

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Battle House Renaissance Mobile, Alabama

June 6-7, 2023

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 11 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 12 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
- 13 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 14 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
- 15 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
- 16 Phil Dyskow.....Florida
- 17 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 18 Bob Gill.....Florida
- 19 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- 20 Chris Schieble (designee for Patrick Banks).....Louisiana
- 21 Bob Shipp.....Alabama
- 22 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 23 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- 24 Greg Stunz.....Texas
- 25 C.J. Sweetman.....Florida
- 26 Troy Williamson.....Texas

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- 29 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC

STAFF

- 32 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 33 Matt Freeman.....Economist
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- 35 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
- 36 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 37 Mary Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 38 Natasha Mendez-Ferrer.....Fishery Biologist
- 39 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
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- 41 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
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1 Peter Hood.....NMFS
2 John Mareska.....GMFMC SSC
3 Clay Porch.....SEFSC
4 Jessica Stephen.....NMFS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1
2
3 Table of Contents.....3
4
5 Table of Motions.....5
6
7 Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes and Action Guide and
8 Next Steps.....6
9
10 IFQ Objectives.....6
11
12 Review of State Survey Private Angling Landings and Discards for
13 Red Snapper.....67
14 Florida Presentation.....68
15 Alabama Presentation.....70
16 Mississippi Presentation.....72
17 Louisiana Presentation.....73
18 Texas Presentation.....76
19
20 Final Action: Recalibration of Red Snapper Recreational Catch
21 Limits and Modification of Gray Snapper Catch Limits.....77
22 Public Comments Received.....77
23 Document.....78
24 Review of Codified Text.....80
25
26 Draft Framework Action: Modifications to Recreational and
27 Commercial Greater Amberjack Management Measures.....81
28
29 SSC Summary Report from the May 2023 Meeting.....102
30
31 Draft Snapper Grouper 44/Reef Fish Amendment 55: Catch Level
32 Adjustments and Allocations for Southeast U.S. Yellowtail
33 Snapper.....114
34
35 Final Action: Draft Amendment 56: Modifications to the Gag
36 Grouper Catch Limits, Sector Allocations, and Fishing Seasons....127
37 Update: Gag Grouper Interim Rule.....127
38 Public Hearing Summary and Public Comments Received.....127
39 Presentation.....133
40 Review of Codified Text.....144
41
42 Draft Snapper Grouper 44/Reef Fish Amendment 55: Catch Level
43 Adjustments and Allocations for Southeast U.S. Yellowtail
44 Snapper (Continued).....146
45
46 Other Business.....147

1	
2	<u>Adjournment.....149</u>
3	

TABLE OF MOTIONS

PAGE 81: Motion to recommend the council approve Framework Action-Recalibration of Red Snapper Recreational Catch Limits and Modification of Gray Snapper Catch Limits and forward it to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation, and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate. The motion carried on page 81.

PAGE 88: Motion in Action 1 to move Alternatives 2 and 4 to Considered but Rejected. The motion carried on page 89.

PAGE 93: Motion in Action 1 to make Alternative 3 the preferred. The motion carried on page 94.

PAGE 95: Motion in Action 1 to move Alternative 5b to Considered but Rejected. The motion carried on page 95.

PAGE 108: Motion to direct staff to modify the amendment for scamp and yellowmouth grouper OFLs, ABCs, and ACLs to include black grouper and yellowfin grouper SSC catch recommendations. In the amendment consideration should be given also to implications to the IFQ fishery involving the shallow water grouper complex. The motion carried on page 110.

PAGE 110: Motion to consider removal of wenchman from the Reef Fish FMP, and to set ACLs and AMs for the remaining species in the mid- water snapper complex (blackfin snapper, queen snapper, and silk snapper). The motion carried on page 113.

PAGE 141: Motion to recommend the council approve Draft Amendment 56: Modifications to the Gag Grouper Catch Limits, Sector Allocations, and Fishing Seasons and forward it to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate. The motion carried on page 144.

- - -

1 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at The Battle House Renaissance in
3 Mobile, Alabama on Tuesday morning, June 6, 2023, and was called
4 to order by Chairman Tom Frazer.

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

10 **CHAIRMAN TOM FRAZER:** I will call together, convene, the Reef
11 Fish Committee as a committee-of-the-whole, and so the first
12 item on the agenda is the Adoption of the Agenda, and that will
13 be Tab B, Number 1 in your briefing materials, and so is there
14 any modifications or changes, in any way, to the agenda, as
15 written? I am not seeing any suggested changes, and so is there
16 any opposition to adopting the agenda as written? I am not
17 seeing any, and so we'll consider the agenda adopted.

18
19 The second order of business is the Approval of the April 2023
20 Minutes, and that would be Tab B, Number 2 in your briefing
21 materials. Are there any edits or modifications to those
22 minutes? I am not seeing any, and is there any opposition to
23 approving the April 2023 minutes as written? I am not seeing
24 any opposition, and so we'll consider the April 2023 minutes
25 approved.

26
27 The next on the agenda is the Action Guide and Next Steps, and,
28 as Dr. Stunz indicated, we're going to devote this entire
29 morning to a discussion of IFQ things, and so, Mr. Rindone,
30 maybe you can go through the first item on the action guide, or
31 is that Assane? Okay. Assane, go ahead.

32
33 **IFQ OBJECTIVES**
34

35 **DR. ASSANE DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good morning. For
36 this item, we have a review of IFQ objectives, and Dr. Stephen,
37 from SERO, will review the existing goals and objectives of the
38 red snapper and grouper-tilefish IFQ programs and present a list
39 of suggested goals and objectives, to assist the council with
40 revising the program's goals and objectives.

41
42 The committee should discuss the goals and objectives presented,
43 ask questions, suggest revisions, and propose additional goals,
44 as needed. The committee should consider how we envision the
45 future of the IFQ programs and provide explicit recommendations
46 relative to the goals and objectives, to maintain, revise, or
47 introduce, and, finally, the committee could consider
48 prioritizing the goals and objectives identified during this

1 discussion, and it should recommend next steps, as warranted, to
2 the council. Thank you.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Diagne. All right,
5 and so that will lead us to a presentation by Dr. Stephen, and
6 so, Jessica, if you're ready. Mr. Strelcheck.

7
8 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** I just wanted to say a few words before
9 Jessica jumped into the presentation. If you recall, at the
10 last council meeting, we were, I think, struggling to kind of
11 find our footing with regard to development of goals and
12 objectives, and it was proposed that council staff and Southeast
13 Regional Office staff take a first stab at these goals and
14 objectives, and so I want to I guess emphasize that these are
15 draft, capital letters draft, right, and these are not NMFS'
16 goals and objectives, and these aren't the Gulf Council staff's
17 goals and objectives, and these are going to be our goals and
18 objectives.

19
20 Jessica is prepared to talk about kind of the current program,
21 the accomplishments of that program, based on reviews we've
22 conducted, and then get into a discussion of these proposed
23 goals and objectives. My recommendation is to let her go
24 through the entire presentation, so that everyone can kind of
25 see, in entirety, all the goals and objectives that have been
26 suggested, or drafted, and then we have discussion around maybe
27 each one individually and answer questions, obviously, at that
28 point.

29
30 We also have left it open-ended, right, and so did we miss
31 anything, and would you tweak anything, would you change
32 anything, and those are the types of questions that, obviously,
33 we are interested in hearing, and getting feedback, so that
34 these can be refined.

35
36 There's a comprehensive list of five or six goals and
37 objectives, right, and it doesn't mean that we have to select
38 all of these. We can select some of these, or we can select
39 none of them, and have, you know, new goals and objectives that
40 are defined by this group, but the emphasis here is that these
41 are draft, and we have a lot of say, obviously, in what these
42 become between now and the end of the committee discussion, and
43 so, with that, I will turn it over to Jessica Stephen.

44
45 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** Thank you, Andy. My apologies for not
46 being there in-person, and I had intended to be at the council
47 meeting, but, unfortunately, I'm still recouping from a COVID
48 infection that did make me unable to travel.

1
2 What led us to where we are today? I kind of wanted to go over
3 a little history of where we're at. In the January council
4 meeting, there was a directive to, no later than the June 2023
5 meeting, conduct a review of the different IFQ program goals and
6 objectives and recommend changes, and, to that extent, we had
7 provided some themes that we were hearing throughout the council
8 meetings, meetings with shareholders, and reviews. I am not
9 going to go over those, as we had gone over those directly in
10 January.

11
12 Then, in the April council meeting, we were further directed to
13 draft some objectives and goals to get reaction from the
14 council, and input from the council, about where these goals
15 could take us, and, in particular, we were told to look at
16 participation, equity in access, and how to balance those goals
17 with reducing capacity. I will take a pause here and mention
18 that equity, as defined by NOAA Fisheries, is the consistent and
19 systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all
20 individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved
21 communities that have been denied such treatment.

22
23 Underserved communities, in NOAA's equity and environmental
24 justice strategy, refers specifically to communities that have
25 been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in
26 different aspects of economic, social, or civic life.
27 Typically, when you hear about underserved communities, they are
28 referring to geographic communities or certain populations that
29 share a particular characteristic or history or some type of
30 identify.

31
32 When we look into fisheries and underserved communities, some of
33 the groups that have been identified as underserved are fishing
34 communities that have subsistence fishery participants, and
35 they're dependent, fishing vessel crews, as well as the fish
36 processors and distribution workers. I do encourage you, if you
37 want to understand more about equity from NOAA's point of view,
38 to look at NOAA's equity and environmental justice strategy that
39 is linked here in this presentation.

40
41 When we get into what goals and objectives are, I want to remind
42 the council of what Magnuson's overall goals and objectives are
43 for catch share programs, and so they have three overarching
44 goals. One is, if a catch share program is established in a
45 fishery that is either overfished or subject to a rebuilding
46 plan, that the catch share program must assist in its
47 rebuilding.

48

1 If a catch share program is established in a fishery that is
2 determined to have overcapacity, the program must contribute to
3 reducing overcapacity. In addition, overarching catch share
4 program goals are to promote fishing safety, fishery
5 conservation and management, as well as social and economic
6 benefits.

7
8 What I am showing you here on this slide are the original
9 program goals, and I want to remind you that these goals were
10 created over a decade ago, and so sixteen years ago for red
11 snapper and thirteen for grouper-tilefish, and the original
12 goals were based on those overarching catch share goals that we
13 just listed as well as very specific fishery needs within each
14 program.

15
16 These programs are analyzed annually by the Regional Office each
17 year, and a report is distributed, as well as each program has
18 undergone a thorough review, two thorough reviews for each one
19 of them, each one individually and then a joint review together,
20 since these fisheries do tend to overlap. In general, the goals
21 did determine that the programs were largely successful in
22 meeting both the program goals and the review criteria.

23
24 This is, again, the original program goals for both red snapper
25 and grouper-tilefish, and we've gone over these at past council
26 meetings, and so I just want to point out that there are two
27 areas where we're still somewhat moderately successful, and
28 probably need further work, and that is in reducing overcapacity
29 and ensuring that we're balancing the social, economic, and
30 biological benefits.

31
32 When we look at the different catch share review criteria, or
33 outcomes, that we're looking at, we also were largely successful
34 within this program, although there is still some room for
35 improvement. The areas, in particular, that were identified as
36 needing more improvement were how we look at participation
37 within the program and how we're looking at new entrants, or
38 replacement fishermen, within the programs.

39
40 As we think about goals and objectives, I want to make clear
41 that goals are typically considered long-term visions or
42 outcomes, and so they are things that we want to get to, and
43 they're the sort of direction you want to take, and you could
44 have multiple different objectives within your goal. Goals
45 should always be attainable, and they might be ambitious though,
46 and so that means it might take a few years for you to get
47 there.

48

1 When we look at the objectives that are underneath a goal, we
2 typically want objectives to be specific, short-term tasks that
3 are going to help you achieve an overall goal. It's really
4 helpful if your objectives are what we consider SMART, and that
5 means they're specific, they're measurable, achievable, and they
6 can have results, and they're done in a timely manner.

7
8 What a group of us did is we looked over discussions that were
9 at council meetings, discussions with fishermen, whether through
10 the focus groups, through customer support, or other outreach,
11 and we were trying to understand what we were hearing and how to
12 take what we've heard and create some draft goals, in order to
13 move the programs forward.

14
15 These are the draft goals that we determined could be helpful to
16 consider, and I will have a slide for each one of them, and the
17 first one would be to maintain the flexible fishing options and
18 economic stability within the IFQ program, and those were both
19 two of the original goals within the program that we felt could
20 be considered to continue on, moving forward.

21
22 Another one would be to increase the market transparency, and
23 this is eliminating information asymmetries, which is where one
24 person understands more about the market than another person, as
25 well as improving technical efficiency, and the goal of this is
26 to reduce the cost per unit harvest for the participants within
27 the program. Reducing IFQ discards and then improving
28 opportunities for participants to enter the program.

29
30 This is the first goal, and I'm going to go a little bit more
31 in-depth as we talk about it, and this, again, was the idea to
32 maintain the flexible fishing options, as well as economic
33 stability, within the IFQ program. The current catch share
34 programs offer a variety of flexible fishing options, from year-
35 round fishing to the individual flexibility measures and 10
36 percent overages. We have also seen that the program has become
37 fairly economically stable within the program.

38
39 Draft objectives that could go with this goal could be that
40 economic stability is supported through the year-round fishing,
41 which, in that case, avoids these different fluctuations in ex-
42 vessel prices that could be caused by market gluts, and so,
43 prior to the IFQ programs, we saw a lot of market gluts,
44 particularly in red snapper, when the season was open for those
45 ten days, and what happens with an IFQ program is that you make
46 it more stable throughout the year, because year-round fishing
47 is allowed.

1 Another one is to consider the flexibility in the fishing
2 measures. Make sure that they're periodically evaluated, to
3 ensure that, whatever those current flexibility measures are,
4 they're supporting catch and sustainability concerns that are
5 being addressed at that point in time.

6
7 This slide is about increasing the IFQ market transparency, and
8 one of the things we have definitely heard from fishermen is how
9 do I know what the price is to buy shares or allocation, and how
10 do I know what's a good value and what isn't, and so, under
11 these objectives, we consider the idea of creating a NOAA-
12 administered marketplace, where different participants could put
13 in requests to either buy or sell shares, as well as sort of
14 reducing that information asymmetry that I talked about before,
15 through the timely release of average share allocation and ex-
16 vessel prices. By doing so, everyone participating in the
17 program has equal access to the same information.

18
19 For Draft Goal 3, this was to improve the technical efficiency,
20 or, in other words, reduce the cost per unit of harvest for the
21 participants. What we would like to do is develop some non-
22 market-driven measures, in order to reduce overcapacity, and as
23 well as examine what's occurring with our market concentrations,
24 to determine if there needs to be modifications to share caps or
25 we need to modify the existing grouper-tilefish allocation caps
26 or add a red snapper allocation cap.

27
28 This one I'm sure we've talked about a lot, reducing IFQ
29 discards, and so, when we're thinking about the IFQ discards
30 within the program, we need to think about both those
31 participants in the program and those who are not in the program
32 that are discarding IFQ species. Some draft objectives would be
33 to improve the collection of our discard information from the
34 IFQ vessels, and we might also want to consider improving that
35 discard information from non-IFQ vessels.

36
37 The potential to create a type of allocation bank that might
38 further reduce both the bycatch and discard of IFQ species, and
39 then to evaluate if there are any additional or new flexibility
40 measures that could be put in place that would help with
41 reducing discards, and I just want to point out that, when we
42 originally put in the red grouper and gag multiuse, some of the
43 aspects of that flexibility measure was to reduce discards
44 between those two species.

45
46 Draft Goal 5 is ways to improve opportunities for participants
47 to enter into the program, and so this addresses the concept of
48 replacement fishermen, or new fishermen, entering the program.

1
2 Some of the different ideas, or draft objectives, that we could
3 consider to achieve this goal would be to implement an adaptive
4 catch share model that redistributes shares to accounts that are
5 harvested IFQ species. At the last council meeting, Andrew
6 Ropicki had shown some examples of how to do a catch share
7 program, and we also had examples from Amendments 41 and 42, in
8 the for-hire industry, that did not go forward.

9
10 There are also draft objectives to think about limiting the
11 share ownership, and so as in what is needed to both maintain
12 the shares held in an account as well as obtain new shares, and
13 so that these share ownerships are related to accounts that are
14 actually harvesting IFQ species, and that goes back to the
15 concept of permit requirements and how to use those permit
16 requirements effectively to improve opportunities.

17
18 A third objective would be to identify the specific barriers
19 that are inhibiting, or limiting, participation, and this could
20 be done by surveying participants and those that want to enter
21 the fishery, that have been unable to enter the fishery, and a
22 third objective for this could be creating an allocation bank
23 that is centered, instead of on discards, centered on reducing
24 those barriers to obtaining those fishing privileges. Then the
25 last objective here is that NMFS has held shares since Amendment
26 36A, and we would probably need to distribute these shares, and
27 it would be good to think about distributing them as a way to
28 improve opportunities for participants to enter the program.

29
30 I know that I went over these all a little quickly, but what you
31 may have captured, as I was going over them, is that these
32 different goals and objectives really overlap each other, and I
33 created a Venn diagram to show how much they overlap each other
34 and where we're moving forward to.

35
36 By improving opportunities, you might also be addressing
37 reducing discards or bycatch or market transparency. I mean,
38 more information about the market should actually help to
39 improve opportunities, as well as help to keep the program
40 flexible and the market stable. Likewise, the technical
41 efficiency that reducing the cost per harvest could also help in
42 conjunction with reducing discards and maintaining that flexible
43 fishing environment.

44
45 I want to stop the presentation at this point, and we'll open it
46 up for discussion now, and I would like to hear if the council
47 agrees or disagrees with any of the presented goals and
48 objectives, and are there any suggested changes, or are there

1 any additional goals and objectives that you want to discuss?

2
3 I will say that the rest of this presentation is just additional
4 information, if questions come up, that we might have some
5 slides to depict what's going on in the IFQ program more
6 succinctly, and so I'm happy to take any questions.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, and so we'll start off
9 if anybody has a question, a clarifying question, perhaps, for
10 Jessica on the presentation, and we'll start there, before we
11 get into an actual discussion of whether these are the
12 appropriate goals, whether we want to remove some of them, or
13 add, and so technical questions, or questions related to
14 clarity, for Jessica? Mr. Anson.

15
16 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen, for the presentation.
17 Just if you could remind me, and, for the purposes of the IFQ
18 programs, what is the definition of "overcapacity"?

19
20 **DR. STEPHEN:** Sure, and so "overcapacity" is defined in
21 Magnuson, and let me see if I have a slide on that, so I can get
22 it completely right. I apologize, and I don't have a slide for
23 that, but we did have numerous peer-reviewed journal articles
24 and reviews that did look at overcapacity within the program and
25 did determine that we're still at overcapacity.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Diagne.

