs, change
6 based on the allocation, and so I don't think you can de-couple
7 them, but I will note that Alternative 2 essentially keeps the
8 same allocation, but with the recognition that it's actually
9 going to change the allocation, and so we're keeping the same
10 percentages, but, because we're using a different recreational
11 landings dataset, it's actually shifting it, and we would have
12 to recognize that, but there is the alternative in there for you
13 to do that if you can come up with the rationale for how that is
14 fair and equitable and all those other things, but you can't
15 just have an action that addresses the catch levels, or the OFL
16 and ABC, without a distinct decision on allocation, because that
17 goes into the assessment and changes the results.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Mara. I think, at this point, I will
20 recognize -- I think Dr. Freeman had his hand up, and it might
21 be helpful to move into Action 2, and particularly I know we've
22 got the table that kind of breaks down I guess the implications
23 of the various options. Matt took his hand down. Roy, is your
24 hand back up?

25
26 **DR. FREEMAN:** Mara addressed what I was going to say, as far as
27 Alternative 2 in Action 1, that that did provide sort of a
28 status quo allocation between the commercial and recreational
29 sectors, while going ahead and adjusting the OFL and ABC. That
30 is an option within Action 1.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Roy, is your hand up?

33
34 **DR. CRABTREE:** Yes, and so part of what I wanted to cover Mara
35 addressed, and the allocation is linked to the ABC, and so they
36 need to be in the same document. The word "reallocation" and
37 what that means, we're not being clear about that.

38
39 If you keep the percentages the way they are right now on the
40 book, and then implement these new catch levels, and we start
41 using FES to monitor it, that would be a large reallocation of
42 the fishery to the commercial fishery. That is essentially a de
43 facto reallocation, and so you've got to look at all of these
44 things in context, but I don't see how you can put in place the
45 catch levels that come out of this new assessment without making
46 adjustments to the allocation, and it gives you some real
47 problems with, well, what's the basis of the allocation right
48 now.

1
2 It's supposed to be based on the mix in the fishery during a
3 historical period, but that's not the mix in the fishery
4 anymore, using these new numbers, and, if you want to stay with
5 the rationale that we used to put the allocation in place, it
6 then changes to one of these alternatives, and so I know
7 allocation is touchy to everyone, but we just need to be careful
8 with what we're calling reallocation and not reallocation.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Roy. Leann.

11
12 **MS. BOSARGE:** Madam Chair, before we leave this action, because
13 this one has the tables in it, and I want to stay in the
14 document, in the action that we've been talking about, and not
15 this buffer stuff, but the one we've been talking about with the
16 OFLs and the ABCs and the allocations, and can you go to that
17 table on page 16, staff? Paper page 16, and you know I'm old
18 fashioned.

19
20 I sent something to staff earlier, and this is something that's
21 been bothering me. If you all remember in Texas, at our Texas
22 meeting last year, 2019, about this time, we were presented
23 allocations from the Science Center that came out of the
24 assessment, and they were drastically different than what we
25 have in this document. I was closer to 69 percent for the
26 commercial guys, instead of the 58 or 59 that we have in this
27 document.

28
29 They presented that based on the landings stream that the
30 assessment model estimated for recreational landings, and Roy,
31 NMFS, came in and said, hey, you can't use that for your
32 allocation, and you've got to use true landings, actual
33 historical landings, and it has bothered me that those two
34 numbers are so different from each other. I did some
35 calculations, and scroll up a little, so you can see that table
36 at the bottom, please, ma'am.

37
38 This is from our document, and I put an extra column in here,
39 and what I did was I took the recreational landings that the
40 stock assessment model estimated as recreational landings, and I
41 have written them out in that column in pen, in hand-written
42 numbers, and look at the difference between what the model
43 estimated for recreational landings, the stock assessment model,
44 versus what the actual recreational landings in FES are.

45
46 The model does this for commercial too, and I did the commercial
47 numbers and put them out there for you too, so you could see
48 what the model estimated for commercial, and the problem, in my

1 mind, with this, and this is where I really want this to go back
2 to the SSC and have some further discussion, but, on commercial,
3 the model got it pretty close to what commercial landings are.
4

5 In some years, it estimated a little higher commercial landings,
6 and some years it was a little lower, but it was on either side.
7 In the recreational landings, with the exception of the first
8 year, 1986, the model estimated every year lower than what
9 actual FES landings were, and substantially lower, and so the
10 estimates were directional and significant differences, and
11 that, to me, seemed a little strange.
12

13 I already have my doubts about the FES numbers, when I look at
14 GRFS, which are much lower, but then, when you get into a stock
15 assessment, and your stock assessment model estimates, year
16 after year after year, that recreational landings were actually
17 lower than FES, I think it warrants a discussion at an SSC
18 meeting, so that I can get some clarity on what exactly went
19 into that, and we can have a brief discussion here at this
20 council meeting, but I want a deep discussion on this, to
21 understand it.
22

23 We had some issues with the previous red grouper assessment, and
24 this red grouper assessment came out fairly rosy, compared to
25 what we think the fishery, the stock, looks like, and we
26 tempered it down with some qualitative factors, and I think we
27 need to take a look at this.
28

29 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Leann. Leann, are you
30 comfortable with this being emailed out to council members, or
31 posted, so that people can look more at this?
32

33 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, and there's actually a second page that
34 continues on in time with those numbers that the stock
35 assessment estimated too, but I just didn't have staff scroll
36 down, and I quit doing the commercial ones. I just ran out of
37 time.
38

39 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks. John Sanchez.
40

41 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I'm sorry. My hand was still up, but I'm good.
42

43 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Clay.
44

45 **DR. PORCH:** I just wanted to make the point of why the
46 commercial landings are matched closer than the recreational,
47 and that is, in the assessment, because of the way the data are
48 collected for commercial, they are generally regarded as more

1 precise, whereas there is considerable uncertainty with the
2 recreational estimates, and we actually -- I can't remember, for
3 this assessment, if we're actually incorporating the PSEs
4 directly or we just use an average value, but, basically, we
5 tell the assessment model that the recreational estimates are
6 less precisely known, and so it doesn't have to fit them as
7 closely.