28
29 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you. "Overcapacity", we can define it as the
30 difference been an optimal level of output, and, for example,
31 you know, quota, through the IFQ, and the potential output that
32 the fleet could catch, given current conditions, meaning stock
33 conditions, you know, technology, et cetera, and so it is that
34 gap that is what overcapacity is. As Dr. Stephen mentioned, we
35 have several studies in that direction, and the last one, you
36 recall, was conducted for the joint review of the red snapper
37 and the grouper-tilefish IFQ.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Any more questions for
40 Dr. Stephen? J.D.

41
42 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. On Slide 7, the third
43 line, it says, "share and allocation transferability and caps is
44 largely successful", and I guess my question is I didn't think
45 there were any caps at this point, and so I'm not sure if caps
46 should be in there.

47
48 **DR. STEPHEN:** Both programs do have share caps for each of the

1 different share categories within them. In the grouper-
2 tilefish, there is an allocation cap that is a point in time
3 that cannot exceed the amount of allocation equal to the sum of
4 all the share caps.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Stephen. Are there any
7 more questions from the council with regard to the presentation
8 itself? Mr. Diaz.

9
10 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** I did want to commend Dr. Stephen and the rest
11 of the staff that worked on this. I thought it was well thought
12 out, and, whenever I went through it, it made me think a lot
13 about the program, and so I think they laid it out good for us,
14 and they kind of teed us up to make some progress, and so I just
15 wanted to thank them for all their efforts there. That's all
16 for now.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dale. Mr. Williamson.

19
20 **MR. TROY WILLIAMSON:** Again, on Slide 7, regarding new entrants,
21 it says there that it has been limited success, and how is that
22 measured?

23
24 **DR. STEPHEN:** So, when we're looking at the new entrants and how
25 they fit in there, what we're looking at, for the most part, is
26 sort of qualitative. We have definitely heard that there is
27 barriers, due to the prices, for new entrants to come in, and we
28 have seen that people, when they join the program, don't
29 understand how to obtain shares or allocation, and that, to me,
30 is a large barrier for moving into it.

31
32 Within the red snapper program, we have seen, definitively, more
33 entrance occur within the program, and so growth in entrants
34 over time, but, just because you're involved in the program, it
35 does not mean that each of the entrants have the equal
36 opportunities available within the program. In the grouper-
37 tilefish, we did see an initial decrease, as was expected within
38 the catch share program, and then it seemed to level off within
39 the entrants within it.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Dugas.

42
43 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. One more. On Slide 14, the
44 last bullet point, distribute NMFS-held shares, can we explain a
45 little bit where are the held shares?

46
47 **DR. STEPHEN:** Sure. Back in Amendment 36A, NMFS revoked the
48 shares from participants that had never access their accounts.

1 It's a very small amount within each share category, but, in
2 Amendment 36A, we did not decide what to do with those shares,
3 and that was pushed off to Amendment 36B, and Amendment 36B has
4 been stalled-out for a while, and so, for quite a few years, the
5 agency is just holding that small amount of shares, and it's not
6 able to be distributed to the participants.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Stephen. We do
9 have another question from Mr. Williamson.

10
11 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Dr. Stephen, you talk about creating an
12 allocation bank, and would you briefing describe what an
13 allocation bank is, and I assume you've got some way of
14 obtaining allocation to fund that bank.

15
16 **DR. STEPHEN:** Sure, and so the allocation bank also, at times,
17 has been called a quota bank, and you will have seen it in 36B
18 and/or 36C, depending on where it got moved to at the time. The
19 idea would be that some percentage of the quota would be placed
20 into an allocation bank and that those allocation, the annual
21 distribution, would have criteria for someone to apply and
22 receive that from the agency.

23
24 Now, how we create that allocation bank is one of the areas that
25 we stumbled on in 36B and 36C. There are different avenues that
26 I think we could proceed to obtain that, and that would be a
27 council decision, on which one would be best. Ideally, those
28 NMFS-held shares could be the original seed for an allocation
29 bank, but they definitely are not enough to make an allocation
30 bank, with just those shares held, sustainable or really
31 applicable to address any of these issues.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Jessica, for that, and,
34 again, just on that exchange a little bit, I think one of the
35 goals, I think, for this discussion today is prioritizing,
36 right, and I think we need to agree on the goals themselves, at
37 a very high level, and, if we can do that, you know, then we can
38 start to have -- Perhaps we can prioritize those goals and start
39 to have a discussion about specific objectives, and I don't want
40 to get down in the weeds too early at this point, and there's a
41 lot of potential ways that we might do that, and so let's stay
42 at a high level for now, if we could.

43
44 All right. Any more questions for Dr. Stephen? I am not seeing
45 any, and so let's go ahead and perhaps -- Maybe I can get some
46 help from staff, and maybe we can put the five goals up on the
47 board. I will read them to you, if you want.

1 **DR. GREG STUNZ:** It's Slide 9.
2
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** If you go to Slide 9. All right, and so we
4 might potentially edit these, but so I guess I will just open up
5 the floor, and so these are the five goals that were captured
6 based on discussions around the council for some period of time,
7 and is there anybody that would like to consider adding a goal
8 or removing one of these goals? General Spraggins.
9
10 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** Just a question. When you're looking at
11 the goals, are the goals in order of how we want to achieve
12 them, or are they in any type of order or anything?
13
14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I would not consider them to be in any
15 priority assignment at this point. Ms. Boggs.
16
17 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Well, first, I would like to thank Dr. Stephen
18 for the presentation, and thank you for recognizing me. I don't
19 have anything to add, and I think that they, NMFS and council
20 staff, those that worked on this, have given us a pretty good
21 start, and, if no one has any additions, I would think that we
22 would prioritize these and work toward them, and start working
23 on the objectives of each of these goals, and that would be
24 easier to obtain maybe first, but, also, we would have to look
25 at how they overlap, to make sure that we're not putting the
26 cart before the horse, but I think they've done a great job, and
27 they've given us a good platform to start from, and this should
28 be an interesting conversation.
29
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Susan. I will hold
31 off, before I start prioritizing, and give people, again, an
32 opportunity to weigh-in, if they have something they would like
33 to add. I see Mr. Dyskow and then Dr. Sweetman and then Andy.
34
35 **MR. PHIL DYSKOW:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would also like to
36 say that I think clearly a lot of work has gone into this, and a
37 lot of good listening, because they seem to have much of what
38 was discussed in prior meetings in this draft. I would like a
39 better definition of what "maintain flexible fishing options"
40 means.
41
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so I'm going to call on Jessica
43 again, as she was putting these materials together, if she's
44 willing to share her thoughts on that particular verbiage.
45
46 **DR. STEPHEN:** When we're thinking about the flexible fishing
47 options, in comparison to how we think about traditional
48 programs, the catch shares offer the year-round fishing, and so

1 that, in and of itself, is a flexible fishing option, and we
2 also have a variety of different types of flexible options
3 within the program that account for different aspects within the
4 program, and so one of them is the red grouper and gag multiuse,
5 and that's the ability to use that multiuse to land either red
6 grouper or gag, and, when the program was initially created,
7 that was really vital, because of the overlap between the two
8 species and the concerns with gag, at the time, and discards.

9
10 We also have a variety of flexible fishing options within the
11 shallow-water and deepwater grouper, and these are species that
12 commonly occur in either the deepwater or shallow, but can be
13 found in the other one, and so we wanted to allow some
14 flexibility that the allocation in deepwater grouper could be
15 allowed to land some of the shallow-water grouper, and vice
16 versa.

17
18 Then the final flexible fishing option that we have in the
19 program right now is the 10 percent overage, and so, for
20 fishermen that have shares, what we kind of consider their last
21 fishing trip of the year, they can go 10 percent over the
22 remaining allocation within their vessel account for that trip.
23 Now, that is paid back at the start of the next fishing year out
24 of the allocation that they would receive from shares, and
25 that's why there is a limit on it.

26
27 When we're thinking about how to move the programs forward, we
28 might want to consider what are the common concerns we're
29 hearing, and so, oftentimes, we're hearing a lot between red
30 snapper and red grouper, and is there a type of flexible fishing
31 option we can include within the program that would address
32 those two species, and so the door is a little bit open to think
33 about how you can use the program the way it is, with additional
34 measures to just make things a little bit easier to either
35 address discards, barriers to new entrants coming in, and other
36 variety of information like that.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Stephen. Dr. Sweetman.

39
40 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the work
41 that you've put in on this, Dr. Stephen. I think you're -- I
42 agree with Susan, and I think you're setting us up for making
43 progress on this. One point that I did want to bring up is I
44 like the goals that are on the board right now, and, obviously,
45 the last one in there, improve opportunities for participants to
46 enter the program, we've heard a lot about that at the table
47 over the last year or so here, and I am just putting a pin in
48 this, you know, as we move towards the priorities later on, but,

1 obviously, overcapacity is an issue, and those kind of seem a
2 little bit opposed to each other, in conflict with each other,
3 to improve opportunities for new people in the fishery, but we
4 have an overcapacity concern there too, and so just something
5 that I'm putting a pin in that for when we move to the priority
6 discussion. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, C.J. Mr. Strelcheck.

9

10 **MR. STRELCHECK:** C.J. teed that up really nicely for me, and so
11 one of the, I think, challenges that the team struggled with was
12 Objectives 3 and 5, in particular, right, because, if you allow
13 more people into the fishery, you potentially are reducing -- Or
14 you're increasing costs, because there's more competition,
15 right, and so we gave a lot of thought to that, and you guys had
16 a very good discussion, I thought, at the last meeting about
17 overcapacity and kind of the concerns you had about how we're
18 addressing overcapacity versus these new entrants or
19 participation.

20

21 That's where we landed, and I'm not honing-in on necessarily
22 overcapacity, but, actually, the efficiency for fishermen and
23 the flexible fishing options, and we want to make this as
24 economically viable for those that are in the fishery already,
25 but also allow for those opportunities for people to then enter
26 the program, or maybe that are on the fringes of the program
27 getting greater access to the program.

28

29 We aren't Alaska, and we don't have the big, industrialized
30 fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico, and we have everything from,
31 you know, large boats, multiday trips, to, you know, dayboats
32 that are going out and catching IFQ species, and, from what I
33 was hearing, at least from the council, and what I've been
34 hearing from stakeholders, it's like there needs to be a place
35 for a little bit of everyone in this fishery, and that's where
36 we tried to land, with regard to kind of refining the goals and
37 objectives since the start of the program.

38

39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Andy. Mr. Diaz.

40

41 **MR. DIAZ:** I think Andy pretty much said the same thing that I'm
42 thinking, and I think I said this at the last meeting, but
43 number of vessels and overcapacity I don't think works anymore,
44 and economists might not look at it like that, but, when I say
45 that, I think of dual-permitted boats, and so charter boats -- A
46 lot of them have adapted their business plan to keep their boats
47 working to buy some shares, so they've got another way to have
48 their boats bringing in money.

1
2 Just because there's a new participant there, I don't know that
3 that adds to overcapacity, and it just helps them diversify
4 their business, and so, anyway, that's the way I'm trying to
5 think of it, and so I don't -- Because I think of it that way, I
6 don't have as big of a problem with new entrants, especially if
7 -- They might just want to be small entrants, to have -- You
8 know, to keep their boat working for some period of time, just
9 to keep some profits coming in.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Diaz. I am looking
12 around, to see if anybody wants to add or remove any of these --
13 Add to these goals or remove any of them, and I'm not seeing
14 much appetite to remove any of them, and I don't see anybody
15 offering up any new ones, which in itself is progress.

16
17 I then think we can start to transition from just listing these
18 goals, and, again, I want to stay on goals, and we're not going
19 to get into the weeds at this point, and think about how we
20 might prioritize those, and, if nobody jumps in, I might start.
21 J.D., have at it.

22
23 **MR. DUGAS:** I will try. From what I've heard from the public,
24 it seems like Item Number 5 needs to be raised up to Number 1,
25 at the top, and there are some challenges and struggles with new
26 participants trying to get into the program, and so I think that
27 needs to be at the top of the list.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I am going to listen to a little bit of
30 comments before we actually start to move these bullets around a
31 bit, because I think there may be, you know, alternative
32 viewpoints and things like that, J.D., and I'm not discarding
33 your thoughts there at all, and I just want to hear from other
34 people as well. Mr. Williamson.

35
36 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Well, if you're looking for an alternative
37 viewpoint, I don't have one. I think that J.D. is exactly
38 right, and we hear it every time we come to this council, and,
39 following-up on Dale's comment, we're either going to have an
40 open fishery for folks to participate in a public resource or
41 we're going to have a protected class of folks who are working
42 in this fishery that have been given, if you will, that
43 opportunity, as it stands today, and it's patently unfair.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Boggs.

46
47 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As it relates to the
48 commercial fishery, I don't feel like those that were here when

1 the initial IFQs were put in place -- I don't think they were
2 given these fish, and I think they earned these fish. These
3 fishermen have fished these fish for years, and this is what
4 they did for a living, and to say that they were given these
5 fish I think is not a correct statement, and I just wanted that
6 on the record, because I personally do not feel like they were
7 given fish.

8
9 They worked hard to get where they were, and they worked hard to
10 put a plan in place to protect their business and to be able to
11 feed the American public the seafood that they are entitled to,
12 because it is a public resource. They just don't have the boat
13 to go catch those fish. Thank you.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Boggs. Dr. Sweetman.

16
17 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will add my two-cents in
18 here, and I agree with Mr. Dugas and Mr. Williamson about the
19 importance of that last goal in there, that improve
20 opportunities for participants to enter the program, and I
21 believe that's very important.

22
23 I would also argue that maintain flexible fishing options and
24 economic stability within the IFQ programs is extremely
25 important too, and then, yes, improve technical efficiency, and
26 I would probably put that up there too, and that's kind of
27 getting at, as Andy was talking about, the overcapacity and
28 other components of the technical efficiency of the IFQ program,
29 but those are kind of my general thoughts there, and I would
30 probably lean towards what's on the board right now as 1 and 5,
31 as probably being some of the most important ones.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, J.D. General Spraggins.

34
35 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I agree with the other three gentlemen on
36 this, and Number 5 obviously has been something that we've heard
37 about every time I've been a member of this board, and I think
38 it's an opportunity that we need to open the door and allow
39 these people to -- I am not saying that anything was done wrong,
40 and it's not about what happened before, but now we need to
41 allow new people into fishery, and I think we need to open the
42 door, in some way, to be able to give them -- To be able to get
43 an allocation also, and so Number 5, to me, tells me a way that
44 you could do that.

45
46 I mean, I know Ms. Boggs was talking about that they were not
47 given this, and that's not what I'm talking about. What I'm
48 saying is that, in the future, maybe we need to open the door to

1 new people to be able to do it and not just leave it to the same
2 people having the same opportunity.

3
4 A lot of those people that are working right now are the ones
5 that are buying from the ones that already have the allocation,
6 and it's just kind of like if you work for a car dealer, and you
7 have an opportunity, if you like, to start your own dealership
8 one day, if you learn how to do it, and I think this is giving
9 the opportunity for them to be able to start their own
10 opportunity in life and to move forward, and so I would feel
11 strongly to see Number 5 move up, and I would love to see it
12 move to Number 1, and that's just my viewpoint.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, General Spraggins.
15 There is a number of people on the list, and I'm keeping it
16 going here, but, before I go to Bob Shipp, who is online, I just
17 wanted to weigh-in a little bit about the way that Number 5 is
18 worded.

19
20 What we heard from a number of folks here, obviously, is, and
21 Dale Diaz in particular, is that it's 2023, right, and the world
22 has evolved, and there are a lot of different business models
23 out there, and we need to consider what those different business
24 models look like. I think the key thing here is not -- The
25 reason it doesn't say "new fishermen", or "new participants", is
26 that, to go along with Goal 1, just to maintain some flexible
27 fishing options, but there's a stability part of that as well,
28 and I think that one of the longer-term goals embedded in that
29 is to maintain some demographic diversity in the fishery, so in
30 fact it's in a good position, moving forward, and you're not at
31 risk from losing participants, and so that's something that we
32 have to consider, too. Dr. Shipp, you're online, and we'll see
33 if we can get some words in from you.

34
35 **DR. BOB SHIPP:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I put my hand
36 up before I had heard several of the other members, but, the
37 truth be known, Number 5 is the essence of this whole effort. I
38 think we've heard not just a year or two, but, for ten years,
39 the problems with this fishery, and so I just want to add my
40 name to the list of those that think Number 5 needs to be not
41 only Number 1, but with big red letters, because that's the
42 problem. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Bob. All right. Next on the list
45 is Dr. Stunz and Ms. Boggs.

46
47 **DR. GREG STUNZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When I originally
48 thought about this, I thought that maybe we would have more

1 goals than this that we might have to prioritize, and so thank
2 you to Jessica. I mean, I think you all really hit the nail on
3 the head, because at least all of my objectives would fall under
4 one of these, and so maybe I am putting Carrie and the staff in
5 a bad position, and we certainly probably need to rank this, and
6 it sounds like we're doing a pretty good job of that, but I'm
7 not seeing why we couldn't work -- I was envisioning that we
8 might have twelve of these up here on the board, but turning out
9 with five, but that we couldn't really work, to some extent, all
10 five of these, with some, you know, guidance and priority.

11
12 Now, of course, like everything, when we start putting in these
13 alternatives, or objectives, or whatever we're calling them
14 underneath each one of these, that's where the devil in the
15 details begins, in terms of what does that look like, but, Tom,
16 I guess I was kind of making a recommendation that, yes, let's
17 try to solidify around a priority order here, but I don't think,
18 at least in my mind, that we couldn't work on all of these, and
19 it's a doable task to work on all of them.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think it's certainly doable to consider five
22 goals and start to talk about the objectives that might fall
23 under those. I think the reality is that, as we -- I think,
24 when we do get to the objectives, exploring some of the tactics,
25 right, to achieve the objectives that underpin those goals, I
26 think we're going to quickly realize that we have to take
27 smaller bites of the apple, and I think that was probably the
28 demise of 36B and C and whatever iteration that we have.

29
30 I think that's part of the exercise here, is to really identify
31 what -- I mean, all of these goals are important, right, and
32 some may be easier to achieve than others, if we want to refer
33 to those as low-hanging fruit, and I'm not sure that we have any
34 low-hanging fruit, necessarily, but, again, I would caution
35 prioritizing the things that might appear easier to do and think
36 about the most important things to do. I think this discussion
37 is helpful in that regard, and so I will continue to hear what
38 people have to say. Mr. Strelcheck, or, Ms. Boggs, did you --
39 Okay. Andy.