8
9 I will have to look into it, but it may be that the trend that
10 Leann is mentioning is for those particular years, and not in
11 subsequent years, and so I will take a look at it, and, in fact,
12 I have someone looking at it now, but it could just be the way
13 the model is fitting that data, and it estimates lower values
14 for recreational catches in the 1990s through 2005, and then
15 it's higher in previous or subsequent years, but we'll have a
16 look at that, but we did tell the model that recreational
17 statistics are known as precisely as commercial.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thank you. Leann.

20
21 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks. I would like to make a motion that we
22 send this information to the SSC, to have them take a deeper
23 look at it and explain. If I can get a second for that motion,
24 I will give you my rationale on why.

25
26 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I will second that.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. We've got a second from John, and
29 let's give staff a minute to get this up on the board. Leann,
30 can you repeat your motion? I think that might help get it on
31 the board.

32
33 **MS. BOSARGE:** Well, I had to say to provide them with my
34 handout, but it's to refer -- Let's do this. **To refer the SEDAR
35 61 red grouper stock assessment back to the SSC for them to
36 provide further discussion and explanation on the differences
37 between historical recreational landings time series and what
38 the stock assessment model estimated as recreational landings.**
39 If Clay thinks that's clear enough, and I better let him chime
40 in, to make sure I got it right.

41
42 **DR. PORCH:** It's clear to me, and we can certainly chime in when
43 it goes before the SSC and show them figures, but I will say
44 that they have actually looked at that information. When they
45 review the results of the stock assessment, we present the fits
46 to the recreational and commercial data, along with other
47 information, and so they have seen it.

48

1 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Dr. Porch, and this difference -- I
2 will give my rationale now, Martha, if you're okay with that.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Yes.

5

6 **MS. BOSARGE:** Roy has always told us, well, the quota will go up
7 enough that, when you change the allocation, yes, it will be a
8 shift in allocation, but you will still end up with same amount
9 of fish to catch, commercially, right, and, when you look at
10 this document, you see that's not the case.

11

12 Our quota is going down, and this may have something to do with
13 it, and so I would like, for that reason, to look it, but, more
14 so, just to understand what in that stock assessment model was
15 driving it to believe that recreational landings were a million,
16 two million, or some years three million, pounds lower than what
17 we told it FES numbers were. It had other data that it was
18 looking at that drove it to that conclusion, and I would like to
19 have a deeper discussion on that, so that we understand better
20 what we're looking at here.

21

22 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Leann. I'm just going to
23 read this motion into the record, and then we can go to Roy's
24 hand. **The motion is to refer the SEDAR 61 red grouper stock**
25 **assessment back to the SSC so that the SSC can provide further**
26 **discussion and explanation on the differences between historical**
27 **recreational landings time series and what the stock assessment**
28 **model has estimated as recreational landings.** Roy.

29

30 **DR. CRABTREE:** Okay. A few things here. Leann quoted me as
31 saying that, if you switch to the higher landings and change the
32 allocation, it all comes out the same. Well, not quite. All
33 things equal, that would be the case, but all things aren't
34 equal, and it's not surprising that the commercial quota is
35 going down. I suspect the recreational is too, because the
36 stock is in poor shape, and so it's not just the only thing
37 going on here.

38

39 The other thing, Leann, is you said that I said you couldn't use
40 the estimated estimates out of the stock assessment, and I don't
41 think I said you couldn't, but I think there are a lot of
42 problems with doing it that way, because, one, every time you
43 update the assessment, or do it over, it's going to re-estimate
44 all of those, and so, every time you do anything with the
45 assessment, you're going to have to go in and revisit the whole
46 allocation, but the bigger problem is then you're using the
47 estimated landings to set the allocation, but then that's not
48 what you're using to monitor the fishery. You're using the

1 actual observed landings, and so then you've got this this
2 disparity, and I don't really know what that would do, if you
3 went down that path.

4
5 I don't know that this motion is going to get us much of
6 anything, and I suspect that Clay and the center could probably
7 tell you what there is to know about this, and, obviously, the
8 assessment is seeing signals from other things that makes it
9 think that the recreational landings were something different,
10 but we know that there are pretty big coefficients of variation
11 on the recreational landings, and so we shouldn't think of it as
12 just this value, but it's in fact a distribution around the
13 value.

14
15 This is kind of different from what we've seen in the past,
16 because, normally, when the center does these things, they
17 essentially fix that the recreational landings are known pretty
18 certainly, and, in this case, they allowed the model to vary
19 from that, which I think is an improvement, and more realistic,
20 but I do think, if you try to base allocations on those
21 estimated landings from the model, that has a whole host of
22 complications, potentially, with it.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Dr. Simmons.

25
26 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a
27 couple of questions. I believe that the table that Ms. Bosarge
28 is referring to is based on SEDAR 12 landings and then the ACL
29 monitoring dataset that was used to estimate the various
30 alternatives for percent allocation between the recreational and
31 commercial sector, and so I guess I'm a little confused about
32 going back to SEDAR 61, and we're also a little unclear about
33 the numbers you had, Ms. Bosarge, for the recreational landings.
34 Where did those come from? Was that from -- Because we pulled
35 up the stock assessment, and those are in numbers and not in
36 pounds of fish, and could you remind us of that again, please?

37
38 **MS. BOSARGE:** Sure, and so the column that I wrote in pencil --
39 If you go back to the Science Center presentation from Skyler
40 that was given to the SSC in their meeting where they blessed
41 that stock assessment, that red grouper stock assessment, as the
42 best scientific information available, one of the last slides
43 that she had in there, and I don't know the slide number, gave
44 those numbers in metric tons for both commercial and
45 recreational, and all I did was convert the metric tons to
46 pounds. It's in one of her additional slides at the very end.

47
48 Your question -- Historical recreational landings, I think that

1 should be "observed landings". Clay, isn't that what you all
2 call it in the stock assessment, where the numbers that -- We
3 actually call it the landings stream that we use for allocations
4 and stuff, that's on your ACL monitoring site, and those are
5 observed landings, the ones that the stock assessment estimates?
6

7 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, but we mean it maybe a little differently than
8 a lot of people would think of observed. I mean, we say it's
9 observed with uncertainty, and, in other words, they're really
10 estimates, right, and it's not that we actually counted every
11 fish. They are just estimates, and so, when we say
12 observations, we mean implicitly that they have some error
13 associated with it, and that's why we don't match it exactly,
14 but, yes, they are treated in the model as observations, in that
15 sense.
16

17 I am looking at the graph from SEDAR 61, and that compares
18 landings in fish, which is in numbers of fish, which is the way
19 the model actually fits the data, and it does look like that the
20 model estimates lower recreational landings, in number of fish,
21 up until about 1994, and then, after that, after 1996, they're a
22 little higher, and then there's a couple of years where they're
23 a little lower again, and then, in the most recent years -- For
24 some of the recent years, for like 2007 to 2012, they tend to be
25 a little bit higher again, and so, in that sense, it's behaving
26 pretty much as I would expect.
27

28 It's not that they're consistently lower in all years, but it's
29 just little blocks of years, where sometimes the model predicts
30 less, and other blocks of years where it tends to predict a
31 little bit more, in terms of numbers, and I haven't pulled up
32 what the statistics are in weight, but weight is a little
33 tricky, because we don't have good weight information for the
34 recreational landings in those early years.
35

36 It's better in the more recent years, but the length composition
37 data was pretty sparse, and so that's why we don't actually try
38 and fit recreational landings in weight, and we just do the
39 numbers, and then the model would estimate, in addition, the
40 weight of the recreational catch from what little information
41 there is.
42

43 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. We've got a motion on the board. Are
44 there any more questions or comments on the motion? Leann, is
45 your hand still up?
46

47 **MS. BOSARGE:** No, ma'am, but, since you gave me the opportunity,
48 I hope this will at least let the SSC look at it. I think

1 there's too many different indicators here of what may be
2 different landings streams, and I want -- I would like,
3 personally, to have an explanation for those significant
4 differences in what we say rec landings are and the estimates in
5 that assessment model, which will create a very holistic picture
6 to generate an estimate. I don't want to use the estimates for
7 allocation, and that's not what I'm asking, but I just want an
8 explanation.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Okay. I am not seeing any other
11 hands, and let's go ahead and make a decision on this motion.
12 **Is there any opposition to this motion? Hearing none, the**
13 **motion carries.**

14
15 Okay. Now I think, if we could, let's go, I guess, back to Dr.
16 Freeman's presentation and pick up with Action 2, and I think
17 that's going to take us to lunch, more or less. Dr. Freeman.

18
19 **DR. FREEMAN:** Sure. Not to spend a lot more discussion on
20 Action 1, but, if it's okay with Madam Chair, I think it might
21 be beneficial to have Mr. Rindone discuss what the Reef Fish AP
22 -- What their motion was for Action 1, or, if you would prefer,
23 I can wait until the end to have him do that.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Yes, let's do that. I think that will be
26 cleaner for us.

27
28 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay. Mr. Rindone, if you're ready.

29
30 **MR. RINDONE:** I'm always ready. The AP met on I believe it was
31 October 6, via webinar, and they talked about a great many
32 things, and this Amendment 53 being one of them, and, within the
33 AP, there was little confidence in MRIP-FES as the best
34 scientific information available, and the AP offered, during
35 this discussion, several reasons as to why it thought that.

36
37 I believe Captain Walker may be on, and he can expound upon
38 that, if he's available, but, ultimately, the AP decided to
39 offer a resolution, and not exactly a motion, but just a
40 resolution to the council to assist it in its decision-making
41 process with respect to Action 1.

42
43 This resolution reads: Whereas, we, the Reef Fish AP, have
44 thoroughly considered all options in Action 1 of Reef Fish
45 Amendment 53 presented to us, and whereas we have been unable to
46 reach a consensus, due to a lack of confidence in the
47 recreational data used to inform the proposed allocations in the
48 alternatives; therefore, be it resolved that the Reef Fish AP

1 cannot recommend any of the proposed alternatives in Action 1.
2 This resolution passed unanimously. Madam Chair.
3
4 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Ryan. All right. I don't know that
5 that -- I see Captain Walker's hand is up. Go ahead. Ed, you
6 might be on mute.
7
8 **DR. FREEMAN:** Madam Chair, they're trying to get in touch with
9 Mr. Walker right now. Give us just a minute, and they're trying
10 to send him the conference code, to make sure he can speak.
11
12 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure thing.
13
14 **DR. FREEMAN:** Madam Chair, if it's okay with you, we'll go ahead
15 and proceed into Action 2, and if, at the end of the
16 presentation, Mr. Walker is available, we can return to his
17 comments then.
18
19 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. That sounds great.
20
21 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay. Moving ahead to Action 2, Action 2
22 determines ACTs, and that is based on two items, one the
23 commercial and recreational buffers, which are addressed here in
24 these three alternatives, as well as the allocations selected in
25 Action 1.
26
27 Alternative 1 is no action, and it would maintain the current
28 buffers between ACL and ACT for each sector, with the commercial
29 buffer being 5 percent and the recreational buffer being 8
30 percent.
31
32 Alternative 2 would apply the ACL/ACT control rule to revise
33 these buffers, leading to a commercial buffer of zero percent
34 and a recreational buffer of 9 percent. Alternative 3 was
35 requested by the council to mediate the impact that a zero
36 percent commercial buffer would have on the multiuse quota,
37 which was what would occur in Alternative 2, and so that would
38 maintain the current buffer between the ACL and the ACT for the
39 commercial sector of 5 percent and then apply the ACL/ACT
40 control rule to revise the buffer for the recreational sector,
41 leading to a 9 percent buffer.
42
43 This shows the recreational ACTs based on selections from Action
44 1 and Action 2, and these are in millions of pounds gutted
45 weight, and also in MRIP-FES currency, with the exception of
46 Alternative 1 for Action 1, when paired with Alternative 1 from
47 Action 2, which I have got double asterisks. Action 1,
48 Alternative 1 isn't carried through for Alternatives 2 and 3 for

1 Action 2, again, because it's not a legally-viable option. We
2 have it there, again, simply for comparison and analysis in
3 Chapter 4 of the document.