40
41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Tom, and I just wanted to agree with
42 your comments and kind of build upon what Greg was saying. I
43 mean, I think all of these goals are things that kind of
44 overlap, and so we might be working on multiple goals at the
45 same time. Really, I think the challenge will be looking at the
46 objectives, and what are things that we can do more quickly,
47 that are more incremental, that maybe we want to do first,
48 relative to picking off maybe some more impactful actions, but

1 they're going to take longer for the process, right, and that's
2 where the objectives will really come in, to help us in guiding
3 that process.

4
5 I will say that I'm a little concerned with regard to kind of
6 some of the comments around Goal 5, and so I think, Tom, you
7 said it very well, and we're trying to maintain demographic
8 diversity, and we want to figure out kind of how do we bring in
9 new entrants, as well as those that maybe participate in the
10 fishery, but are having a hard time securing allocation, or
11 shares, but we're not talking about just opening up this
12 fishery, right, and there is a certain capacity to this fishery,
13 and, right now, the economics say we're still over capacity,
14 right?

15
16 We maybe aren't now driving to reduce capacity, but I think we
17 need to be really thoughtful, as we move forward, in terms of
18 kind of that balance, in terms of those demographic
19 considerations and diversity and the capacity that we want to
20 maintain in this fishery to make sure that it's economically
21 viable and we're maintaining kind of that flexibility and
22 technical efficiency within the program, and so just kind of
23 tying all those goals together is really going to be key.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Andy, for those comments.
26 Ms. Boggs.

27
28 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you. Andy touched on one of the things that I
29 was going to say, and, to me, we have to -- We have to cure the
30 overcapacity problem, in my mind, before you can look at adding
31 new entrants, because then you're just adding to the
32 overcapacity, and maybe you can somehow do that in conjunction.
33 I understand that there is an issue, and Number 5 is an
34 important goal, but I think Number 1 is probably the main goal,
35 because that's the backbone of this program, and, until we deal
36 with the overcapacity, it seems to me like it would be hard to
37 allow new entrants.

38
39 Now, somehow maybe we can work those together, and maybe 1 and 2
40 combined, and I don't know, but I think, to me, we need to deal
41 with Number 1, that, to me, is probably the biggest priority,
42 because the overcapacity -- You don't want to end up crashing
43 the fishery when you're trying to put new entrants, and just --
44 I think then we would have a bigger problem than what we have
45 now. Thank you.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Susan. Kevin Anson and then Dakus.

48

1 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand, for brevity,
2 that you have to give some sort of label, or describe each of
3 the overarching goals here, and maybe "improve opportunities for
4 participants to enter the program", you know, might be not
5 descriptive enough, I guess, but, if you look at the individual
6 draft objectives, the first objective is to implement an
7 adaptive catch share model that redistributes shares to accounts
8 harvesting IFQ species, and so all that would indicate to me, is
9 that you're redistributing shares to folks that are already
10 participating, and so, yes, I guess, to include the big picture,
11 you would say give the opportunity for participants to enter the
12 program, but we already have had people enter the program, but
13 it's just there's some significant barriers for entry into the
14 program, currently, and so that's what I think Number 5, to me,
15 gets at, is the barriers to entry.

16
17 Yes, there are issues with, you know, the number of actual
18 participants, and new participants, and that issue of
19 overcapacity, but, you know, we are limited by the number of
20 permits, and, I mean, there is already a restricted number of
21 folks that can participate in the program, as far as going out
22 and catching IFQ species and bringing them back to the dock to
23 sell, and so, if that's the issue, then we need to be talking
24 about reducing permits, you know, really, at the end of the day,
25 but, to me, Number 5, just to add my name to the discussion
26 relative to priority, and I would agree that Number 5 should be
27 a Number 1 priority that we move forward with to look at.

28
29 Then I think a lot of the issues that you could address, through
30 Number 5, the rest of the goals -- There are certain things,
31 because of the overlapping nature, that would start to take
32 shape, and so thank you.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Kevin. Dakus.

35
36 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I think about the
37 goals we have before us, and I want to offer my support for
38 Draft Goal Number 5 as well, but not ignoring the other goals,
39 and, to Kevin's point, but also to Bob Shipp's point, these also
40 have a lot of overlap, a lot of potential to benefit the other
41 goals, as we think through them, and, in reading through the
42 objectives, and these are very well thought out, and so I
43 appreciate the effort here, but, with the adaptive catch shares,
44 it seems like there is so much potential there to increase the
45 participants and reduce those barriers to entry, while, at the
46 same time, addressing the overcapacity issues.

47
48 Bullet 2 is limit share ownership, and there's a lot here that

1 we are going to unpack within -- After we get past this goal
2 prioritization effort, to really sink our teeth into the
3 objectives, and recognizing where it also -- That achieving some
4 of these objectives also benefits within the other goals, and it
5 really kind of substantiates the Venn diagram that was presented
6 to us.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dakus. Mr. Dyskow.

9
10 **MR. DYSKOW:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would probably agree with
11 Susan, in that the original participants earned their seat at
12 the table, and they earned those shares, but where I struggle is
13 that share ownership, whatever you want to call it, currently
14 exists into perpetuity, and so these original anglers that
15 earned these shares have been essentially assigned them into
16 perpetuity, and that's a problem, in my mind, and we really
17 haven't addressed that, in any way, shape, or form.

18
19 Another question, while I have the mic, and this is for Andy,
20 but we currently distribute 100 percent of the allocation to IFQ
21 shareholders, and what's to say that we don't change that to 80
22 percent, and build a bank of 20 percent, to address some of
23 these issues, and is that technically possible, or is it not
24 possible, sir?

25
26 **MR. STRELCHECK:** That's certainly possible, and Jessica went
27 through and presented the concept of an allocation bank, right,
28 and so the devil is in the details, in terms of how you would
29 design it, how much allocation would be set aside, for what
30 purposes, and then how that gets distributed.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Andy, for pointing that out, and,
33 again, I just want to emphasize -- I know we're going to get
34 down into the weeds at some point here, but we'll try to keep it
35 as high-level as we can for right now, and we've got Bob Gill on
36 the line, and then Mr. Diaz. Bob.

37
38 **MR. BOB GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am fine with these
39 five goals, and I would strongly suggest, however, on Goal
40 Number 3, that we delete the terminology "improve technical
41 efficiency". The reason for that is that it's questionable, in
42 my mind, that's what we want to do, and we certainly don't want
43 to maximize technical efficiency, because that gets you to the
44 rationale, as has been noted in the reviews, that the optimum
45 technical efficiency is the minimum number of boats to harvest
46 the allowable catch.

47
48 Well, that says all you have is highliners in the fleet, and I

1 would argue that's wrong, and we don't want a fleet of
2 highliners, and we want a diversified fleet, which is not the
3 minimum cost per unit harvest, and it's not the maximum
4 technical efficiency, and so I would argue that reducing costs
5 per unit harvest is an admirable goal, but improving technical
6 efficiency is not. Thank you.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Bob. We'll circle back on
9 that, at some point, before we accept these, or adopt these,
10 five goals, and then we'll identify what their priority rank
11 might be, but, until then, Mr. Diaz.

12
13 **MR. DIAZ:** I've got a couple of things that I want to say.
14 First off, I don't think we could tackle all five of these goals
15 at one time, and the reason I say that -- I mean, I've probably
16 been at this table, other than Kevin, and Kevin is an old-timer,
17 but longer than anybody, and, when you get to start talking
18 about specific items and objectives -- I mean, this program is
19 incredibly complicated, and, I mean, we're going to start
20 talking about focusing on something, and does a person need a
21 permit, and I don't know, and that was in the last document.

22
23 Just think of all the things that came in there that we had to
24 discuss about if a person needed a permit or not, you know, non-
25 participants, participants, grandfathered, and, I mean, the list
26 goes on and on, and every one of these we're going to talk about
27 for an extremely long period of time, trying to flesh this out,
28 because it's complicated.

29
30 I think where we get wrapped up, where we haven't made progress,
31 is, a lot of times, we get to the point where it's a close vote,
32 and so good ideas fail, but people are concerned that we're
33 going to do something that there's a workaround, and it's not
34 going to be effective, and you know what I'm saying, because
35 it's so complicated, and so all of it has got to be thought out
36 in great detail, and so I don't think we can tackle all five
37 goals. I think we could probably try a couple, and see where we
38 go, and keep prioritizing things. Having said that, that's
39 enough of that.

40
41 To me, when I read through this -- I think, anytime we get a
42 chance to reduce discards, that should be a high priority, and
43 so I tend to think that, although the commercial fishery is not
44 as bad as some of our other fisheries on discards, there are
45 some opportunities where we could make an impact on discards,
46 and that would be good for everybody in the commercial industry.

47
48 Another thing that I don't like about the program is the fact --

1 I understand it's market-driven, but lease prices are so high
2 that, a lot of times, the people that actually have to go out
3 and catch the fish -- You only get a small percentage of the
4 price of the fish, and they're the ones with all the expenses,
5 and so, because of that, I kind of like the idea of us setting
6 up a quota bank and try to deal with discards and maybe set up
7 the quota bank in such a way where lease prices are more
8 palatable for people that are having to lease fish, and I don't
9 know.

10
11 There's a lot of details, once we get into that, but, when I
12 look at prioritizing this list, those are the two things that
13 are the highest priority, in my mind. Thank you.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I just want to make sure that I captured that,
16 and so reducing discards, Number 4, and what is the other one
17 that you would put into a goal?

18
19 **MR. DIAZ:** The ones that support quota banks, and, when I look
20 at this, actually three of those goals, I think, or really all
21 of them support the quota bank, but three of them directly tie-
22 in, in my mind, to support a quota bank, and I think that's 3,
23 4, and 5.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dale. Mr. Strelcheck.

26
27 **MR. STRELCHECK:** One other thing that I wanted to note, and we
28 haven't really talked a lot about Goal 2, in terms of increasing
29 IFQ market transparency, but, if you look at the objectives
30 under that one, a lot of that could be a goal of the council,
31 but would likely fall to the agency to actually implement,
32 because it pertains to sharing of price data and information on
33 a more regular basis, or having some sort of NOAA-administered
34 marketplace, and there might be some actions that the council
35 would need to take, but we do think that that does relate nicely
36 then as well to these lease allocation prices, and kind of
37 opening up knowledge about the market, and kind of where the
38 allocation is held and being leased and, ultimately,
39 opportunities for gaining access to that allocation as well.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Andy. I am looking around, and
42 just a couple of thoughts, while folks kind of ponder what else
43 they might want to add to the discussion, but, again, like
44 everybody here, I appreciated the way that the presentation was
45 laid out, and, also, I've thought about the previous goals, and
46 the relative amount of success that we've had with some of them,
47 and so, in my mind, number one, where it says "maintain flexible
48 fishing options and economic stability", you know, I think we've

1 done a good job. I mean, the industry has done a good job in
2 that regard, and so I'm not sure, again, even though it's Number
3 1 on this list, that we need to aggressively pursue that in a
4 way that's going to radically improve the program, and that's
5 just my thought.

6
7 Dr. Stephen did indicate that one of the attributes of that
8 flexibility was the multi-share, or the multiuse, kind of
9 categories, whether it was shallow and deepwater grouper, red
10 grouper, kind of tradeoffs, essentially, but I think that
11 there's an opportunity to explore that, to address, or programs
12 like that to address, the discard problem as well, right, and I
13 kind of come back and am thinking, well, you know, we have a lot
14 of problems, and we have a lot of challenges, in the fishery,
15 and not just in the commercial sector, and certainly in the
16 recreational sector, whether it's the for-hire or private side
17 of things, and discards are probably the biggest things that
18 we're going to have to deal with, and so I'm trying to think
19 about how we might collectively align some of our activities, or
20 our priorities, right, so we're achieving the most good for the
21 resource and the stakeholders that are involved, moving forward.

22
23 I do think that there's some tractable things that you can do
24 with regard to multiuse quota sharing, or exchange, that would
25 allow you to address the discard issues, certainly in the
26 commercial fishery, and that, ultimately, would have some flow-
27 on effects for some of the other sectors as well, and so my
28 inclination would be to think about things that are big
29 problems, things that are tractable, with a little bit of
30 creative thought, and then put those higher on the list,
31 recognizing that some of the other ones are subject to a lot of
32 different perspectives and viewpoints, and Number 5 is
33 particularly complicated, from my perspective, and so, anyway,
34 that's just a couple of thoughts, and I will give somebody else
35 a chance to weigh-in here, before we decide to start ranking
36 things.

37
38 Okay. I am not seeing anybody wanting to share any more
39 thoughts, and so this is how I thought this conversation might
40 go, and so we're going to pull a little teeth.

41
42 Based on the conversation that I've heard so far, and, Bernie, I
43 guess we're going to move some things around, and I will make a
44 strawman here, and I think I saw people wanting to move Number 5
45 to the top, and we'll do this for discussion.

46
47 Just, again, for discussion, I am going to suggest -- I will
48 leave 2 where it is, right, and we can quibble about that in a

1 minute, but I would probably move Number 5, which is reduce IFQ
2 discards, to the third position, and I would leave 4 and 5 as
3 they are, and I appreciate Bob Gill's comments, as they relate
4 to the Item Number 5 now, which is improve technical efficiency.
5

6 I think the industry, and society, will figure that out on their
7 own, and I'm not sure that we're going to have to do that for
8 them. I think that leaving the reduced cost per unit of harvest
9 makes sense, when we're trying to think about optimizing the
10 value of the fishery, and so, Bernie, if you could just scratch
11 -- Don't necessarily get rid of "improved technical efficiency",
12 but just maybe give it a strike-through, just the first three
13 words. Thank you, Bernie. I appreciate that.
14

15 All right, and so we've got a strawman up on the board, and
16 maybe what I would like to do is not talk about all five of them
17 at one time, and let's go through them one at a time, and really
18 drill-down a little bit into the merits of whether or not that
19 is really the most important goal here. Okay. J.D.
20

21 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. For Number 1, in my mind, I
22 would like to replace the word "participants" with "active
23 fishermen". I think that needs to be more the focus, and not
24 necessarily the brokers, if you will, and that's how I read it,
25 and it's open to anyone, and I would like to see it narrowed
26 down to active fishermen.
27

28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Again, before we do that -- I mean, I don't
29 disagree with your comments, right, and I think, when you start
30 talking about a specific participant, right, then you're getting
31 into the weeds a little bit here, right, and a mechanism to
32 achieve that goal, and so we'll capture that comment, J.D., and
33 I think we'll come back to it. Thank you though for sharing
34 those thoughts. Any other thoughts on this Goal Number 1, or
35 does anybody think it is misplaced? Ms. Boggs.
36

37 **MS. BOGGS:** I am just going to keep reiterating that I think,
38 until we deal with the overcapacity issue, I don't know how you
39 can bring new entrants in, and maybe they work together, and I
40 know that Number 1 is now Number 2, but, if overcapacity is a
41 true issue, and a true problem, then I don't know how we can do
42 really much else, until we deal with that, so that we -- Not
43 knowing exactly how this would work, but then we would know
44 what's available for new participants, new entrants, new
45 fishermen, whatever word we come up with, and I just feel like
46 we need to deal with that first.
47

48 Thinking about what Andy said about Number 4, and I know that's

1 not what you're asking about right now, but Number 4, and that
2 does seem like something that the agency would have to handle,
3 and it seems -- It seems like that would be something that could
4 quickly -- I say quickly, but be done fairly soon, to have that
5 available for information that we may need to be able to deal
6 with the new entrants, or participants, or whatever, and I
7 apologize, but it's participants, as it reads now, and it's just
8 -- Again, I think we need to deal with the overcapacity first.

9

10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Susan. All right. I
11 am pondering a little bit of a response to that. Again, and a
12 number of people have pointed this out, and I think there is --
13 Dakus said it well, and there's a tremendous amount of overlap
14 here, right, and, again, I am trying to think where we need to
15 go to get the maximized benefit to the program, right, and,
16 again, the reason that I was thinking that Number 2 would be
17 dropped down on this list is because I do think that there is
18 demonstrated success there, with regard to year-round fishing
19 opportunities, you know, which has made the industry safer for
20 the employees, right, for example.

21

22 It's helped to stabilize some of the prices in the market,
23 right, and they will tend to regulate themselves, because of
24 that flexibility, and I think there's a lot of good things
25 there, but, again, I am trying to figure out, with regard to
26 improving opportunities for people to enjoy the benefits of the
27 industry, right, and that's really what you're looking at here,
28 is can you maximize people's ability to, again, gain value from
29 participation in some way, and, as Dale pointed out, that
30 doesn't -- There's a lot of different ways to do that, right,
31 and, in some cases, it may be 5 percent, or 10 percent, of
32 somebody's business model, but, without that 5 or 10 percent,
33 you know, their whole plan falls apart.

34

35 I'm not sure that we've wrapped our heads around the complexity
36 of the business world and the industry in that way, and I'm not
37 sure that we're going to be able to make a tremendous amount of
38 progress in the short-term, because I think that's going to take
39 us a lot of time. You know, I think we're going to have to dig
40 into some of the economics here, and things that we haven't seen
41 before, and so I recognize that it's an important goal, but, if
42 we really want to make some changes -- Maybe there are some
43 objectives in there that are achievable in the short-term, and
44 so I don't want to cut that off yet, but I'm talking out loud.

45

46 I am inclined to leave it there for right now, right, but, to me
47 too, I left it -- I moved it down a bit, but I'm not -- 1 and 2
48 are intertwined, one way or another, right, but I think we might be

1 able to do a little bit more with the discards, right, and I
2 really do.

3
4 If I had my way, I would probably try to move that up into
5 either 1 or 2, but I'm not going to make a unilateral decision
6 to do that, and I just think there's some tractable things that
7 we can do. Mr. Strelcheck and then Dr. Stunz.

8
9 **MR. STRELCHECK:** A couple of points with regard to overcapacity,
10 and so I agree with Susan, in the fact that we need to maintain
11 that as a goal, or driver, with regard to the actual IFQ
12 program. I'm not sure where it gets placed in the order of
13 priorities at this point, but, in the Magnuson Act, any time
14 there's a limited access privilege program that's established
15 for a fishery, and it's determined to have overcapacity, we have
16 to then have that limited access privilege program contribute to
17 reducing overcapacity, right, and so that's laid out in the
18 Magnuson Act, and that's a requirement, and we need to make sure
19 that, in our goals and objectives, that we are accordingly
20 addressing that.

21
22 With that said, we talked a lot about kind of balancing that
23 with improving opportunities, and I think, as you said it
24 nicely, Dr. Frazer, I don't think we fully understand the kind
25 of dynamics of how this fishery is operated, and we've heard
26 from Dale about dual-permitted vessels, and we have vertically-
27 integrated businesses, but this is what we're hearing about, and
28 I think Goal 1, as it's on the board, is well placed right now,
29 and it's probably the area we could make the most progress, but
30 we do need to keep in mind kind of how we balance that with the
31 capacity issue.

32
33 To put a finer point though on overcapacity, if you read the
34 Agar et al. paper in our briefing book, it says that 20 percent
35 of the red snapper fleet would be capable of harvesting the
36 entire quota, and so that shows kind of the level of
37 overcapacity that we're still dealing with, if our goal is fully
38 to eliminate overcapacity and have the most economically
39 technically-efficient fishery that we possibly could have,
40 right, and I don't think that's our goal, and I recognize that,
41 but we, I don't think, are going to be able to address
42 overcapacity, in its entirety, and be able to address Goal 1,
43 because we will be here for a long time addressing the
44 overcapacity issue.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Andy. Then we've got Dr. Stunz
47 and then Mr. Diaz.

48

1 **DR. STUNZ:** Andy, that was my point, and I'm trying to figure
2 out if I understand overcapacity, and I don't know if maybe you
3 or Jessica could help me, but the whole fact that this is an
4 LAPP, in my mind at least, it somewhat eliminates this
5 overcapacity issue. If you had a purely open fishery, then, of
6 course, we're worried about overcapitalization, because you can
7 have more fishing power than that stock can support, and we
8 fixed that in the LAPP, by what this IFQ program -- By having a
9 quota.

10
11 So, for example, no matter how many boats are in that fishery,
12 you're not going to exceed the quota, assuming everything is
13 above board and all that kind of thing, and so then where I'm
14 having difficulty understanding is, if we freed up this program,
15 through some of these goals that we have here, where there's
16 more access, like in Number 1, or maybe even Number 2, then the
17 market -- If it was a freer access to this fishery, the market
18 would curb any of that overcapitalization, because people could
19 get in, and the number of boats and such would -- In other
20 words, you're curbing that power, indirectly, by having a quota
21 in an IFQ program.

22
23 I guess my question is, or point, is, if we design this
24 appropriately, with these goals here, which I think get there,
25 then the overcapitalization, at least in my mind, is not as much
26 of a problem, and maybe it is and I'm just missing something,
27 but, you know, the whole point of an LAPP is to curb that.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** To that point, Andy?

30
31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I would probably like Assane to weigh-in from
32 more of an economic perspective, but simply curbing, or
33 limiting, the number of participants, in and of itself, does not
34 address the overcapacity. It caps the capacity, right, but the
35 overcapacity is then tied to your economic, or technical,
36 efficiency within the program.

37
38 If you let, for example, too many boats in, and you have too
39 small of a quota, right, that's a very inefficient fishery to go
40 out and harvest whatever quota is available, right, and so
41 you're trying to essentially set up a fishery that has the
42 available quota and a certain diversity of participants that
43 economically would be most efficient to go out and then harvest
44 that quota over a period of time.

45
46 I don't disagree with your comments that how we design this can
47 meet some of these goals, could help with that relative to the
48 status quo, but I will say that we have not -- We have helped

1 with overcapacity, but we have not fully addressed overcapacity
2 since implementation of the program sixteen years ago, and I
3 don't know, Assane, if you have anything else that you want to
4 add.

5
6 **DR. DIAGNE:** Very briefly, and, essentially, Andy mentioned most
7 of the things that I was thinking about, but, perhaps in the
8 discussion, we place, and how do I put this, too much emphasis
9 in let's say some of the comments that I hear about
10 overcapacity.

11
12 It is a requirement of the act, as Andy mentioned, but we have
13 to remember that we haven't done anything specifically to reduce
14 overcapacity, apart from creating the program, and this type of
15 program, of course, is expected to reduce overcapacity over
16 time, and what you would see, as the studies have shown, is the
17 less-efficient vessels would sell out to the more efficient part
18 of the fleet, and then we would move forward, and so that is the
19 only thing we have done.

20
21 If we look to other programs, in addition to implementing the
22 IFQ, they looked at permit stacking, permit buybacks, and
23 sometimes vessel buyback, to accelerate the reduction of
24 overcapacity, and we haven't done any of those things here in
25 the Gulf of Mexico, and so it, I guess, needs to stay on your
26 list of goals, because that is a requirement of the act, but we
27 are not, as far as I know, looking at buying back permits and
28 buying back vessels, and that's one thing.

29
30 As far as the, I guess, moving in the opposition direction,
31 between more participation and overcapacity, part of that, I
32 guess, is softened by the fact that, as said in the review, by
33 new participants, we are thinking about replacement fishermen,
34 meaning the next generation of fishermen, to address things such
35 as the graying of the fleet, et cetera, and so it is not about
36 opening it wide, because the quota is there, because that would
37 be another series of problems.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** To that point, Dr. Stunz?

40
41 **DR. STUNZ:** A quick follow-up, Assane. Thank you, and, of
42 course, as a marine scientist, I'm not an economist, but so, if
43 you had a way to avoid consolidation of shares, by over-
44 efficiency, way too far undercapitalized, and you had freer
45 access to the quota, or shares, and let's say the quota bank or
46 whatever this Number 1 would establish, I still don't understand
47 then why wouldn't the market, the freer market, you know, within
48 this overall quota that we don't want to exceed, not seek the

1 optimal level of fishermen in that fishery, and that's why I'm -
2 - You know, it seems like we're just going so far right now on
3 the other side of undercapitalization, and not letting it freely
4 do it, because you've got a consolidation of shares and
5 controlling, you know, who has those shares and how that's
6 distributed throughout the IFQ system.

7
8 **DR. DIAGNE:** I am not sure that I follow this, that we are going
9 too far to the extreme in one direction, because I think Dr.
10 Stephen mentioned that, and it's the review and the annual
11 report, but participation, meaning the number of folks that are
12 participating, has increased, in some cases, right, and the
13 limiting factor here is having the quota, and that's one, and,
14 if you were, for example, looking at the red snapper IFQ
15 program, where the cap is somewhere around 6 percent, I think,
16 the share cap, and, if I were to make it 5 percent now, for
17 argument's sake, that would mean that, technically, the program
18 that we have created, and let's say twenty entities could own
19 the entirety of the quota, and that's the program that we have,
20 and we are very far from that.

21
22 We have a couple hundred participants, and I don't recall the
23 number now, and so I guess the fact that we are going to an
24 extreme, in terms of overconcentration, that may be a
25 perception, but that is far from actually the program that we
26 have in front of us, and maybe Dr. Stephen could add something
27 on the number of accounts and the number of participants, but it
28 doesn't seem, to me, that we are going to that extreme.

29
30 The last thing that I am going to say here is we are talking
31 about catch shares now, but another way of calling this is an
32 LAPP, meaning a limited access privilege program, and the first
33 word of that is "limited", and so sometimes you have to remember
34 that, you know, and it cannot be, under any circumstances, open
35 and having, you know, an increased number of participation
36 without controls.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** A quick follow-up, Greg?

39
40 **DR. STUNZ:** Thank you, Assane, and, obviously, I'm the one now
41 getting us way down into the weeds here, and so, obviously,
42 we'll have more discussion on that, Assane, and, Tom, you
43 probably need to move on, but I just wanted to say that I think,
44 you know, that has to do with the leasing versus the ownership
45 issue. I mean, I'm not advocating, by any means, for a purely
46 open fishery here, but I just would advocate for a freer access
47 to the shares for those that are committed in the fishery.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Greg, and I think we certainly are
2 going to have those types of discussions as we get down into the
3 weeds a bit, and so Mr. Diaz and then General Spraggins.

4
5 **MR. DIAZ:** I think the discussion around the table, and the
6 presentation, was good this morning, because, having listened to
7 the discussion today, my perceptions on how to prioritize this
8 is different than when I came in here this morning, and so the
9 discussion is helping me think through this.

10
11 I do agree with your last comment, Tom, that our current Number
12 2 on the board -- I think it's a goal that should stay in, but
13 it should move down the list, and so I would -- I am in
14 agreement with you, and I would move Number 2 to Number 4, is
15 what I am thinking right now, and I might change my mind as the
16 discussion goes on, but that's where I'm at right now, and my
17 rationale is exactly what you said, that it doesn't require the
18 work, at the moment, that some of the other ones probably should
19 get. Thank you.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Dale. We'll circle back on the
22 reordering here in a minute. General Spraggins.

23
24 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Thank you, and I'm like Dale. You can teach
25 and old dog a new trick every now and then, and I have sat here
26 this morning and reevaluated everything of where I thought that
27 things should go to where I think now, and I can tell you that
28 looking at reducing the IFQ discards -- To me, that ought to be
29 a goal that we have for everything, and not just IFQ, but
30 everything that we do, because discards, to me, seems to be the
31 biggest problem as to the numbers that we're at.

32
33 If we could figure out how to make the discards go away, to a
34 point, then our numbers would be a whole better, the fish that
35 we would have, the capability of catching it and everything
36 else, and so I agree with you, and Dale said it too, that we
37 ought to move Number 3 to Number 2, for sure, and I'm still --
38 As much as I like Number 1 where it's at, I'm almost wanting
39 Number 2, Number 3, to Number 1, and, I mean, it's just looking
40 at the way it should be done, but I think, if we reduce the
41 discards, we're going to help the other problems a whole lot.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, General Spraggins. All right. I
44 am looking around, and I know that we've got a hard stop at
45 10:00, and a number of folks have to make a few phone calls, and
46 so we've got about twenty-five minutes or so to keep working
47 through this. I am not seeing any hands right now, and so I
48 will go ahead and, at least for the time being, perhaps move

1 Number 3 to Number 2, and I realize that the General was on the
2 fence about whether he wanted to make it 1 or 2, but we'll start
3 there. Dale, were you thinking that Number 3, as currently on
4 the list, should be moved to Number 4?

5
6 **MR. DIAZ:** That would be my preference, but I'm just one person.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That's okay though. I mean, somebody has got
9 to move the ball here, and so is there any major objection, at
10 least for discussion purposes, in moving it around? Go ahead,
11 Dr. Stunz.

12
13 **DR. STUNZ:** Dale, I don't disagree with that, but the only
14 reason that I would support just keeping it the way it is right
15 there was Andy was mentioning that, you know, it was sort of the
16 agency's role to, you know, help with that market transparency,
17 and that would help, and so the only question I've got there is
18 that 3 is still very important to me, but, if 4 is not something
19 that this group is going to work on directly, and it's just
20 going to kind of happen, and maybe, as Andy mentioned, you know,
21 there's some actions that we have to take within that, at some
22 level, but, you know, how to redirect -- I'm trying to see where
23 we redirect our effort.

24
25 Again, I'm not going to -- If everyone wants to 4 up to 3, or
26 whatever, I don't feel that strongly, but it seems like 3 -- 1
27 through 3, as they are currently, are under the council's --
28 More of our purview, and maybe 4 is not, and so for what's that
29 worth.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Diaz.

32
33 **MR. DIAZ:** I understand Dr. Stunz's rationale, and I agree with
34 him.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. General Spraggins.

37
38 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** It's not in reference to 3 or 4, but, in
39 Number 5, are we going to reword that in some way, or are we
40 going to just take it off? Is it even needed? That's just a
41 thought.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I mean, Mr. Gill suggested, obviously, that we
44 remove the emphasis, or taking the emphasis off, improving the
45 technical efficiency, for a number of reasons, and I appreciated
46 his suggestion, and I'm happy to do that. This may -- This goal
47 may be -- I want to step back, and I actually think there are
48 some things that you can do to achieve this goal, the council,

1 but I'm happy to say the goal is to reduce cost per unit
2 harvest, but I would like others to weigh-in on that. Andy.

3
4 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, we were careful in using the word
5 "improve", and not "maximize", right, and so I know technical
6 efficiency maybe isn't a common term that people are overlay
7 familiar with, but I guess I'm more comfortable with leaving it
8 in, because I still there's that nexus with regard to addressing
9 overcapacity, as outlined within the Magnuson Act, right, and
10 this really gets to, obviously, for those -- Not everyone,
11 right, but, for those within the program, we want to continue to
12 try to improve technical efficiency, where we can, and not
13 necessarily indicating that it's going to improve for everyone.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and, again, I think everybody appreciates
16 the thought that went into the presentation, and the wording
17 that was there, and, I guess, with regard to that particular
18 goal, and without getting too far into the weeds, but maybe I
19 will ask Jessica, if she's still on the line, to expand a little
20 bit on the objectives under that goal, and there were two,
21 right, and one of them was to develop non-market-driven measures
22 to reduce overcapacity, and the second was to examine market
23 concentrations, to determine if share and allocation caps need
24 to be modified, and so, Dr. Stephen, if you could kind of
25 provide, or elaborate a little bit more, on this bulleted
26 objectives and what you were thinking.

27
28 **DR. STEPHEN:** Sure. I can help out a little bit here. When we
29 were thinking about this, if you think about the market
30 concentrations, where we have -- In the caps that we have, and
31 so we have share caps, but they don't really constrain landings,
32 and they don't really affect technical efficiency along the way,
33 right, and so, when we're having the amount of fishermen in
34 there in order to harvest things, we want to make sure that they
35 can make money at it, right, and so you want to maintain that
36 flexible fishing option and economic stability through this.

37
38 What we have noticed is that, even though the quota has
39 increased in red snapper pretty dramatically, we've also seen an
40 increase in participation, yet we're still struggling with how
41 to reduce the cost per unit harvest and how to improve those
42 barriers to entry, and so what would be good here is to look at
43 are there non-market-driven measures that we could put in place
44 that would help to reduce that overcapacity. Typically, we're
45 looking at market-driven measures, such as the creation of the
46 IFQ program and the participants within it.

47
48 I think, when we're looking at this, we need to really spend

1 some time understanding and digging into it more, which we
2 didn't have as much of an opportunity during this presentation
3 to do, because this is more than just economics too, and it's
4 just looking at how all the different goals play together and
5 get you towards that, and you can look -- I think I have Slide
6 30, where we're talking really about participation, as well as
7 Slide 32, and so the very end of the presentation, if you can
8 jump down to that.

9

10 When we're thinking about capacity in relation to how many
11 vessels are there, and how much cost per unit harvest, right, if
12 you have a limited supply of something, the more people that are
13 playing in it, the harder it would get to go there.

14

15 We did a little looking into red snapper, in particular, in
16 comparison to grouper-tilefish, and, currently, there really is
17 no limit to participation within the program, because the
18 program is fully open as public participation, and that is where
19 we get some of those public participants that are owning shares,
20 or allocation, and they are not harvesting, and so it would be
21 helpful if the program could gather more information on the
22 different types of public participants, and are they crew
23 members, or are they brokers, or are they just fishermen
24 separating their assets.

25

26 Then, when we look overall for the reef fish permit, we have an
27 awful lot of latent permits that are still out there, which
28 means that there could be increased participation into the IFQ
29 programs, if those latent permits are bought by someone who
30 wants to begin harvesting within the IFQ.

31

32 When we look particularly at red snapper, where the
33 overcapacity, and the technical efficiency, really seem to be a
34 problem, we've noticed that there's been increased participation
35 in the red snapper program, and, even though we've been
36 increasing the quotas over time, it does not appear that that is
37 actually supporting that increased participation.

38

39 If you go down one more slide, you can see this a little bit,
40 and so, if you look at the bottom-corner graph, of the vessels
41 that are harvesting red snapper, the first data point was the
42 pre-IFQ, and, when we started the IFQ program, you can see that
43 it dropped pretty dramatically, and almost 200 vessels were
44 decreased in participation, and so that was a drop in
45 overcapacity that could improve technical efficiency.

46

47 In the first few years, you see it slowly gradually decrease, as
48 expected. In 2010, the grouper-tilefish program came onboard,

1 and suddenly that made it a lot easier to harvest, or obtain,
2 shares or allocation of red snapper, because they were contained
3 within the same system, and so you see the tick-up that happens
4 there, and then you see a gradual decrease for a couple of
5 years, but what is concerning is that we've been seeing an
6 increase in the vessels participating over time, that it's
7 starting to approach the pre-IFQ levels.

8
9 Now, we've had quota increases, and that does mean that it can
10 support more, but, when we're looking at where the technical
11 efficiency is, we're trying to balance out where the quota is,
12 how many people are participating, and that they're making
13 enough money to be efficient in doing it, and I'm not sure if
14 that actually helped anything here, but I just wanted to point
15 out some of the concerning areas that we've seen when looking at
16 this goal. Assane, do you have anything more to add? This is
17 definitely a little bit more of an economic question.

18
19 **DR. DIAGNE:** No, and I think that showing the participation
20 trend in the vessels, and we also need to mention that, in year-
21 one, once the red snapper program was created, the quota was
22 drastically reduced, I think cut in half or something like that,
23 right when the program was implemented, and then gradually, of
24 course, with the success, different successes, the quota has
25 been increasing.

26
27 About this discussion on overcapacity, as mentioned, that is one
28 of the requirements of the act, and so, as such, it would be, I
29 guess, desirable to leave it in the list of objectives, or,
30 excuse me, of goals, so that, as we work on the different other
31 goals and objectives, we won't do anything that would contribute
32 to increasing overcapacity, essentially, and that's it, but,
33 again, we are not doing anything actively right now to reduce
34 overcapacity, beyond the creation of the program itself, and so,
35 to the extent that we can let the program work as intended, we
36 are going to get, gradually, reduction in overcapacity, as long
37 as we don't essentially implement measures that would be
38 contrary to that.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks to both Dr. Stephen and Dr.
41 Diagne for kind of walking us through that. It's certainly a
42 kind of prelude to some of the more deeper discussion on that
43 goal later on. All right. Let's go back, Bernie, if we can, to
44 the goals.

45
46 Again, based on the most recent discussion, perhaps we'll remove
47 the strike-through in Number 5, for right now, and so is
48 everybody pretty happy with the rank-ordering of the goals? Mr.

1 Williamson.

2
3 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** I am happy with the ranking, but just a
4 question, probably to Andy, regarding Number 4, and that seems
5 like a fairly simple goal to accomplish, if there are questions
6 about, or information that's needed, and it just seems like it
7 would be simple enough to require the shareholders to produce
8 that, unless there are some type of perceived legal barriers, or
9 confidentiality issues, that you all see that we're not aware
10 of.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Strelcheck.

13
14 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I think some of it might be easier to
15 accomplish, as you alluded to, in that we receive data and
16 information from the program that could be more publicly
17 available, and maybe not in real-time, but in more near real-
18 time. We have to look at, obviously, confidentiality of
19 disseminating that data.

20
21 The marketplace concept, you know, the transfer of allocation,
22 or shares, and how that works, we actually do have some work
23 that's going to be starting up this fall, going out and meeting
24 with industry members to kind of help shape that effort, right,
25 but I don't think it's a simple task, and there might be some
26 input, or even changes that the council would have to institute,
27 in order for us to openly develop that, but, yes, to the extent
28 that we can share data that is non-confidential, that certainly
29 would help with this, but we think that this really does relate
30 back then to some of the lease challenges that Dale talked about
31 earlier and just for new entrants, and how do you figure out
32 kind of where to even buy and sell quota shares and allocation,
33 and so it's interrelated with other goals.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Andy. All right. Are there
36 any other input, or is there any other input, on these goals?
37 I'm pretty happy, to be honest with you, that we were able to
38 stick on the goals, for this discussion, and not get too far
39 into the weeds. I don't see any other discussion, and we'll use
40 this as our working list for right now.