4
5 If we go to the next slide, this was presented to the council by
6 Mr. Pulver. These are the projected closure dates, and these
7 are future landings that were determined from taking a three-
8 year average of the three most recent years of complete MRIP-FES
9 data, and, again, these are predicted, and they can certainly
10 vary depending on changes in effort during the season, and,
11 these being closure dates, I do want to note that, in terms of
12 the accountability measure for the recreational sector -- One
13 second.

14
15 This paragraph right there, I did want to note that -- This is
16 2010, and the recreational ACL had been exceeded in 2013, and
17 there were in-season closures in 2014 and 2015, as a result, and
18 so some of the in-season closures may not actually occur within
19 the season, should the quota be exceeded, if that makes sense,
20 for those predicted closure dates. I guess one way to look at
21 it is that's when it's predicted that the quota would be met.

22
23 This is just a projection, and so the next steps are obviously
24 contingent upon council motions, and, depending on what's
25 decided by the committee and Full Council, some of the next
26 steps would be that SERO would send a notice of availability to
27 be published with EPA, and then council staff would schedule and
28 hold public hearing meetings, although it sounds like some
29 additional discussion may occur by the council before these
30 steps would happen, and I just wanted to lay that out for the
31 committee to see. I will stop there, and then do we have Mr.
32 Walker available? Okay. It looks like he's available, and so I
33 will let him go ahead and speak to the committee.

34
35 **MR. ED WALKER:** To answer the question originally, the AP kind
36 of kicked it around, I think just to try and make some progress
37 for you guys, and we pulled out a couple of the alternatives and
38 essentially forced everybody to give an opinion on it, because
39 not many people wanted to put their name on this, because the
40 universal opinion in the room was skepticism towards the FES,
41 such monumental changes in the fishery based on something that a
42 lot of the AP members just seemed to think they had questions
43 about, and they're not real confident in it.

44
45 In trying to put forth a motion that would make such big changes
46 in the fishery, like essentially life-altering changes for some
47 people in red grouper land, nobody really wanted to touch it,
48 and so we pulled out a couple anyway, and we kicked them around

1 the room, and we voted down essentially, I think, three of the
2 alternatives that we tried, and I believe there were five at the
3 time, and the first one technically isn't legal, and so there
4 were four.

5
6 We tried several of the others, and all of them were voted down,
7 and we could not -- I could barely get anybody to talk about
8 this issue, and it's almost like what I'm seeing going on in
9 this meeting right now, and it makes a lot of people nervous,
10 making such big decisions on completely new data, historical
11 data, and so that's the way the AP went, and we were essentially
12 deadlocked on nothing, and, rather than hand you guys nothing,
13 one of the panel members drafted that -- It's not a motion, but
14 just a resolution that we handed you, and I think that's the
15 best we can offer, and we just leave it in your hands. I'm
16 happy to answer any questions that anybody has about that.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Captain Walker. Are there
19 any questions about the resolution? I will give people a minute
20 here. If not, Ed, was there anything -- Do you all have a
21 motion or anything about Action 2? I can't remember.

22
23 **MR. WALKER:** Which was Action 2?

24
25 **DR. FREEMAN:** Mr. Walker, that was the one on the buffers, and
26 the AP did not make a motion.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. So no motion there.

29
30 **MR. WALKER:** No motion there, no. That was just along the same
31 lines, and this, again, goes to confidence in the data.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thank you for calling in and being on
34 the line with us.

35
36 **MR. WALKER:** I will be here from now on, if there are any more
37 questions.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. I appreciate that. Okay. Dale, I see
40 your hand just went up.

41
42 **MR. DIAZ:** I just wanted to thank Mr. Walker for being willing
43 to serve on that AP and to chair it. I know it's hard to run an
44 AP when something like this comes about, and I appreciate his
45 service. Thank you, Mr. Walker.

46
47 **MR. WALKER:** You're welcome, and you're right that it was
48 difficult to get anybody to speak up on that one, and, being a

1 virtual meeting, it makes it even a little trickier, but thanks.
2 I'm glad to help.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. We are about at our lunchtime, and I
5 don't see any more hands right now. We have managed to pass one
6 motion relative to this document, but the staff was looking for
7 some, I guess, direction here on a preferred, and the committee
8 has not offered those at this point, and I suppose we can
9 revisit those at Full Council, if we have a chance, and then, at
10 that time, if we move forward with any sort of preferreds, we
11 might also want to talk about scheduling and holding public
12 hearings meetings. Roy, I see your hand is up.

13
14 **DR. CRABTREE:** Just one thing to think about, and so red grouper
15 is a stock that everyone agrees is not in good shape, and, if we
16 don't select a preferred, or get somewhere on this, I don't
17 think the Fisheries Service will be able to hold back any quota
18 on the commercial side, which means it's going to be very
19 difficult for you to make any changes to the quotas until the
20 2022 season, and so we've got quotas that are likely too high,
21 and an assessment that's getting out of date, and we're going to
22 wait until 2022, it appears to me before we're able to make any
23 changes.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks for raising that. Okay. We've got some
26 things, I guess, to think about between now and Full Council,
27 when we go through this report. With that, I'm going to pass it
28 back to the Chair.

29
30 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you, Martha. We will take our scheduled
31 break, and we'll come back at one o'clock.

32
33 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on October 27, 2020.)

34
35 - - -

36
37 October 27, 2020

38
39 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

40
41 - - -

42
43 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
44 Management Council reconvened via webinar on Tuesday afternoon,
45 October 27, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Martha
46 Guyas.

47
48 **DR. FRAZER:** Thanks, everybody, for taking a few minutes off

1 your lunch, and we're going to try to move through this in a way
2 that's going to be most efficient.

3
4 Again, we had a little look at where we think the hurricane is
5 going to go, as I'm sure everybody else did, and we have a
6 landfall tomorrow in the late afternoon or early evening, and so
7 we don't intend to spend all day tomorrow at all. In fact, if
8 we can get rid of our business, or take care of our business,
9 this afternoon, and perhaps come back with any remaining
10 committee reports first thing in the morning, that's where I
11 would like to go.

12
13 In the interest of time in the Reef Fish Committee, I think,
14 Martha, if we can move to the gray triggerfish interim analysis,
15 and that would be Agenda Item Number VII, and we can forego lane
16 snapper, and we can actually also forego 36B, and I can talk
17 about the rationale for that later if we need to, but that would
18 then allow us to move into the Mackerel Committee and then in
19 Full Council, where we could take care of some of the existing
20 committee reports, and that would allow us some time to prepare
21 the Reef Fish Committee report and the Mackerel report and get
22 that taken care of first thing in the morning, and so, with that
23 said, Martha, if you want to pick it up with gray triggerfish,
24 that would be great.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Yes, we can certainly do that. While staff is
27 pulling up the document, can we go through the action guide?
28 Thank you. I am not sure if this is Ryan or --

29
30 **GRAY TRIGGERFISH INTERIM ANALYSIS**

31
32 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, it's me. All right, and so Dr. Powers is
33 going to go over the interim analysis completed by the Southeast
34 Fisheries Science Center for gray triggerfish, which used the
35 SEAMAP combined video index, which is a combination of the
36 Panama City and Pascagoula Lab video surveys and the FWRI video
37 survey, as its representative fishery-independent index of
38 abundance, and you guys should consider the catch limit
39 modification recommended by the SSC and the recommendations from
40 the Reef Fish AP and provide staff direction on next steps.
41 Madam Chair.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Excellent. Thanks, Ryan. All right, and so
44 let's go ahead and pull up Dr. Powers' presentation, and, Dr.
45 Powers, we're ready when you are.

46
47 **DR. JOE POWERS:** Thank you. Recall that, yesterday, you had the
48 discussion about what an interim analysis was, and this is a key

1 example of this.

2
3 If we go to the first slide, generally, an interim analysis, as
4 explained before, uses a representative index of abundance,
5 preferably fishery-independent, and you use that to adjust the
6 ABC up or down, based on what the perception of the stock is,
7 and, in the case of triggerfish, this was applied because the
8 analytical assessment was rather old, and it's been some years
9 since it was done, and it was SEDAR 43, done in 2015, and so it
10 only included data through 2012. At the time, it was classified
11 as not overfished, but experiencing overfishing, and it was
12 undergoing rebuilding.

13
14 Just as a little background, the sector allocation is 79 percent
15 recreational and 21 percent commercial. The council has
16 maintained the ABC at 305,300 pounds whole weight since that
17 time period, and there will be a table that shows that later,
18 and then the recreational sector's allocation, in terms of the
19 ACL, is 241,000, and the ACT is 217,000.

20
21 The basic premise of the interim analysis is you develop an
22 index of abundance that tracks gray triggerfish over time and
23 then establishes a reference period, and that reference period
24 is an index which relates to a particular sustainable level of
25 catch, and then you compare the index to the reference years,
26 and this is called an I ratio, and then you adjust the catches
27 by that ratio, and so, if the ratio is greater than one, then
28 the catches go up. If it's less than one, then they go down a
29 little bit

30
31 How much you go down is buffered by the uncertainty, and this is
32 actually analyzed through more complicated sorts of analysis,
33 management strategy evaluations, MSEs, and so you get a good
34 idea of what level of buffer is needed in order to incorporate
35 that, and this is essentially what was applied for gray
36 triggerfish.

37
38 In the interim analysis, the survey that was used for this index
39 was the video survey from the Pascagoula Lab and the Panama City
40 Lab and FWRI in Florida. The fishery-independent index covers
41 the sizes of gray triggerfish selected by the fisheries. It was
42 generally agreed, from the assessment and subsequent analysis,
43 that the stock hit its low point, in terms of spawning stock
44 biomass, in the late 2000s, and spawning stock biomass has been
45 increasing since then, especially in the eastern Gulf.
46 Therefore, the perception is that you can increase the amount of
47 removals, the amount of catch, without jeopardizing the
48 rebuilding plan for the stock.

1
2 This was what the ABCs and the OFLs have been over the time
3 period, and the adjusted current ABC remains at 305,000 pounds.
4 The index, combined index, this is what it looks like over the
5 preceding years, and the low point that was established as the
6 reference point is 2009.

7
8 If you go to the next slide, what you see there is the red dot
9 is the reference point, the 2009, and the recent average is the
10 horizontal red line on the right, and, basically, if you compare
11 the two of them, that becomes an I ratio of about 1.5, and, if
12 you reference that to the 305,000, and adjust that by 1.5, the
13 answer is 456,900 pounds whole weight, and so, in essence, what
14 you're saying is, with this interim analysis, is that, based
15 upon the index, the conclusion is that you can adjust the
16 catches up by 1.5 and adjust things accordingly based on that,
17 and so that was the basis of the interim analysis.

18
19 It is fairly simple, but there's a lot of evaluation that goes
20 on, in terms of trying to establish the level of uncertainty for
21 which this will work and the probabilities of getting erroneous
22 sorts of answers.

23
24 This, again, puts it into the same context, in terms of the I
25 ratio of 305,000 pounds and the adjustment and so on and how
26 that gets allocated between the commercial and recreational.

27
28 The SSC was interested in the process, and there is concern that
29 it is a limited sort of situation, and, in this particular case,
30 the analytical assessment was done quite some time ago, and so
31 you are adjusting it, and, in some sense, this is like a data-
32 poor stock. You're making these sorts of adjustments, and the
33 SSC agreed with the approach, and they felt that it was useful,
34 in terms of adjusting the ABC accordingly.