41
42 I know a couple of folks have a hard stop, and have a phone call
43 to make, at 10:00. It's been a really productive discussion,
44 and I appreciate the participation. We will take a very lengthy
45 break, and we'll take a thirty-minute break, actually, if that's
46 okay with you, Greg, so to accommodate some of the other needs
47 here, but then we'll come back and start to look at these goals
48 individually and think about at least what some objectives,

1 achievable objectives, might look like. All right? Thanks,
2 guys, and we'll see you all at 10:15.

3
4 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)
5

6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Again, I appreciate the discussion around the
7 table for this part of this, to help identify a working list of
8 goals, and I think we're in a good spot there. You know, again,
9 I think 1, 2, and 3 are where we will try to focus our efforts
10 today, and, even if we only do 1 and 2, I think that will be
11 considerable progress and help us chart a path forward to make
12 some improvements in the program and what we want to do as a
13 council.

14
15 The way that I wanted to approach this second-half of the
16 discussion, since we have the five goals, is we will tackle them
17 one at a time, realizing, again, that there's a fair amount of
18 overlap in them, but we will first deal, in order, with this
19 idea of improving opportunities for participants to enter the
20 program, and so, with regard to specific objectives, we will
21 start by referencing that slide in Dr. Stephen's presentation,
22 and I think, Bernie, that will be Slide 14.

23
24 The objectives, under what is now Goal Number 1 to improve
25 opportunities for participants to enter the program, there were
26 five of those, and, again, I will just read them into the
27 record, so we have it. One is to implement an adaptive catch
28 share model that redistributes shares to accounts harvesting IFQ
29 species, and the second bullet point is to limit share ownership
30 (maintaining and obtaining shares) to accounts that are
31 harvesting IFQ species.

32
33 Number three is to identify barriers inhibiting, or limiting,
34 participation by surveying participants and those wanting to
35 enter the fishery, and four is create an allocation bank to
36 reduce barriers to fishing privileges, and five is to distribute
37 NMFS-held shares.

38
39 Again, this is a suggested list, based on previous discussions
40 around this table, and we can choose to add new objectives,
41 eliminate these objectives, and we'll kind of go through a
42 similar exercise, and, at the end, perhaps we'll reorder those
43 objectives, and so I don't want to be too prescriptive here, and
44 so I think I will just open the floor for some discussion about
45 whether the objectives, as written, are appropriate. C.J.

46
47 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do think the objectives
48 are hitting the nail on the head there. One comment that I

1 would have, regarding the first bullet there, implement an
2 adaptive catch share model that redistributes shares to accounts
3 harvesting IFQ species, and so we, obviously, received a
4 presentation from Dr. Ropicki on this, and there was some
5 interest -- I think that there are some pretty great things that
6 could be done here with this approach.

7
8 However, since it's never been implemented, or done, before, I
9 would kind of like to evaluate the impact on that before
10 implementation, and so, obviously, that first bullet says
11 "implement an adaptive catch share model", and I guess my point
12 here would be "to evaluate and implement, if appropriate, an
13 adaptive catch share model that redistributes shares to accounts
14 harvesting IFQ species", and so just my two-cents on that one.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, C.J., and so we'll circle back on that
17 wording, suggested wording, change in the first bullet, but
18 we'll keep it in mind here. Ms. Boggs.

19
20 **MS. BOGGS:** I would echo what C.J. said. I mean, not knowing
21 what that's going to look like, we certainly don't want to --
22 The IFQ program is working, and it may not be working for
23 everyone, and I know we need to make tweaks, but we don't want
24 to do something like this and completely disrupt a program that
25 is currently working.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Ms. Boggs, for those comments, and
28 so, again, C.J., I just wanted to make sure that I took the time
29 to write a few notes, and so it's "evaluate and implement" --

30
31 **DR. SWEETMAN:** "If appropriate".

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** "If appropriate". Okay. Any other thoughts?
34 Mr. Williamson.

35
36 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** I have -- I appreciate the adaptive catch share
37 program, and it has some places in it that I see that it could
38 be abused, but I would suggest that we not limit ourselves to
39 the adaptive catch share program and that we implement a program
40 approved by the council that redistributes shares to accounts
41 harvesting IFQ species. My personal preference, as you know,
42 would be a public auction that would be wholly transparent.
43 Thank you.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Williamson. Again, all good
46 thoughts and ideas, and I want to distinguish goals and
47 objectives and tactics, right, and I don't think we're quite at
48 the level of, you know, the tactics here, but I think that, if

1 we can agree on some of the language here, and maybe even step
2 back from this bullet and ask ourselves what it's trying to
3 achieve, and, when I read it, I'm saying, okay, we want to
4 evaluate, and potentially implement, a process that equitably
5 distributes those shares, and, again, there's lots of different
6 ways to get there, and so maybe if I could make that suggestion,
7 for that bullet point, but, before I do that, I just want to
8 make sure that people might be in agreement with that. Go
9 ahead, Mara.

10
11 **MS. LEVY:** Well, just a question, and so the goal is to improve
12 opportunities for participants to enter the program, and I am
13 guessing that the objectives are supposed to lead to that goal,
14 right, and it seems to me that implementing an adaptive catch
15 share model -- Whatever is implemented, you all are going to
16 decide what that means, right, and what does "adaptive catch
17 share" mean, and how is it going to work, and like that is
18 totally going to be -- But that is very different than
19 establishing an auction, which could also meet the goal, right,
20 but might not be your objective.

21
22 I guess I see these as sort of individual things that could
23 either work together or just be one objective to achieve that
24 goal, and so, I mean, I just think -- I just think that you can
25 think about the objectives as achieving that broader goal, but
26 they can be different objectives, and they might not all work
27 together, right, and so I think that's why you're kind of
28 looking to pick.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I agree with that. I mean, clearly the
31 objectives should, you know, help you achieve, or obtain, a
32 goal, and there may be multiple pathways to achieving the goal,
33 and I guess what I'm trying to do is, without getting too
34 prescriptive here, try to -- Because I think, ultimately, we
35 will get there, right, but, I mean, I'm trying to dig into the
36 language here in these bullets, and, without saying, again, do
37 we want to use an auction, or do we want to use, you know, an
38 adaptive catch share model, and I don't know what that looks
39 like yet, but what I do know is that we want to be able to
40 distribute, and I am not going to use the word "redistribute",
41 but I'm just going to distribute the shares in a way that's
42 consistent with the goal. It's probably as simple as that, but,
43 again, I am happy to beat that back and forth with you a bit,
44 Mara. Dakus.

45
46 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you. I completely agree with Ms. Levy's
47 comments, and back to C.J.'s, and I think, as we link these
48 potential, and I will call them objectives, but, really, they're

1 a laundry list of strategies that we've listed here, with the
2 goal of accomplishing this goal.

3
4 I think, inherently, we have that, a level of evaluation, as we
5 think through every single one of these, and we really think,
6 okay, is this going to achieve this, and I think, if it was as
7 simple as just listing these objectives, we wouldn't be sitting
8 here today, and we would have accomplished this a long time ago,
9 and so, as we really think though, okay, and I'm glad we're here
10 having this discussion, but, as we think through these
11 objectives, we're going to evaluate those, at some point, and
12 we're going to walk through and evaluate and see how those
13 measure up to accomplish this list of goals.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Dakus. Mr. Dyskow.

16
17 **MR. DYSKOW:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do agree with everything
18 that's been said, in that there are multiple ways we can proceed
19 with this, but perhaps a broad starting point, that would allow
20 us to more reasonably select the specific method would be to
21 say, if, today, we're allocating 100 percent of the fish under
22 the IFQ program, maybe we change that to 80 percent, and we have
23 this 20 percent of the available resource that we can
24 redistribute through one of these methodologies, but let's first
25 establish the fact that we need to get these fish in some kind
26 of a bank, and then we can proceed with whatever methodology
27 makes the most sense.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Phil. Again, just thinking
30 about what you're saying there, and so, maybe to generalize, an
31 objective -- We'll use the five bulleted points as kind of a
32 reference point, but, essentially, what you're talking about is
33 evaluating and implementing a process to distribute shares,
34 right, that optimizes participation in the fishery, and, that
35 way, it would be consistent, and it would align with the goal.

36
37 **MR. DYSKOW:** But, more specifically, we need to figure out where
38 these fish are coming from. We need to do that first.
39 Otherwise, how can we proceed, and so, I think, more
40 objectively, let's decide where these fish are coming from, how
41 we're going to attain them, and then we can look at how we're
42 going to distribute them in a way that allows us to achieve the
43 objective of letting in new participants. What has always
44 stopped us before is there were no fish. How can you give
45 something away?

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Right, and, again, my silence here is I'm just
48 trying to capture your thoughts, Phil. I mean, when we have an

1 objective, and we're able to articulate one here that is aligned
2 with the goal, I think we can have some sub-bullets, perhaps,
3 under that, and like so, if we were going to evaluate and
4 implement a process to distribute shares that optimizes
5 participation in the fishery, for example, you know, we might,
6 under that evaluation part of that, perhaps have a sub-bullet
7 that says, you know, allow some discretionary allocation of
8 shares, right, because that's what you're getting at, I think,
9 and so I'm happy to go that route, right, but I need to have an
10 objective, I think, that's general enough to capture some of
11 these other items that we're talking about and how to achieve
12 that.

13
14 Let's at least try that, all right, and see what the sub-bullets
15 might look like, and I might scrap then and turn around, but,
16 Bernie, let's just go ahead, for this objective, and say the
17 objective is to evaluate and implement a process to distribute
18 shares that optimize participation in the program. To evaluate
19 and implement a process to distribute shares that optimize
20 participation in the program, and we can be specific, I guess,
21 of IFQ program, if you want.

22
23 **MR. DYSKOW:** That optimizes new entrant participation.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think we had -- I think the discussion
26 around the table before was we limited it to participants,
27 right, because it wasn't necessarily the new participants, and
28 it was the longer. Okay. There are a couple of potential
29 avenues here, right, and maybe a sub-bullet, and what I'm
30 hearing at least, and we'll get it up on the board for
31 discussion, is to allow, for discretionary distribution of
32 shares to meet the objective in support of the goal. That would
33 be, again, like a bullet. Okay. I am going to stop for a
34 minute, and I see that Dr. Shipp has his hand up, and then Mr.
35 Strelcheck. Go ahead, Bob.

36
37 **DR. SHIPP:** Thank you. I want to go back to what Phil
38 mentioned. It seems, to me, that what you have on the board is
39 really Step 2, and it seems like Step 1 is where are we going to
40 get the shares, and it seems, to me, that that's the fundamental
41 problem here, is we have to have some shares to distribute, and
42 it doesn't make much sense to consider distribution methods if
43 we don't have any shares to do it, and so, again, I go back to
44 Phil's comment of TACs and 20 percent, some source that would
45 create essentially a quota bank and operate from there. Thank
46 you.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I mean, I understand what you're saying, and

1 I'm not necessarily wed to this structure, and, again, let me
2 hear a little more discussion on this before I decide to move
3 things around. Mr. Williamson.

4
5 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** We mentioned, previously, the problem with in
6 perpetuity of shares, and Phil has mentioned taking the excess
7 of the new allocation, but the majority of the shares, of
8 course, are currently outstanding to the original shareholders
9 and people who they have transferred these shares to, or
10 purchased from other folks, and I would suggest that, when a
11 shareholder passes away, dies, then those shares be reclaimed,
12 to be distributed, and that would also include intergenerational
13 transfers that they've made, or transfers that they've made to
14 third parties or legal entities, such as corporations, and, I
15 mean, it's a privilege that was granted to them, individually,
16 and it should not be continued to be an in-perpetuity transfer.
17 Thank you.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Troy. Again, we'll circle back and
20 try to figure out where this might fit in the structure. Ms.
21 Boggs.

22
23 **MS. BOGGS:** So, in Amendment 36B -- Andy.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I apologize. Andy, you were first. Susan, go
26 ahead, and then Andy has yielded to you.

27
28 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, sir. In Amendment 36B, and I don't know
29 what the actual page number is, but it's Table 1.1.2 and 1.1.3,
30 and I don't know if Jessica is still on the phone, but it was
31 page -- Actual page 4 of 36B, and there was a table in there,
32 and the first one is defining the number of shareholder accounts
33 with and without shares in any share category, and the second
34 table is the number of shareholder accounts that are public and
35 non-public.

36
37 We need to figure out that information, get that updated, and
38 then determine how many of those accounts are latent, or not
39 landing, fish, because then, and I believe there's another table
40 in here that I can't find yet, but then you can look at that,
41 and maybe look at your latency, and, instead of -- I am trying
42 to choose my words carefully.

43
44 Just look at the latency, and maybe that is a way, if you're
45 wanting to do down this road, that you can find shares to
46 distribute without disrupting the current fishery, as it is,
47 with those fishermen that have earned the right to fish, have
48 worked for those fish, and that's their business model, and I

1 think that's a good starting point, if you're wanting to look to
2 see where we might capture some fish that can be used to be
3 distributed for this participant issue that we're discussing.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Again, I agree that that's a potential
6 contribution to a discretionary -- To discretionary shares, or
7 quota, right, and probably a mechanism that we might employ, but
8 it may not -- I don't know, and, based on what Jessica had said
9 before, it's a relatively small amount, but I don't know that
10 for sure, right, but it's a mechanism, and I don't -- Go ahead.

11
12 **MS. BOGGS:** I apologize, Tom, but I think what Jessica was
13 saying is the agency has recaptured some shares, but I didn't
14 think that was the same as this, and my apologies, and so, if
15 Jessica is listening, she'll know what I'm looking at, but it's
16 Table 2.1.1, document page 19, and it's about reef fish permits
17 in relation to landings and IFQ accounts.

18
19 In 2018, there were 317 latent permits, and I don't know that
20 those are the shares, and Andy can maybe address that, or
21 Jessica, that were reclaimed, and maybe I am wrong, but I think
22 these are accounts -- They're still accounts, and so I think
23 that might be something -- I may be wrong, but I think we
24 should, if that is a viable option, ask the agency to update
25 this table and look to see what that might equate to.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Jessica, do you want to respond to that
28 comment?

29
30 **DR. STEPHEN:** Let me see if I can help out here a little bit,
31 and so the table you currently have showing, Table 2.1.1, is
32 showing the overall number of reef fish permits, and the latent
33 permits in this are people that were not landing any reef fish,
34 and so not IFQ and not non-IFQ, and so that's what the latent
35 permits there reflect to.

36
37 When we're looking within the IFQ accounts, which is a subset of
38 the reef fish permits, we have IFQ accounts that are active, in
39 the sense that they were transferring shares and allocation or
40 making landings, and then we also have depicted the number of
41 IFQ accounts that had landings overall.

42
43 This is slightly different than when we're talking about the
44 public participant accounts that do or do not have permits, and
45 so that's only within the IFQ system, versus within the entire
46 reef fish community for the permits. Susan, did that help
47 answer your questions?

1 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I'm just trying to look to see if you have
2 latent permits, just like what the charter fleet has been trying
3 to do, to decrease the number in the fleet, and, if you have a
4 bunch of latent permits, and then you could go further, and it
5 just seemed like that might be a good place to start, without
6 totally disrupting the system as it currently is, and so, just
7 real quickly, Jessica, and so those latent permits -- Do they
8 have shares attached to them, I guess would be the question, and
9 then what does that number look like?

10
11 **DR. STEPHEN:** When we were looking at the latent permits, we
12 were just looking at overall reef fish landings, and so there
13 may be a portion of those latent permits that also have an IFQ
14 account and also have shares that they are not landing. I think
15 it would be easier for us to look within the IFQ system and look
16 at accounts that are not active, and, in this case, I am
17 defining "active" as they are not transferring allocation, they
18 are not transferring shares, and they are not having landings.

19
20 These, I think, were identified back when we were taking shares
21 back, but we were very narrow in the scope, when we took shares
22 back in 36A, for accounts that were not active and had not been
23 logged into.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Boggs.

26
27 **MS. BOGGS:** So this would be in addition to the fish, or the
28 shares, excuse me, that the agency has already reclaimed.

29
30 **DR. STEPHEN:** Correct. You could reclaim more shares from IFQ
31 accounts that have not been active in a specified time period.
32 Depending on that time period in your criteria for active, it
33 would depend on how much would be revoked.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen. Again, I appreciate
36 that that's a mechanism to acquire, or identify, shares that
37 could be redistributed, and we don't know, at this point,
38 whether that is sufficient or not to meet the objective, right,
39 and so I'm trying to -- Go ahead, Susan.

40
41 **MS. BOGGS:** So you're saying you don't know if that's enough to
42 meet the objective, and so now are we going to come back and say
43 we need a thousand shares, and, I mean, are we going to be
44 prescriptive in what -- I mean, because, as the quota increases,
45 those numbers increase, it will continue to grow, but,
46 obviously, I misunderstood what you just said, because now it
47 sounds like -- You said there's not going to be enough shares,
48 but we don't know what that looks like.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Exactly right, and I don't know what that
3 looks like. What Jessica indicated, in her original talk, was
4 that there was a limited amount of shares that had been
5 essentially reclaimed, right, and there may in fact be some more
6 latent kind of permits, I guess, out there that could add
7 additional quota that, but, to get to both Phil's kind of
8 comment, and Bob's comment, if this bullet point under the
9 objective -- Maybe it is an objective to begin with, right, to
10 identify a discretionary pool of shares that can be distributed
11 to meet the objectives, you know, or to meet the goal, and then
12 there may be a number of things that we do under there, right,
13 and so, for example, identify the latent permits, blah, blah,
14 blah.

15
16 Again, I'm looking back to Phil, who is at the table, and, Bob,
17 I can't see you, but I'm happy to think about replacing the
18 objective with slightly different wording. Go ahead, Phil.

19
20 **MR. DYSKOW:** I sort of agree with Susan, in that, if there's a
21 less painful way to acquire these shares, non-participating
22 fishermen -- If we can reclaim those shares in a way that's not
23 directly taking shares away from active fishermen in the IFQ
24 program, that's a better way, and there's probably going to be a
25 full menu of items, and that's the easy lift, and so let's put
26 that one, you know, near the top.

27
28 We need shares to redistribute, and we need a bank, or whatever
29 we choose to call it. Where they come from, there's probably
30 several different ways they can be acquired, and starting with
31 the least painful makes perfect sense.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Phil. Andy.

34
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Real quick, to Phil's
36 point, 100 percent of the shares are allocated in this fishery,
37 and so any changes you would make to the shareholdings would
38 automatically take something away from existing shareholders,
39 but provide it to any new shareholders, and allocation works a
40 little different, but we could be taking still allocation away
41 from shareholders and redistribute to others, and so I don't
42 know if there's really an easy path there.