35
36 With that notion, the SSC approved the motion that is listed
37 there, which basically says that the SSC recommends that the ABC
38 be increased to the 456,900 pounds whole weight, based on the
39 MRIP-CHTS, but we hedged our bets a little by saying that let's
40 only do this for 2021 to 2023, and, if we're still in the same
41 situation in 2024, then you're going to have to do another
42 interim analysis, and so, obviously, a more comprehensive
43 analysis would be preferred, but, at a minimum, what this motion
44 is saying is that, in 2024, revisit it with an interim analysis.
45 That was the basis of our results, and I believe that's the last
46 slide. That concludes my presentation.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Powers. Are there

1 any questions? Kevin.

2
3 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Dr. Powers, for
4 the presentation. Unfortunately, there was some feedback on the
5 phone when you talked about the buffer for uncertainty, and
6 could you go back over that and describe the uncertainty, as it
7 relates to the interim analysis?

8
9 **DR. POWERS:** Well, I was speaking generically about interim
10 analyses, and, basically, when the ratio goes up, then you would
11 increase the ABC, and, if it goes down, you would decrease the
12 ABC. How much you increase and how little you decrease it is
13 governed by a parameter in the particular model, and so it isn't
14 a one-to-one that it goes up completely, and so there is quite a
15 bit of analysis that's being done about management strategy
16 evaluation, and, in fact, the data-poor workshop looked at a
17 number of these sorts of methods.

18
19 What we're basically saying is that level of uncertainty has to
20 be incorporated into how much you go up and how much you go
21 down. In this particular case, I think the index was used
22 pretty much straightforwardly, and so that is a limitation. The
23 analyst also mentioned that, if they were continuing to look, in
24 general, about interim analysis, how big those buffers ought to
25 be.

26
27 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. I was just curious, because I don't know
28 if this is the metric that you used or not for uncertainty, but,
29 if that's the confidence interval that's around the estimate,
30 that dashed line on the graph, it seems like they've gotten much
31 tighter here in recent years, and so thank you for the
32 clarification.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Next, I have Susan Boggs.

35
36 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Powers, you mentioned,
37 at the very end of your presentation, an interim analysis in
38 2024, but gray triggerfish is on a research track for 2023 to
39 2024, and so, when they complete the research track, are you
40 suggesting that they immediately do another interim analysis?

41
42 **DR. POWERS:** No, and, basically, this is a -- The motion set
43 some limits. At the time, we weren't sure whether in fact there
44 would be a research track on this, and so all that we're saying
45 is we're only making recommendations about this ABC for 2021,
46 2022, and 2023, and, come 2024, if you don't have anything
47 better, the least you need to do is an interim analysis.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Dr. Powers. Leann.
2
3 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you. Dr. Powers, we received a generic
4 presentation on how this would work, I don't know, several
5 meetings ago, and I didn't pull the presentation back up, but I
6 thought I remember there being some sort of beta character, or
7 function, in this whole process, and that beta -- In layman's
8 terms, what I remember is it would dictate how closely you
9 follow the index, how closely you want your advice to follow
10 that index, both ups and downs, and I didn't get a chance to
11 read everything that was on the briefing book on this, but did
12 you all decide to go a different route, where you don't have to
13 try and determine what that beta should be, but rather you just
14 take more like an average of the more recent years of that index
15 and go with that, create the ratio from that?
16
17 **DR. POWERS:** First off, the reference to beta sometimes is called
18 a smoothing parameter, and it's also what I was referring to in
19 terms of how much uncertainty you deal with it, and, in this
20 particular case, the center's analyst tried to evaluate that,
21 but, given the circumstances of this particular -- And the fact
22 that we have an analytical assessment that's out of date, they
23 chose to sort of downplay that data factor, and it was
24 evaluated, but, in terms of the final recommendation, it was
25 more or less downweighted.
26
27 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** A follow-up, Leann?
28
29 **MS. BOSARGE:** No, ma'am. I'm good. That was all.
30
31 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. All right. Dr. Mickle.
32
33 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have two questions, and
34 the first one is for Joe. I appreciate the presentation, and I
35 was not able to listen in on this meeting, and I really just
36 would ask if the recruitment uncertainty was discussed in SEDAR
37 43, or was it brought up at all? I know this is an interim, and
38 we're just kind of running through the existing models with new
39 data, but was there any discussion there on the recruitment
40 uncertainties that have been discussed in the past, at this SSC
41 meeting, when talking about this specific agenda item?
42
43 **DR. POWERS:** My recollection of it was no, that there wasn't a
44 lot of emphasis, and I think it was mentioned, and, for those of
45 us that have been around for a while, we recognized that that
46 was an issue before, but I think the focus, using this
47 particular interim analysis, was to be able to have some
48 structure that basically used the existing analysis, but

1 recognizing the general perception that things are getting
2 better and to be able to have a scientific basis to adjust the
3 quota, and that's essentially what the interim analysis is
4 doing. Thank you.

5

6 **DR. MICKLE:** Martha, is it okay if I ask my second one?

7

8 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure.

9

10 **DR. MICKLE:** Thank you. My next one is I think for Shannon
11 Calay, and I think Clay is on another call, I saw in the chat
12 box, and this is along the same subject matter, but it
13 approaches the recruitment uncertainties in the previous SEDAR
14 43, and I think there is a good effort on NMFS to fund some
15 research to look at some sargassum and relationships with
16 spatial coverage of looking at if there is some corollary
17 metrics to look at there, and I think there was a grant that
18 Frank Hernandez was a part of, and I think -- I'm not 100
19 percent sure, but I think they were presented -- The results of
20 that study were presented at the Gulf States Marine Fisheries
21 Committee meeting in the spring of 2019, and I may be mistaken,
22 but I know the next stock assessment on gray triggerfish is
23 intended to be a research track. Are any of these data
24 potentially going to be incorporated into that research track,
25 and I guess my question is directed towards the Science Center.