43
44 I am struggling with what's on the board. I don't really know
45 what "optimize" means, and optimize relative to what, and I
46 think that could be interpreted very differently for those
47 around the table. Is it economics, or is it participation, and,
48 you know, whatever that goal is, right, I'm not sure that I

1 understand "optimize", and I certainly don't understand kind of
2 "discretionary distribution".

3
4 My recommendation, if we want to generalize and get away from
5 the adaptive kind of catch share approach, and I really like
6 C.J.'s suggestion about to evaluate and implement, but maybe we
7 could say something like "to evaluate and implement, if
8 appropriate, alternative mechanisms for redistributing shares
9 and allocation to accounts harvesting IFQ species".

10
11 That broadens it, and it kind of covers both the share component
12 and the allocation component, and it gives us flexibility to do
13 that evaluation, look at some alternative processes, including
14 the adaptive catch share, but not restricted to the adaptative
15 catch share, and then, ultimately, decide is there something
16 that we think is better for the program, and then we can
17 proceed.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. So, if you're willing, Andy, and if you
20 want to re-craft that objective, and I think you would have to
21 switch some words around for Bernie, and we'll leave that up on
22 the board and start to work with that.

23
24 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, Bernie, maybe just go down to the bottom,
25 so we can maintain the current text right now, and so it would
26 say to evaluate and implement, if appropriate, alternative
27 mechanisms for redistributing shares and allocation to accounts
28 harvesting IFQ species.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so, before we discuss this in more
31 detail, I wanted to have Dr. Stephen have an opportunity to
32 weigh-in. Her hand is up. Jessica.

33
34 **DR. STEPHEN:** I just wanted to say that I did find the numbers
35 that Susan was talking about. If you look in the IFQ annual
36 reports, for red snapper, we have thirty-one accounts that we
37 considered inactive, and they held around 26,000 pounds. If you
38 look in grouper-tilefish, overall, as a whole, we have about 252
39 accounts that were inactive, that held, as a whole, for all the
40 grouper-tilefish categories, 284,000 pounds, and so the annual
41 reports are in the background material, if people are interested
42 in looking at it, and it's Table 18 in grouper-tilefish and
43 Table 11 in red snapper.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen, for that. We have a
46 suggested revision to the wording of the objective by Andy, to
47 evaluate and implement, if appropriate, alternative mechanisms
48 for redistributing shares and allocation to accounts harvesting

1 IFQ species. I am personally okay with that language and
2 replacing the current language under the objective, if everybody
3 else is. Okay. I am not seeing any objection to that, and so,
4 Bernie, we'll go ahead and replace the original language. I
5 think we want it as the primary objective and not the bullet.
6 Okay.

7
8 Again, what I have asked people to do is not get too
9 prescriptive in how, you know, we do that, and I'm still
10 thinking that I haven't adequately resolved the issue that Phil
11 and Bob Shipp brought up, you know, which has to do -- Maybe it
12 does, right, because I am thinking about what would --

13
14 The term that I used originally, Andy, was "discretionary",
15 right, and so what I was aiming for there was the flexibility to
16 deal with multiple issues, right, some of the diversify or allow
17 for increased participation in the fishery, but also some of the
18 other things that we know are going on in the goals, the other
19 goals, specifically the discards, right, and so, in order to
20 attack either of those goals, you're going to need some
21 flexibility, right, and so that's -- Go ahead, Phil.

22
23 **MR. DYSKOW:** I think you're right, but, to go back to what Andy
24 said, we currently allocate 100 percent of the fish, and we need
25 to have some sort of a hold-back methodology to create the
26 flexibility to do any of these things, and we have to start with
27 the fact that, if you're going to allocate 100 percent of the
28 fish from the get-go, you have no fish to do this, and so I
29 think a significant place to start would be let's commit to
30 building this hold-back, whatever it is, so that we can
31 accomplish whatever we decide to do, but, until we do that,
32 we're just writing words on a piece of paper, or on a screen, in
33 this case.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Dyskow. Mr. Dugas.

36
37 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's along the lines of
38 what I was going to comment on, is this is all fine-and-dandy,
39 but I think we're ahead of ourselves, and we need to find out
40 where the allocation, quota, fish, where it's going to come
41 from, and I have some ideas, but I don't know if this is the
42 right time or place to say it.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Well, it's an open forum right now, and so
45 fire away, and we'll talk about it, and, if we're too far in the
46 weeds, we'll step back.

47
48 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so some of my ideas is I

1 guess we could maybe call it a claw-back mechanism, and we can
2 look at regaining shares from other participants that are not
3 active fishermen, and even the fishermen that are leasing shares
4 out, and, you know, there's fishermen that they catch their
5 quota, but they also lease some too, and so that's two of the
6 points that I would like to see move forward, is I'm not
7 interested in taking any fish, or allocation, away from active
8 fishermen that is catching fish. If he's making a living, the
9 IFQ program is working in that fashion, but the guys that are
10 not actively fishing, that's where I think we need to look at.
11 That's where some of these fish can come from. Thank you.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. I will come back to that in just a
14 second. Andy.

15
16 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I think, J.D., some of what you were just
17 mentioning is related to some other objectives that we haven't
18 even kind of walked through, with relation to Goal 5, and I
19 guess I would caution against getting too specific with regard
20 to the actual mechanism which we're going to then implement, and
21 I know, for example, Mr. Dyskow has suggested, you know, some
22 sort of holdback, right, and, well, that might be reasonable,
23 and it may be the approach we want to take, but we want to
24 figure out first the why, right, and why are we going to hold it
25 back, and what's the purpose of holding it back.

26
27 Yes, this is the mechanism for which we're going to hold back
28 the shares and allocation, and this has been the goal and
29 objective that we're now going to meet based on doing that,
30 right, and so that's why it's been a very methodical approach,
31 and it's taken us a long time to get to this point, is let's
32 first define what we want to do, and then, from there, we can be
33 tactful, in terms of our response.

34
35 I will also say that, as you all well know around the table,
36 this is an extremely complicated program, not just complicated
37 to administer, but we have all kinds of different businesses
38 that are operating with the program, right, and so I caution
39 against just kind of blanket statements about how we do things,
40 because it's going to affect people so differently, based on how
41 they participate in the fishery, and there's a lot of people,
42 some sitting in this audience, that have invested a lot of money
43 in this catch share program, right, and they have put financial
44 capital into the program, and made that investment, because they
45 believe in the program, and there's people that received quota
46 share, right from the get-go, that maybe haven't invested, and
47 there's people that have bought allocation and they're leasing
48 it.

1
2 All of that has to be taken into account when trying to figure
3 out kind of where are we going to land with accomplishing these
4 goals and objectives.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Ms. Levy.

7
8 **MS. LEVY:** Just to point out that so the idea of an adaptive
9 catch share model, that redistributes shares to accounts
10 harvesting IFQ species, right, and so that, to me, is kind of
11 what J.D. is talking about, right, and so adaptive catch share
12 is going to identify which accounts are harvesting both species
13 and then reallocate over time, however you decide to that.

14
15 That is very different than setting aside some shares that you
16 then have in a bank that you then decide how to redistribute for
17 a particular purpose, and so I hear both of those ideas
18 happening, and that's fine, but I guess I just -- You don't need
19 to withhold shares to then redistribute them, necessarily, to
20 those harvesting fish, and like you could choose to do that
21 adaptive catch share, which does that over time.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I totally get that, I mean, but that only kind
24 of achieves partial success, I think, in my mind anyway, but
25 it's okay, and it's still an alternative mechanism here, in the
26 way that this objective is written, right, and it's one of many
27 that might be evaluated, and so I just don't -- What I am trying
28 to avoid right now is saying we're going to do adaptive catch
29 shares, and we're not ready for that yet.

30
31 **MS. LEVY:** Correct, and I guess my point is like there's a lot
32 of discussion about where is all this stuff going to come from,
33 but I kind of agree that that's a little bit ahead of the game,
34 because what do you want to do with it, right, and, if the goal
35 is to redistribute to those actually harvesting the fish, that
36 might be a different where do the fish come from than the goal
37 is to do X, Y, or Z, and so that was just my point.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and well taken. All right. So, this is
40 a fairly general statement, and I appreciate why it was crafted
41 the way that it was, and I think we're still a ways away, right,
42 from getting into the specific kind of tactics that would be
43 employed to achieve the objective, and so let's hold this one on
44 the board for right now, all right, and let's see if we can,
45 Bernie, go back to the bulleted objectives and see if there are
46 others that apply and whether they are significantly different,
47 so that they're not captured under Objective 1 and they stand
48 alone.

1
2 Okay, and so we've essentially generalized, I think for the
3 better, the first bullet point there, and I think, in so doing,
4 and, again, Andy, you might correct me if I'm wrong here, but we
5 could probably -- Well, I always appreciate his contributions,
6 but I am thinking that we could probably dispose of the final
7 bullet, I mean, because that's essentially one, you know,
8 mechanism, right, and so we don't need that, and so we have
9 three that are still on the board here a little bit, and so I'm
10 going to open the floor up for if somebody wants to talk about
11 any of those bulleted items, whether they're limiting share
12 ownership, identifying barriers, or creating an allocation bank.
13 I know you want to say it, Kevin. Go ahead.

14
15 **MR. ANSON:** For me, and I've heard others mention it this
16 morning, and it's been mentioned at meetings before, if the goal
17 to permanently redistribute shares, I mean, I guess it could be
18 covered under the current objective that we have tailored, that
19 Andy offered, but I'm just -- I guess we'll find the devil is in
20 the details, to kind of see how that shakes out, but I'm just
21 concerned that it isn't here, I guess, clear enough for us, and
22 for the public, to kind of understand that.

23
24 If that is in fact a goal that we're trying to shoot for, I'm
25 just trying to think how whatever mechanism, or process, that we
26 craft will address that issue of breaking the link of the
27 original fisherman's share from future, you know, heirs or
28 whoever that got those share rights in perpetuity, I guess, is,
29 I guess, what I'm thinking of, as I look at this and trying to
30 think ahead as to how any program would be changed, is to
31 address that issue. That's all, and so it's the in the back of
32 my mind, but, again, it could be something that is eked out as
33 we develop a specific mechanism to do such thing.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Let me ponder that a bit, right, and
36 then we'll come back to it, but I think that Dr. Stunz wanted to
37 perhaps speak to this objective that's on the board.

38
39 **DR. STUNZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think it would fall under
40 this objective, or maybe a new one, but, earlier on in Jessica's
41 presentation, about how we arrived at where we are today, and it
42 had to do with NOAA's equity and environmental justice strategy,
43 essentially ensuring that underserved communities -- That these
44 shares are equitably distributed in a consistent and fair
45 manner. I don't know how we would build that in, or just, you
46 know, continue the sentence, to ensuring that it meets NOAA's,
47 you know, EEJ strategies or something like that.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think you could just simply add "alternative
2 mechanisms for equitably redistributing shares", right?
3

4 **DR. STUNZ:** Right. I think that would capture it.
5

6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Can you insert, Bernie, the word "equitably"
7 in front of "redistributing"? Again, there's a record here,
8 right, and so, if we want to go back and understand the intent,
9 and I think everybody will understand what it is. Go ahead.
10

11 **DR. STUNZ:** To that point, Tom, we had an entire slide over
12 that, and so I just wanted to make sure it's clear in the
13 record, and, I mean, what you have there is perfectly fine, but
14 that word "equitable" specifically is referring to NOAA's equity
15 and environmental justice strategy.
16

17 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Dr. Diagne.
18

19 **DR. DIAGNE:** Just a question, and I guess, when I read this,
20 what I don't know is what "equitable" means, if we went down to
21 it, and I'm not sure that we have very specific guidance that
22 would say distribution X is equitable, and so that's, I guess,
23 something that we would have to struggle with.
24

25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I would agree with you, and, I mean, it's
26 something that we will certainly have to consider in the
27 discussions moving forward, right, and so what I'm wondering
28 about, Kevin, right now is -- You know, it's all tied into these
29 things we're talking about, and, I mean, if -- One potential
30 mechanism, for example, is how do we look at long-term ownership
31 and these concerns over perpetual ownership, I guess, and
32 whether or not -- Maybe that's a new objectives that says to
33 just consider, right, that issue, but I'm going to leave it to
34 you to -- I mean, currently, the relevant bullet, right, in the
35 slide show, or the deck, is limit share ownerships, I think.
36

37 If you want to think about language that captures that idea,
38 that's consistent with that second bullet point, I would be
39 willing to include it as an objective here, right, and, I mean,
40 these are -- It's okay to put these on the board, and we may,
41 down the road, not go there, right, but at least these are lists
42 of things that we want to consider potentially considering
43 today, and so I will let you wordsmith that on the fly, if
44 you're willing. Sorry to put the pressure on you.
45

46 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and so I'm not quite ready, but I guess, just
47 to address your -- You brought up the limit share ownership, and
48 so, you know, I see that as kind of a twofold thing. Yes, you

1 can limit share ownership, the in-perpetuity kind of context,
2 but it would also be limit share ownership inasmuch as just
3 maintaining or setting a different percentage, you know, and
4 limit it that way, the cap. Let me think on it a little bit
5 more, to see if I can put into words what I'm thinking. Thank
6 you.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Does anybody have any thoughts on
9 these other bullets? C.J.

10
11 **DR. SWEETMAN:** So I have a question, likely a dumb question, but
12 it's never stopped me before. Andy, I'm coming at you here, and
13 so the fisheries finance program, and I'm wondering --
14 Considering maybe an additional objective here that could
15 potentially look at, but I'm not familiar, intimately familiar,
16 with the fisheries finance program, and that's why I'm asking
17 the question, and do you think that there's a potential
18 mechanism within there for evaluating potentially streamlining
19 that program, that could help accomplish this goal?

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.

22
23 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So I am going to call a friend, and Jessica
24 Stephen is on the line, and I know she did a detail with the
25 fisheries finance program, and I guess I will say that I'm not
26 sure that we have, necessarily, any kind of direct control, or
27 authority, to make changes, but certainly the council, within
28 their purview, could make recommendations, but I will let
29 Jessica weigh-in.

30
31 **DR. STEPHEN:** I worked with the fisheries finance program, in
32 particular to set up the program to be eligible for our catch
33 share program, and so Andy is correct that there are certain
34 limitations that we have in place with how that's structured,
35 because it is a nationally-structured program, and the terms of
36 the program typically would have to go through Congress, in
37 order to have some changes made to them.

38
39 I would though encourage, if there are particular changes that
40 this council might want to see, that they could submit a letter,
41 asking for more information, or for what portions of the program
42 could be changed or modified, in order to meet some of these
43 needs, and I am happy to give contacts that we have within the
44 Southeast Region of people who are working with that program.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen. I think Dr. Sweetman
47 said he is okay with that answer. All right. Again, I'm going
48 to walk through these other bullet points, and I am asking

1 myself, as I walk through, are they really bearing on the
2 overall goal, right, and so, if the goal is to improve
3 opportunities for participants, does that bullet of limit share
4 ownership to accounts that are harvesting IFQ species -- Is that
5 consistent? We can keep it as a goal, or as an objective, and I
6 just want to make sure that people want to do that. Mr.
7 Williamson.

8
9 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** I think that the conundrum here is the public
10 participants. I mean, we've already invited them into the
11 program, and I am not in favor of them, nor do I particularly
12 object to them, but we are kicking them out, according to this
13 language.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Strelcheck.

16
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I guess, before weighing-in on Bullet 2 for the
18 objective, the question I guess I would have for the council is
19 are we all on the same page with what it means for a participant
20 to enter the program, right, because I think entry may mean
21 different things to different people around this table, and, you
22 know, to me, I guess entry would not be just you're
23 participating in the program, but you have some sort of shares
24 or allocation actually to be involved directly in the program.

25
26 Objective 2, or the Bullet 2, obviously, directly relates to
27 public participation, and the provision that was put in place
28 five years after program implementation, and, to be honest, I am
29 not sure that it addresses the goal or not, right, because I
30 don't know the advantages, or disadvantages, of eliminating
31 public participation and what the ramifications might be on
32 those that actually rely on that quota allocation to access the
33 fishery.

34
35 I just wanted to put that out there, that it was put in here
36 simply because we've heard a lot around this table about
37 concerns about public participation, but there may be some kind
38 of unintended consequences, depending on how we want to proceed
39 with addressing that objective.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So maybe an objective, Andy, is to evaluate
42 the merits of private -- I guess public participation, I guess,
43 in the IFQ fishery, and, I mean, I guess what you're telling me,
44 and what I'm hearing, is that there has been a fair amount of
45 discussion around this table, historically, about is that a good
46 thing or a bad thing, and I don't think we've ever, as a body,
47 come to a conclusion, right, and, again, recognizing that you're
48 not going to get seventeen people to agree on anything, but

1 there may in fact, you know -- If we could have that dialogue,
2 and weigh the pros and cons, you know, and, as you said, if you
3 got rid of it, are there unintended consequences, and I think we
4 at least have to have a dedicated discussion, perhaps, on that
5 topic.

6
7 My inclination is probably to leave the bulleted item as an
8 objective, but to restructure it in a way that says to perhaps
9 evaluate the merits of limiting share ownership. Would you be
10 okay with that? Andy.

11
12 **MR. STRELCHECK:** When we were working with the council staff in
13 drafting a lot of these goals and objectives, there was a lot of
14 evaluations kind of put before the objective, right, and we
15 thought a lot about whether or not we should include that word,
16 right, because then it kind of opens the door to like, well,
17 there's more work to be done, versus, you know, are we at a
18 decision point, and we should be more definitive, in terms of
19 our objective, be very specific that we don't want, or we do
20 want, people holding shares that aren't directly harvesting
21 quota, or that aren't directly fishing in the fishery, right,
22 and so, to me, what I've heard around the table is more
23 sentiment to prohibit that action, and so I personally am more
24 neutral on this topic, but was yielding toward the perspective
25 of those around this table that it sounded like this was
26 something that we did want to be prescriptive on and prohibit.

27
28 I lean toward, where we can be definitive, we should, and avoid
29 using terms like "evaluate", because I think that takes us down
30 a lengthy road of then evaluation, and we may not be addressing
31 some of these things for quite some time.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Fair deal, and I am happy to leave the
34 language in as written, and, you know, clearly there will be
35 some analysis, right, as we go through that, and discussion, and
36 we may walk that back, and I don't know, and I don't have the
37 answer to that, but, if that's the sentiment, it's certainly an
38 assertive way, right, to structure it as an objective, and we
39 can do that, and so let's go ahead and move that bullet point
40 then over, Bernie, the one that says "limit share ownership",
41 and make it a second objective.

42
43 Okay, and so that's a second objective, and where is our first
44 objective? Let's work this out, real quick. All right. There
45 you go, and I will let her go ahead and format that. All right.