26

27 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Dr. Calay, are you on the line?

28

29 **MR. RINDONE:** I might be able to help here.

30

31 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Sure.

32

33 **MR. RINDONE:** Given that the gray triggerfish research track is
34 now planned for I think 2024, with some of the schedule
35 adjustments that have happened recently, what's going to be
36 included in that assessment, to date, hasn't even been
37 determined yet, and so, since it's a research track though,
38 anything and everything that's available can certainly be
39 considered, and so there's not a limitation, as of yet.

40

41 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks. I see now that Dr. Calay is
42 unmuted. Is there anything that you want to add to that? Okay.
43 We'll circle back around to her in a minute, and we also have
44 Susan's hand up.

45

46 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a question, and,
47 Tom, I'm sorry. We just got through talking about red grouper
48 and FES, and we're looking at red snapper in FES, but you're

1 saying here that you're not calibrating to FES for triggerfish,
2 and so it concerns me that we're using different numbers to move
3 forward with any species of fish, and why aren't we being
4 consistent? Thank you.

5

6 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Ryan, do you want to address that?

7

8 **MR. RINDONE:** Sure. You guys might remember that we had the
9 SEDAR 62 assessment that was underway that was also looking at
10 gray triggerfish, and that assessment had to be aborted, due to
11 some issues that arose with the data, and they were not able to
12 be reconciled in the time that we had to work on the assessment.

13

14 Because of that -- That assessment was the one that was going to
15 move gray triggerfish from the Coastal Household Telephone
16 Survey to the Fishing Effort Survey, and, because that
17 assessment was stopped, that left us back with catch limits that
18 are still in the data currency of the Coastal Household
19 Telephone Survey, and so the interim analysis that we're talking
20 about now used the same data currency, because we weren't using
21 this interim analysis to change the OFL.

22

23 This is designed to examine the ABC, when compared to the
24 representative index of abundance, and so that's why we're still
25 in that data currency for this species. When we do complete the
26 research track assessment in the future for gray triggerfish, it
27 will then be followed by an operational assessment, and, at that
28 time, catch advice will be presented to the SSC, and the SSC's
29 recommendations will likely be considerate of the MRIP-FES data
30 currency.

31

32 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Susan, does that answer your question?

33

34 **MS. BOGGS:** Yes, and it just concerns me that we're going to
35 have all these different -- We're making decisions in different
36 -- I don't know what you want to call it, currency or numbers or
37 whatever, but it does answer it, and I do recall all of that.
38 Thank you, Ryan, and that answers the question.

39

40 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Dr. Powers, is your hand up?

41

42 **DR. POWERS:** No, it isn't. Thank you.

43

44 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Leann, is your hand up?

45

46 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, ma'am. I was just going to say that, as we
47 get closer to the gray triggerfish assessment, that, if GRFS
48 collects gray trigger data, which, Martha, you could answer

1 that, then I would hope that GRFS would be analyzed, because I'm
2 sure -- I am guessing that there's a lot of gray trigger private
3 rec landings that are in Florida, and I would hope that that
4 data stream would at least be analyzed, the same way we're going
5 to do it for gag, to try to figure out the best path forward for
6 inputting data into the stock assessment.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Yes, it sure does, and that would be my hope as
9 well, when we get to that point. I agree with you there. Okay.
10 I am looking to see if there's any more hands here, and I am not
11 seeing any right now, but we do have a new ABC recommendation
12 from our SSC in this interim stock assessment in front of us,
13 and so what would the committee like to do with this
14 information? It might be appropriate to -- I think we could
15 start a framework. Dale.

16
17 **MR. DIAZ:** That's what I was going to ask you or Dr. Simmons. I
18 mean, is it appropriate at this point to direct staff to start a
19 document to be able to utilize this new information in the
20 interim analysis?

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I think so, but I will let Ryan or Carrie
23 weigh-in here.

24
25 **MR. RINDONE:** We have the vermilion snapper framework action
26 that is underway right now that is also looking at an increase
27 in that species' catch limits, and this would be appropriate to
28 fold into that action, since it's essentially doing the same
29 thing for another species, and we're prepared to do that for you
30 guys.

31
32 Also, I wanted to mention that we do have a recommendation from
33 the Reef Fish AP on this topic that you might consider as a
34 function of whatever motion you would be fixing to make to this
35 effect, and so, if you want to hear that, I can provide that.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure. Let's hear it.

38
39 **MR. RINDONE:** All right. The Reef Fish AP, meeting via webinar,
40 talked about the interim analysis, and they were pleased to see
41 that gray triggerfish was improving and thought it appropriate
42 to follow the management approach currently in use by the
43 council, which sets the total ACL equal to the ABC.

44
45 The AP recommended continuing to use the sector ACTs in the same
46 manner in which they are currently used, and so they passed the
47 following motion to go with the SSC recommendation and set the
48 ACL equal to the ABC, at 456,900 pounds whole weight, and that