46
47 So then, again, in the interest of time, I'm going to try to at
48 least work us through this first goal, and hopefully the second

1 goal, and what I'm hearing, also, is that these other bullet
2 points, the last two, there is certainly some desire to create
3 some type of an allocation bank, to reduce barriers to fishing
4 privileges, and I think that gets, in part, to what Dale and Bob
5 were trying to get at as well, right, and so we will leave that
6 as an objective.

7
8 Bernie, what we're going to do is go to Slide 14, and, for now,
9 why don't you take the third and fourth bullet points that are
10 in that Slide 14, and we'll transfer them to objectives on the
11 Word document that you're working on, and that will leave us
12 with four objectives, and we'll just talk about those last two,
13 and then we will move on to Goal 2.

14
15 Okay, and so I'm going to first do 4, and sorry, but, Phil, I
16 think that's in line with your original comments, right, and
17 you're happy to keep that as an objective under this goal?
18 Okay. I'm not -- Is there any objection to making this as an
19 objective? I'm not seeing any, and so then we'll go to Number
20 3, which is identifying barriers inhibiting, or limiting,
21 participation by surveying participants and those wanting to
22 enter the fishery.

23
24 I mean, that's largely an informational exercise, but probably
25 one that's well worth doing, and so I don't -- I would be
26 surprised if there's any objection to that. Are people happy
27 leaving it on the list? All right.

28
29 Did anybody want to add anything to this list? I mean, this
30 will be an evolving document, you know, perhaps, but I think
31 this gives us a good starting point, and we'll talk about our
32 next steps after we talk about the next goal, right, and so
33 we're going to leave this one behind, as soon as Bernie feels
34 comfortable with that. Andy, go ahead.

35
36 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't know if we have time to wordsmith
37 today, but this issue of inheritance, you know, kind of shares
38 and privileges being passed down through generations, and I
39 don't know if it's fully captured in this list, but maybe
40 something that the council staff maybe could take a stab at
41 coming back to, if that's something of interest to the council.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I am looking if everybody is willing to
44 listen. Okay. Andy, I think that's good. We will -- In fact,
45 what we'll do is come back in Full Council, and we'll think
46 about some appropriate language in there, to make sure that
47 people are good with that, and so, Dr. Simmons and Dr. Diagne, I
48 just wanted to make sure that you captured this comment, that

1 we're going to add -- We've got some discretion here to add some
2 language in this Goal Number 1 objectives that has to deal with
3 ownership of these shares, perpetual ownership, I guess, right?

4
5 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. Thank you, and that would include,
6 essentially, temporal limits, in terms of ownership, let's say
7 ten years, et cetera.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I don't think, again, we would get that
10 prescriptive, but we want the objectives to deal with that. All
11 right, and so we'll bring that back to the folks in Full
12 Council. Ms. Boggs.

13
14 **MS. BOGGS:** I am only commenting because of that little kind of
15 side discussion there, and I don't think, when we look at this,
16 it needs to be limited. I mean, again, these fishermen, whether
17 they've been in the fishery since the IFQ was created or they
18 worked their way up from the deck and bought a boat and acquired
19 shares, and I do not feel like that we need to limit this. That
20 is something that they worked for, and commercial fishing is
21 commerce, and, like any other business, you build your business,
22 and you have a good business model, and somebody wants to come
23 in and buy you out, or you want to leave it to your family, and
24 to say you can only do this for this many years, and you can't
25 give it to your -- That's kind of sometimes what I hear at this
26 table, and I just wanted to get that out there.

27
28 This is a business that these people have built, and some of
29 them are second and third and coming into the fourth generation,
30 and to say, oh, you can't do that anymore, and you need to go
31 find a new profession, I think it would just be very derelict of
32 this council to do something like that.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I understand that sentiment, and, again, these
35 are an initial list, right, and they are simply, hopefully,
36 providing us a more focused path forward, where we'll be able to
37 deal with these specific items in a more efficient and effective
38 manner, moving forward, and so, whether we adopt something like
39 that or not, there will certainly be a tremendous amount of
40 discussion, and so we'll just keep it on the board now, but your
41 comments are, obviously, reflected in the record, or will be,
42 and so thank you, Susan.

43
44 Okay, and so we're going to go ahead and go to the second goal
45 that was on our list. All right, and so the second goal that we
46 prioritized is to reduce IFQ discards, and so, again, there are
47 three bulleted items here, and, in order to achieve that goal,
48 one way to do it is to improve collection of discard information

1 from IFQ vessels, and we can, again, create an allocation bank
2 to further reduce bycatch and discards of the various IFQ
3 species, and the third bullet point here is to evaluate
4 additional or new flexibility measures to reduce discards.

5
6 As an individual, I looked at this, and I said, I don't think
7 that there's going to be much debate about the first bullet
8 item, right, and, I mean, the more information that we can
9 gather that would allow us to characterize, you know, in a
10 precise and accurate way, the number of discards, that will help
11 us, right, and so I'm just going to go out on a limb and say
12 we'll go ahead and adopt that bullet as an objective. Mr.
13 Anson.

14
15 **MR. ANSON:** Certainly the council has been involved with a
16 rather large data collection program, SEFHIER being the most
17 recent as an example, but I guess this seems a little out of
18 place, to me, relative to the council, because this is a Science
19 Center question, in my mind, and the Science Center just needs
20 to -- I mean, they have a program already in place to collect
21 that information, and the issue more, that I see it, and Dr.
22 Porch can certainly correct me if I'm wrong, but my
23 understanding is that it just seems to be an allocation of
24 resources and having more people to be on boats to collect that
25 information and to make it available in the stock assessment
26 process.

27
28 I mean, that's how I understand it, and so I just see this as a
29 little out of place for us to spend much time in doing that.
30 You know, if it's a new program, it may be something different,
31 but I'm just not seeing that it's appropriate here.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Clay, did you want to speak to that?

34
35 **DR. PORCH:** Sure, and so, for the commercial fishery, yes, we do
36 have an observer program that covers most of the fleets, and the
37 main issue is that there just isn't the funds to have extensive
38 observer coverage, and so, typically, it's a few percent.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Boggs.

41
42 **MS. BOGGS:** Is it my understanding -- I don't recall seeing this
43 on some of the forms, but not all of the commercial fleet has to
44 report their discards, and is that correct, and would that not
45 be another mechanism to try to capture what the discards are?

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Porch.

1 **DR. PORCH:** Right. There's a subset that are asked to report
2 all their discards, but the self-reported discards typically
3 don't match up that well with the observer coverage. A lot of
4 people just report zero discards, and so the observer coverage
5 is what we rely on for the discard estimates. Mostly we use the
6 self-reported data from the logbooks for effort estimates and
7 how to scale up the discard estimates.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I guess, to Kevin's point, right, I'm not sure
10 there's a lot of action that the council could take to
11 necessarily improve the collection of that discard information,
12 and so I'm happy to drop it out of a bullet, because it's
13 probably not an actionable item, but I just want to make sure,
14 before I do that, because the group that put this presentation
15 together obviously gave it some thought, and so, Andy, do you
16 want to weigh-in?

17
18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Certainly Jessica can weigh-in as well, and so,
19 with regard to improvement of data collection, there is
20 certainly, within your authority, you know, additional reporting
21 requirements that you could impose to help with data collection,
22 beyond just what Clay can do with the resources that he has,
23 right, and so there is a recognition that, with an IFQ program,
24 there are different reasons for regulatory discards, limitations
25 on allocation being one of them, and so, you know, the thought
26 there was, you know, what can we do to continue to improve and
27 refine the knowledge about why discards are occurring, what
28 mechanisms are in place to address those discards, and,
29 ultimately, implement measures in response to that, and so that
30 was kind of the line of thinking that we were walking through
31 with regard to improvements in data collection.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and that's slightly different, right, and
34 so, given that explanation, I'm inclined to leave it, and I'm
35 not sure, you know, that it's an immediately actionable type of
36 thing, you know, and information will evolve, and we'll learn
37 more, and it might lead to a regulatory change, but we can
38 certainly leave it in now, if everybody is good with that.
39 Okay.

40
41 Then we will go ahead then and go to this second bullet, which
42 is create an allocation bank to further reduce bycatch and
43 discards of IFQ species. Is there any opposition to keeping
44 that as-is? Hold on, and let's make sure that we're all --
45 Bernie, I apologize. I keep getting ahead of you, and I am
46 taxing you. Sorry. Okay, and, while she's getting it squared
47 away, and properly formatted, I just would like to open the
48 discussion a little bit about this bulleted item. Mr. Anson.

1
2 **MR. ANSON:** Recognizing some of the comments that were made
3 after the presentation, but even during the presentation that
4 Dr. Stephen went through, and, you know, this is where the Venn
5 diagram and some of the overlap exists, and I just -- I guess as
6 a stand-alone here it's okay, but it is mentioned in the
7 previous goal, you know, as one of the objectives potentially to
8 take, as far as the suite of mechanisms that we would be
9 evaluating, and so I am just wondering, Dr. Stephen, if you're
10 still on the phone, and the allocation bank to further reduce
11 bycatch and discards of IFQ species, and so I assume this would
12 be an allocation bank that people could access, people that were
13 already participants, or already had an IFQ account, and, I
14 mean, I guess this is more the devil is in the details type of
15 thing too, and so maybe it's too much to ask here, but I was
16 just trying to get some more context as to how this could work,
17 but, if that's what we would kind of figure out, or, you know,
18 set up, then that's fine, and it can wait.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, I think those are all good points, right,
21 and it would certainly be considered in the discussion, and
22 you're exactly right that the devil is in the details. As long
23 as people recognize here that it's a viable mechanism, right, to
24 deal with this issue, I think I'm happy to leave it here, right?
25 Mr. Diaz.

26
27 **MR. DIAZ:** I said earlier that I thought a quota bank would be a
28 good thing, and this is definitely one thing that would be part
29 of setting up a quota bank, but I think a quota bank would have
30 several objectives to try to meet under its own, and the last
31 goal had an objective, and this would be an objective, and I
32 think maybe there are several others we can add under there,
33 when we get there, but I'm definitely in favor of leaving this
34 here, and I think this probably should probably be the highest
35 priority of a quota bank, but there should be other priorities,
36 too. Thank you.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and, again, I think you're right. To
39 Kevin's point, when we look at that Venn diagram, there's going
40 to be some overlap in the objectives, and, to the extent that we
41 can pursue actions that achieve, you know, multiple goals, I
42 think that may be where we should put our effort, with getting
43 more bang for the buck, in that regard, and so, again, this is
44 just a skeleton framework for us, and, in a couple of minutes,
45 we'll talk about what our next steps are, but I'm happy with the
46 intent of this bulleted item right now, and so, unless I hear
47 otherwise, we'll leave it up.

48

1 Then we'll then discuss this third bullet point, which is
2 evaluate additional or new flexibility measures to reduce
3 discards, and, again, I am going to lean on the team, Andy, your
4 team, a little bit, to elaborate a little bit on the thinking
5 and the discussion behind that bulleted item, if you don't mind.
6

7 **MR. STRELCHECK:** We have a number of flexibility measures
8 already built into the program, the ability to, obviously,
9 transfer and move allocation, but we have a 10 percent overage
10 provision, and we have multiuse allocation, and so the idea here
11 would be looking at kind of the network and mechanisms of
12 flexibility measures in place and if there's anything
13 additional, or new, that we would want to consider.
14

15 One addition that Dr. Stephen presented at the January meeting
16 was multiuse between red grouper and red snapper, right, and
17 that's kind of our line of thinking here, and I think there's
18 some innovative ways to kind of think about this that would
19 provide even further efficiencies to the industry, and I will
20 leave it at that.
21

22 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and I think the latter, the multiuse, for
23 example, between red grouper and red snapper is a pretty
24 creative and innovative way of thinking, and I know it's been
25 discussed before, but we haven't enacted that, or considered how
26 we might do that, and so I like that, and I understand that will
27 be captured in the record as well, as we move forward, and so
28 any other discussion or thoughts on this bulleted item? Ms.
29 Boggs.
30

31 **MS. BOGGS:** Just to capture it on the record, I am looking at
32 Dr. Stephen's Slide 30, and some other ideas were full
33 retention, and, of course, we talked about allocation banks and
34 size limit changes, and those are also good measures that we
35 could look at to help reduce the IFQ discards. Thank you.
36

37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Excellent comment, Susan, and so all right,
38 and so we'll put a bullet there, Bernie, and I will ask if there
39 are any other bulleted items at this time, anything that anybody
40 wants to add. Okay. I am not seeing any.
41

42 We have about fifteen minutes, and let me take a quick look at
43 that third goal. The third goal is to maintain flexible fishing
44 options and economic stability within the IFQ programs. It
45 might be easier if I just read these bullets for you, and we can
46 just read them here, if you want. There will be two bulleted
47 items, or objectives, under this goal. All right. There you
48 go, and you can get rid of the superscripts in both of those

1 bullets.

2
3 I am not sure about -- Again, Andy and Jessica, I'm going to
4 lean on you guys a little bit. The way that that sentence is
5 structured, economic stability is supported through year-round
6 fishing that avoids fluctuations in ex-vessel prices caused by
7 market gluts, I'm not sure how you would associate an action
8 with that, and so I'm trying hard to understand how to write it
9 as an objective.

10
11 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Certainly, Jessica, or others, weigh-in, and I
12 think that at least my thought process around this one is this
13 was kind of a carryover objective from the initial program that
14 we want to continue to have in place, right, and that is kind of
15 clearly setting that as an objective.

16
17 Now, is there anything we should do beyond what we've already
18 done? That's a good question, and I don't know if there's
19 really anything implementable here, other than we're just
20 clearly indicating that this is maintained as an objective for
21 the program.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and that's why we kind of moved it down
24 in the priority, because I think there were some success stories
25 there already, right, and it's just going to -- It's a major
26 goal, an ongoing goal, of the program, and I'm happy, at this
27 point, perhaps not even having any objectives, right, and I
28 could be -- People could argue otherwise, but where I see us
29 moving forward, right, is, again, these first three goals -- I
30 think that we can actually make some progress in the years
31 ahead, and I think we should focus on those, and we should focus
32 appropriately on their prioritized ranks, right, and so, to
33 facilitate, I guess, a productive path forward, I think we'll
34 just stop here, right, and I'm going to look to Dr. Simmons, and
35 perhaps Dr. Diagne, and think about where we want to go with
36 this information and what we'll do with it for our next council
37 meeting. Go ahead, Dr. Stunz, real quick.

38
39 **DR. STUNZ:** Carrie, maybe while you're thinking, I just have a
40 comment, and I know this got confusing, Tom, because we have
41 these draft goals that we've prioritized, and now we've got
42 three new goals, and so I was going to say, Bernie, what would
43 be very useful is, including the other two goals we haven't
44 talked about yet, if we could get those in one document
45 distributed to the council, so we can have those to look over
46 between now and Full Council, to really think about this,
47 because I'm sure there might be some more discussion that would
48 come up, because, right now, it's -- You know, it would be nice

1 to have a one-pager with all of this on it.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Stunz, and, Bernie, I will work
4 with you to get that squared away. Okay. I think that we do
5 want to remove those two objectives for right now, and so you
6 can get rid of those, Bernie. Okay. Dr. Diagne, do you want to
7 talk about next steps for us, perhaps?

8
9 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and perhaps our suggestion is, looking at I
10 guess the details, the level of details, that this body would
11 need to make significant progress, we can start by assembling
12 the typical group, an IPT, and most of the folks that were
13 working on this with Dr. Stephen I suspect will be in it, and
14 probably let's say by the October council meeting we can bring a
15 solid document back that will point towards directions for
16 regulatory actions, and, at that time, the council could say,
17 for example, that we are interested in this direction, and so
18 let's take these potential actions and include it in the first
19 amendment to proceed, but it seems to me that, between now and
20 October, we will have sufficient time to put the team together
21 and let's say do the research and bring a fairly solid document
22 to move us forward.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Dr. Stunz.

25
26 **DR. STUNZ:** To that point, Tom, you know, we've been going
27 through this exercise without formal motions and that kind of
28 thing, which is fine, and I don't think there was probably a
29 better way to do it and have that meaningful discussion which we
30 just had, which I thought was great, by the way, but, between
31 now and Full Council, I think maybe we need to give the staff
32 maybe a little more concrete guidance, through some motion, like
33 we forward this, do whatever we want to do, start an amendment,
34 whatever that might happen to be, because, right now, we've just
35 sort of had this discussion, and we have this sort of informal
36 list, and so I think we all need to think about that, and Bernie
37 will send around, you know, the summary of where we ended today,
38 and then, at Full Council, think about, you know, giving formal
39 guidance, through a motion, on what the next steps would be,
40 would be a good idea.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** You're exactly right, and I certainly intended
43 to do that, and I didn't want to like kind of mess up this
44 conversation with a formal process of making a lot of motions,
45 and I feel like we actually had a pretty decent discussion and
46 had some agreement on what might be possible, moving forward,
47 and so we'll synthesize that information, and we'll bring it
48 back to Full Council, and we'll get some motions, to make sure

1 that, you know, it's on the record again that everybody agrees
2 that this is probably the path that we're taking, and we agree
3 on these goals, and we agree on these objectives, and this is
4 the next step. All right. We're about ten minutes early, Dr.
5 Stunz, but I think we're at a reasonable place to stop this
6 discussion.

7
8 **DR. STUNZ:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I think that's
9 great, and I would just thank you, everyone. That was very
10 productive, and I feel like we made more progress in the last
11 few hours than we've made in the last few years, and so, anyway,
12 but there's certainly still a lot more work to go, and so we'll
13 go ahead and just take our normal lunch and meet back here at
14 1:30. We're scheduled to meet back at 1:30, and we'll go ahead
15 and do that, and we'll pick up with the state survey landings
16 information after that. All right. See everyone at 1:30.

17
18 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on June 6, 2023.)
19

20 - - -

21
22 June 6, 2023

23
24 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

25 - - -

26
27
28 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
29 Management Council reconvened at The Battle House Renaissance in
30 Mobile, Alabama on Tuesday afternoon, June 6, 2023, and was
31 called to order by Chairman Tom Frazer.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. We're going to get started, and
34 we're going to pick up with the review of the State Survey
35 Private Angling Landings and Discards for Red Snapper, and I
36 didn't know if, Ryan, you just wanted to kind of walk through
37 the action guide.

38
39 **REVIEW OF STATE SURVEY PRIVATE ANGLING LANDINGS AND DISCARDS FOR**
40 **RED SNAPPER**

41
42 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Sure thing. As we've done in the past,
43 council representatives from the five Gulf states will briefly
44 review their 2022 private angling fishing seasons for red
45 snapper and offer projections for the 2023 fishing season. The
46 2023 season has started in several states already, and these
47 data are part of an ongoing effort to just update the council
48 about what's going on, and it's not something that requires

1 action by the committee.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Rindone, and so it
4 looks like first up would be Florida, and we'll load that
5 presentation up, and then, Dr. Sweetman, I will let you take it
6 away.