1 motion carried unanimously.
2
3 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Ryan.
4
5 **MR. RINDONE:** I believe Captain Walker is still milling about
6 back there somewhere.
7
8 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Carrie, it looks like your hand is up.
9
10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Ryan
11 covered what I was going to go over. Thank you.
12
13 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Leann.
14
15 **MS. BOSARGE:** As far as the type of document that we put it in,
16 I thought that, in our discussions about these interim
17 assessments that we talked about yesterday, or earlier today,
18 that we would try and get a framework, or an abbreviated
19 framework, document that we could almost use as a template, so
20 that, when we implement these interim catch recommendations, and
21 that would make it a little easier going forward, if we had that
22 template, where we could somewhat plug and play, but, if you
23 roll it into the vermilion document, which I don't care which
24 way you want to do it, it just didn't seem like you would end up
25 with your template, doing it that way.
26
27 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. One thing I guess we could do is,
28 if we wanted to get something started here, make a motion to do
29 that, and then we could give staff some discretion to either add
30 it to the vermilion document or start up that template.
31
32 **MR. RINDONE:** I think Dr. Simmons wants to weigh-in here.
33
34 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Please do.
35
36 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I think the
37 suggestion that we were trying to bring up in the presentation
38 yesterday is just to look at this possibly in the Reef Fish FMP,
39 in changing our framework there, and perhaps even in the Coastal
40 Migratory Pelagics Framework, and I think that could take some
41 time, and we're going to need to work that out and see the best
42 way forward with that, and so staff was thinking that would be
43 like a separate action.
44
45 For this triggerfish increase, I think staff was thinking the
46 council may want to move fairly quickly on this, and so we would
47 perhaps put it in with the vermilion snapper framework action,
48 and try to simplify it, as soon as possible.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I would agree with that. That seems a lot more
3 straightforward. Leann, is your hand still up?
4
5 **MS. BOSARGE:** No, ma'am. I'm just for whatever gets it done
6 faster, and I know we're going to need to implement this
7 quickly, and I don't remember what's in that vermilion document
8 that we might end up tripping over and it taking longer, but I
9 will go with whatever staff thinks.
10
11 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Kevin.
12
13 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and that addressed my comment, or concern, with
14 folding in the gray triggerfish increase in with vermilion, is
15 the timing of it is -- There's a little bit of a need, I guess,
16 with gray triggerfish and the timing of the season for next
17 year, and I wouldn't want it to be slowed down, necessarily, if
18 you were to include it with vermilion, but, if it's going at the
19 same pace, or if it can be combined and it wouldn't slow that
20 down, that would be fine with me.
21
22 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. I think everybody's take-home is we want
23 a document, and we want it fast, however that comes. If
24 vermilion is the way, then that's fine, but it would be helpful,
25 I think, to get a motion on the board to that effect, if someone
26 is willing to go there.
27
28 **MR. DIAZ:** I just sent a motion into Meetings, if they want to
29 pull it up.
30
31 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Excellent.
32
33 **MR. DIAZ:** If I can, Martha, I was just trying to put something
34 together that was in line with what we were just talking about,
35 and, definitely, if anybody wants to alter that language, or
36 make some recommendations to change it, I would be amenable to
37 that.
38
39 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I am going to read this out loud, and then
40 we'll see if we can get a second and if there's any discussion.
41 **The motion is to direct staff to combine gray triggerfish with**
42 **the vermilion snapper framework action for the purpose of**
43 **adjusting catch levels and utilize the information from the**
44 **interim analysis. Is there a second to this motion?**
45
46 **DR. SHIPP:** I will second it.
47
48 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. It's seconded by Dr. Shipp. Any

1 discussion? I think this is more or less where we're wanting to
2 go. I am not seeing any hands. **Is there any opposition to this**
3 **motion?**

4

5 **MS. BOGGS:** I oppose.

6

7 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. **I've got one opposed. Otherwise,**
8 **the motion passes.** Okay. We're through gray triggerfish, and I
9 think was all of the regular agenda items for Reef Fish that we
10 were going to cover, based on our adjusted hurricane schedule.
11 The only other thing we have is we do have an item of Other
12 Business that Kevin brought up yesterday regarding dead discards
13 of red snapper, and I assume we can kind of cover that pretty
14 quickly, Kevin?

15

16 **MR. ANSON:** I think so.

17

18 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Let's go ahead and do that, and then we
19 can move to the Mackerel Committee. Go ahead.

20

21

OTHER BUSINESS

22

23 **MR. ANSON:** I think I mentioned this at the last meeting, but,
24 through the participation in the calibration workshop, and it
25 realized that there might be an issue relative to dead discards
26 in the recreational fishery, as it pertains to monitoring the
27 landings, and so I guess that's what I would like to hear some
28 more information from the Science Center, is a description of
29 landings and catch and how dead discards move through the
30 assessment process and then back out to catch advice and how the
31 Regional Office then interprets what is to be recorded, as far
32 as monitoring landings.

33

34 I can understand where dead discards are needed for the
35 assessment, and that those are calculated and run through the
36 assessment when each assessment is done, but I guess I just need
37 a little bit of understanding as to what the definition of
38 "landings" are then, for the purpose of monitoring landings
39 during the season, because it's my understanding, right now,
40 that the recreational fishery -- The Service adds all of those
41 dead discards where the anglers respond that they threw back the
42 red snapper dead, although it was discarded at-sea, and those
43 get added up and tracked against the quota, but I don't think
44 there's a similar question, or similar data, that's collected
45 for the commercial fishery, where they report their dead
46 discards and then those get imputed, or a poundage gets
47 associated with those dead discards and tracked against their
48 ACL.

1
2 That's what I am trying to -- I would just like, maybe at the
3 next meeting, just for someone from the Science Center to define
4 that and describe it a little bit better, and, again, I looked
5 at the accumulative landings system, the ALS system, and the
6 language there describes the data that is used in the
7 assessment, and they refer to catch for recreational landings,
8 and then, later in the summary paragraph of the data, they
9 describe landings for recreational data, and so that's all. I
10 just wanted to see where that stands.

11
12 Then, if in fact there is some discrepancies, or some
13 differences, as to how that's tracked in-season, relative to the
14 recreational and commercial sectors, maybe they can add some
15 rationale as to why one sector has the dead discards tracked in-
16 season, to monitor against quotas, and then in the other they
17 don't, and it might be just because the data is available in the
18 recreational sector, but I would like just some further
19 information from the Science Center, and maybe they can do that
20 for the next meeting. Thank you.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Kevin. I'm going to go to Dr. Calay,
23 and she's got her hand up.

24
25 **DR. SHANNON CALAY:** We would be happy to prepare a short
26 response in time for the next council meeting. I think that's
27 the quick answer.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I love it. It's so great.

30
31 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. With that, I think that wraps up
34 all of our Other Business. The other items that we didn't get
35 to I guess will be on ice for a future meeting, and I will pass
36 it back to Dr. Frazer.

37
38 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 27, 2020.)

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