7
8 **FLORIDA PRESENTATION**

9
10 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. Good afternoon,
11 everyone. I hope that everyone had a nice lunch, and so, yes,
12 we'll be going over the 2022 Florida Gulf red snapper update.
13 As standard in these presentations, here is our State Reef Fish
14 Survey slide. As you all are aware, SRFS replaced GRFS, the
15 Gulf Reef Fish Survey, in July of 2020 and it is now applied to
16 the entire state. It is required for all fishermen that are
17 targeting or harvesting thirteen reef fish species from a
18 private vessel, and it is a required no-cost annual designation
19 for this.

20
21 There is two components to the State Reef Fish Survey. First,
22 there's a monthly email survey and dockside interviews, and that
23 is subsequently supplemented by MRIP as well. Unlike other
24 states, as I've mentioned in previous meetings, the State Reef
25 Fish Survey is not designed for real-time monitoring, and it is
26 not really feasible, due to the variety of access points that we
27 have in Florida and the large amount of anglers.

28
29 Here was our season in Florida in 2022. We had a quota of 1.657
30 million pounds, and it accounts for an overage that we had in
31 2021 of approximately 250,000 pounds, and so we reduced that
32 from the 2022 quota, and the season structure that was set up is
33 on the board here. We had a summer component of June 17 through
34 July 31, and then we reopened for select fall weekends, that you
35 can see on this slide there.

36
37 Here is what we're looking at. As far as Florida's landings
38 from 2022, it was approximately 1.6 million pounds, or roughly
39 97 percent of our quota. You can see the previous years in
40 there, where the 2021 and 2020 ACL was higher. The 2022 ACL
41 that you see is lower, and it accounts for that overage, and you
42 can see the landings there.

43
44 Moving on to average weights, since 2018, you know, we've kind
45 of seen this oscillate a little bit between private and charter,
46 but, in general, you can kind of see a slight decrease, in terms
47 of the size of the fish that people are catching just a little
48 bit over the past couple of years here.

1
2 Moving on to average lengths, there's a little bit of a
3 differing trend. Conversely, we see a slight increase in longer
4 fish being landed since 2018. In general, charter and private
5 recreational vessels seem to be catching relatively similar size
6 fish, and the charter boat length information was obtained from
7 the MRIP website.

8
9 In 2022, we had fewer angler trips compared to 2020 or 2021, but
10 roughly relatively similar to what we saw in 2020. Then, moving
11 on to CPUE, note that we don't collect landings at the trip
12 level, but the average CPUE for 2022 was about equal to 2020,
13 but slightly less than what we saw in 2021, and then the final
14 slide is the Gulf red snapper season for this upcoming year
15 here, and so a similar summer component season structure, June
16 16 through July 31, and we have additional weekends that are
17 going to be available, and you can see them there, and it's
18 starting on October 6, but, basically, every Friday, Saturday,
19 and Sunday weekend in October and November will be open.

20
21 We will be, obviously, monitoring harvest in -- Harvest
22 monitoring will occur in-season, and this season was set based
23 on Florida's 2023 recreational red snapper quota of
24 approximately 2.069 million pounds.

25
26 This season, in 2023, will be open for seventy days total, which
27 represents the longest season on record since state management
28 began for the State of Florida, exceeding the previous longest
29 season that we had last year by thirteen days, and, as always,
30 the season will apply to recreational anglers fishing from
31 private vessels in Florida Gulf state and federal waters. For-
32 hire operations that do not have a federal reef fish permit may
33 also participate in the season, but they are limited to fishing
34 for red snapper in Florida Gulf state waters only, and, as I
35 said, we'll be monitoring harvest throughout the season, and
36 that includes my presentation, Mr. Chair.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, C.J. Ms. Boggs.

39
40 **MS. BOGGS:** C.J., would you repeat that last little bit that you
41 said about the private recreational anglers and something about
42 the charter boats, and I'm sorry, but I missed it.

43
44 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No problem. I said that our for-hire operations
45 that do not have a federal reef fish permit may participate in
46 the season, but they are limited to fishing in state waters.

47
48 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you for clarifying that.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Are there any other questions for C.J.?
3 Clay.

4
5 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you. I thought I heard you say, earlier,
6 that, even with the augmented sampling that the state does in
7 addition to MRIP, that it wasn't really suited for in-season
8 monitoring, but then I see, in the bottom here, that in-season
9 harvest monitoring will occur, and so I just wonder if you could
10 explain that, and so you mean that you will do it anyway, but
11 you don't think it's effective, or I must be missing something.

12
13 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No, and in-season monitoring is a requirement of
14 everything that we're doing here with the state survey, and so
15 that's all I'm saying here.

16
17 **DR. PORCH:** Right, but, in general, you don't think the survey,
18 even with the augmented sampling, is really suitable for in-
19 season monitoring?

20
21 **DR. SWEETMAN:** In terms of real-time, like to the day level,
22 compared to some of the other states, the way that our survey is
23 structured, yes, it's a little bit different, in that
24 perspective, but, of course, we're going to continue to monitor
25 in-season.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** If I might follow-up a little bit, since you
28 have a break between July 31 and those fall weekends, will the
29 in-season data collection and monitoring that you have in place
30 allow you to adjust those seasons, if you might need to?

31
32 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, most certainly. I mean, obviously, the goal
33 is not to go over the quota, and so we'll have some timeframe
34 between the summer season and the fall season to evaluate where
35 the landings are at, and then, subsequently, as we move
36 throughout that time period, we can continue to look at those
37 landings, to see if we need to modify that, but, as it stands
38 right now, similar to last year, the plan is to move forward
39 with what we have on the screen.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, C.J. Any other questions?
42 Okay. I'm not seeing any, and so next up on the docket would be
43 Alabama, and, when we get that presentation up, Kevin, it's all
44 yours.

45
46 **ALABAMA PRESENTATION**

47
48 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. As the presentation indicates, it will

1 be a brief update, and I tried to follow instructions and keep
2 it very limited, and so we'll go ahead and proceed, Bernie, if
3 you can go to the next slide.

4
5 A summary of the 2022 harvest, which it's a little hard to see
6 there, but that's the blue line, and you can see that it shows
7 around 458,000 pounds, I think, is what we harvested, roughly,
8 at the end of last year, and that was much less than the
9 previous years that we've been operating under state management,
10 and these are in Snapper Check pounds, and they are not
11 calibrated or anything, and these are straight what is estimated
12 from the Snapper Check survey.

13
14 In 2021, it's the orange line there, and the one in the middle
15 was 950,000 pounds, 940,000 pounds, approximately, and then we
16 were just below our target that we were shooting for in each of
17 those years of 1.1 million pounds in 2020, and so the harvest
18 has been decreasing over time, and certainly last year was the
19 lowest harvest of this time series, in state management, and
20 that could be attributed to the inflation, the high gas prices
21 last year that were observed, and hot temperatures during June,
22 as I recall, much hotter than normal, which could have affected
23 catchability of the fish.

24
25 2022 represented also the longest that the state season has been
26 open for private recreational and state charter anglers, and
27 we've been operating on a Friday through Monday season, four-day
28 weekend seasons, season length, if you will, or openings during
29 the season, for the last several years.

30
31 Here is the mean weight by mode, and so the private is the blue
32 line, and the state charter is the orange line. State waters go
33 out to nine miles for reef fish, and our state charter boats,
34 obviously, are limited by that distance, but our private recs
35 can go out much farther from shore, and you can see the number
36 of fish that have been weighed over the time series, from 2017,
37 of which this graph depicts, through 2022, and it's remained
38 relatively stable for the private recs. Again, they're able to
39 access waters that are farther offshore, and larger fish that
40 reside there, whereas the state charter size has gone down.

41
42 Here is the lengths for the same time series, 2017 through 2022,
43 and the private mode is in blue, and the state charter is in
44 orange. It's similar trends, a little bit smaller length, and a
45 declining trend in the private recreational side.

46
47 Here are some of the metrics that we were requested to provide,
48 and so the larger bar chart there is the vessel trips with

1 harvest, and the green is the private trips, the blue is state
2 charter, and so, combined, in 2020, we had over 20,000 estimated
3 vessel trips, comprising 19,500 anglers for the private side,
4 and 1,163 angler trips for 2020, and that is roughly two-times
5 larger than it was for 2022, what we estimated that occurred in
6 2022, with 9,000 private recreational vessel trips occurring,
7 and just under a thousand of the state charter trips.

8
9 Then that chart that is on the upper-right is the mean anglers
10 per vessel trip, and it's been fairly consistent throughout the
11 time series, at just over four anglers per vessel trip for 2020
12 through 2022 for the private recs, as well as state charter, and
13 then, down at the right, the lower-right there, the mean harvest
14 per vessel trip has been roughly anywhere from the upper six
15 fish to just under eight, for the three-year time series, for
16 both private and state charter.

17
18 I will just give a brief summary of what we have set up for this
19 year. For the 2023 season, we opened the season on Friday, May
20 26, again with four-day weekends, Friday through Mondays, and we
21 still have the two-fish-per-person-per-day limit, with a
22 sixteen-inch total length size limit, and, of course, we'll be
23 monitoring that, and we'll be abiding by the calibration
24 amounts, and we'll be discussing that later on in Reef Fish, for
25 final action on that, and we'll be managing our harvest towards
26 that amount.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you. Any questions for
29 Kevin? All right. Thank you, Kevin. We will move straight
30 away to the Mississippi presentation and General Spraggins.
31 We'll get it up on the board.

32
33 **MISSISSIPPI PRESENTATION**

34
35 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Okay, and this is our 2022 red snapper, and,
36 just to give you an idea, and we are still using our Tails 'n
37 Scales, which is a very accurate -- This year, it was reported
38 at 98 percent accuracy for the Tails 'n Scales, and that's
39 matched up numerous ways, and one is by the actual reporting of
40 the fishermen, and then number two is because we have
41 intercepts, and our marine patrol intercepted over 10 percent of
42 the boats that were launched to go snapper fishing in 2022,
43 which is about twice the normal of what it is in the Gulf. Then
44 we also have a dockside survey, where we marry them all up
45 together, and they marry up pretty good.

46
47 As you can see, in 2022, we were down a little bit, and we
48 caught around 129,000 pounds of fish in 2022, and it was open a

1 lot longer. It was open for 187 days, and about an 85 percent
2 harvest rate, but a lot of it was due to the cost of fuel, and
3 some of it was due to weather during, you know, the peak times
4 of the year, but it worked out pretty good.
5

6 As you can see, the size of our fish is moving up, and we're at
7 a little over seven pounds a fish now, and so that has gradually
8 moved up since 2019, which is a good sign, and our length is
9 also moving up, and we're moving up to around almost twenty-
10 three inches per fish, and so that's a pretty good size
11 increase, and you can see that, from 2019, has steadily gone
12 forward, and so our stock is there, and we are catching a good
13 stock, an overage of a little over seven pounds a fish, and
14 twenty-three inches, and so that's a pretty good record.
15

16 Anglers per trip, we are getting back, and it started around
17 four, and then we moved it down to around 3.7, or somewhere in
18 that neighborhood, for 2022, but it's in that average, from
19 about 3.5 to four per trip, and, for vessels, we're down a
20 little bit, down to around 4,000, a little over 4,000, vessels,
21 as far as trips that we had last year, and, once again, a lot of
22 it was due to cost. A lot of it was due to the amount of fuel
23 costs and other things that are happening.
24

25 Our CPUE is back up to about normal for 2021, but we're still
26 down from the 2019 and 2020 years, and so before, but that's
27 still not bad, and it's still a pretty good catch, for what we
28 do.
29

30 Also, to give you an idea of 2023, we opened on the 26th day of
31 May, and we'll be open seven days a week until the 9th of July,
32 and that's about forty-five days. We will assess, at that
33 point, and see where we're at, and I think we looked at it just
34 for the opening weekend, and we were around 17,000 pounds, or
35 something like that, for that first week, and so nothing
36 spectacular, but we'll have a lot shorter season this year,
37 because of our numbers being reduced, but we'll make it work.
38 Any questions?
39

40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, General Spraggins. Any
41 questions? All right. Then we will go ahead and keep walking
42 down the line here, and so next up is Mr. Schieble, with the
43 Louisiana presentation.
44

45 **LOUISIANA PRESENTATION**

46
47 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is a short recap of
48 last season, 2022, and then we'll go into some of the lengths

1 and weights of the fish as well, and then I'll give you a brief
2 rundown on this season.

3
4 Last year, we had an 816,233-pound allocation, but that included
5 a payback of 6,918 pounds from the previous year, and so we were
6 at 809,315 pounds. We opened on May 27, for weekend-only
7 seasons, which includes Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, and we
8 fished to a three-fish bag limit, and we closed on September 18.
9 Then we reopened for a daily eight-day season on October 7
10 through 14, and that was to utilize the remaining 39,087 pounds
11 we had after Labor Day weekend.

12
13 A total of 801,911 pounds were harvested during that season last
14 year, which left a remainder of 7,404 pounds not utilized, and
15 so we underfished by that amount, and just our estimate of our
16 federal for-hire landings was 62,121 pounds, even though we
17 don't manage that.

18
19 This is a comparison of the most recent time series, from 2019
20 through the 2022 season, and the black line is last year, and we
21 can see it started out pretty much in the same curve as most
22 seasons do, and then we kind of had a reduction in effort, as we
23 got later in the summer, and it's probably as kids go back to
24 school, and things like that, after you get past Labor Day
25 weekend, and it typically falls off. The orange line was 2021,
26 and you can see it flatlined right in the middle of the summer,
27 and that is the Ida effect, and so we were shut down for, I
28 believe, at least four weeks there, because of Hurricane Ida,
29 and that's what extended that season and why the line looks like
30 that.

31
32 This is the average weights from the inception of LA Creel,
33 which was in 2014, all the way through the most recent season,
34 and you can see that we had kind of a rebound in average weight
35 last year, and the private recreational is the orange line, and
36 the state charter is the blue line, and the weights bounce back
37 up to just about seven-and-a-quarter pounds for the private and
38 almost seven-and-a-half for the state charter.

39
40 This is a comparison of the average length on the top graph and
41 average age on the bottom graph, and so the same thing. The
42 private lengths are the orange line, and the state charter are
43 the blue line, and you can see that the average length kind of
44 rebounded, to about a little over twenty-three inches, with
45 charter closer to twenty-four, and the average age rebounded a
46 little bit as well, especially for the charter sector, and
47 they're up to seven years old, similar to where they were back
48 about four years ago, and, also, the private anglers are up to

1 about 6.2 years old, and so very similar to 2020 in age, but,
2 overall, the trend is that the private recreational age
3 vacillates, and some years it's higher, or older, and some years
4 it's younger, but pretty much it's very steady, if you look at
5 the long-term trend.

6
7 In the interest of confusing everyone, we have reversed the
8 colors on these for some reason, and so the private angler is
9 blue, and the state charter is orange, and so the catch effort
10 of anglers per trip is the first graphic, in the upper-left, and
11 last year was very similar to 2021. However, caution, I guess,
12 because we have the Hurricane Ida effect in there too, and so,
13 likely, there was a little bit of a dip last year that's not
14 evident in this year, and, even though it looks the same as last
15 year, it's a little bit different effort, probably, because we
16 weren't closed for a hurricane in 2022.

17
18 Then the second graphic, in the upper-right, is red snapper
19 anglers per trip, and that's also very similar to 2021, and
20 there's not much difference there between private and the state
21 charter/for-hire, and the lower graphic is the number of red
22 snapper vessel trips, and you can see there's a bit of a decline
23 in the number of trips last year from the previous year, but,
24 also, keep in mind that the season was extended in 2021, because
25 of Hurricane Ida, and so they had a very long season, even
26 though we had that closure created in the middle of September,
27 and so that may be why you see that trend, where 2022 is more
28 similar to 2020.

29
30 I threw this in here because we often talk about discards around
31 the table, and I just wanted to illustrate kind of the trend in
32 discards for us since the inception of basically state
33 management, with the EFPs in 2018 and 2019, and, after that,
34 subsequently, the number of discards has steadily gone down.

35
36 I attribute that to the fact that we've had more availability of
37 snapper, through state management, for our anglers, and so, this
38 year, we're fishing three fish as the bag limit per angler, and,
39 last year, we ended with a four-fish bag limit at the end of the
40 year, when we were trying to finish out the season, and so being
41 able to have that higher availability may be leading to a
42 reduction in discards.

43
44 I can't directly connect that, but that's what I hypothesize,
45 and, also, the bottom graphic shows you in-season and out-of-
46 season discards, and, as you would expect, during the snapper
47 season, obviously, the number of discards goes up when the
48 season is open, and then the out-of-season, or as people are

1 incidentally catching them while targeting other stuff, and I
2 think that's it. That should be the last slide, and so if
3 anybody has any questions.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Any questions for Chris? I am not
6 seeing any. Thanks, Chris. All right, and so we will go ahead
7 and go to Texas and Mr. Geeslin.

8
9 **TEXAS PRESENTATION**

10
11 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. For our Texas 2022 calendar
12 year private rec red snapper summary, as standard, we utilize
13 our long-standing Marine Sportfish Harvest Monitoring Program,
14 starting in the Gulf only, in Bay Pass, sample areas.

15
16 Our state-waters, as we intended to keep open year-round, opened
17 on January 1, and our federal-water season opened on June 1.
18 Our quota for Calendar Year 2022 was 265,105 pounds. Our season
19 length, the longest one we've had since 2008, lasted ninety-four
20 -- The federal season at least lasted ninety-four days, and we
21 closed that right before Labor Day, on September 2, and we were
22 able to maintain that year-long state-water season, particularly
23 because of lower landings, and our goal is to maintain that
24 year-round state-water season, and so we usually project to
25 close when our federal landings -- When our landings, cumulative
26 landings, are approaching about 70 percent, and so we have that
27 buffer there to maintain that open state-water season. All said
28 and done, our 2022 landings were lower than anticipated, right
29 at 150,000 pounds, and that's roughly 56 percent of our quota.

30
31 When we look at the bag distribution within the private sector,
32 you can see that most folks, 50 percent of the anglers, are
33 catching their two-fish limit. However, with the four-fish bag
34 limit in state waters, which only two of those can count as
35 federal fish, you see a small percentage, roughly 25 percent,
36 are actually catching three or four red snapper.

37
38 Looking at our length distribution information here, you can see
39 our mean size is roughly twenty-one-and-a-half inches. Looking
40 back from last year, that is down about one inch, but still some
41 fairly large fish in there, certainly, as you would expect, back
42 up against those minimum size limits of sixteen inches in
43 federal waters and our fifteen-inch minimum size length in state
44 waters.

45
46 When we look at the length frequency of the weight, you can tell
47 that our -- We do get some bigger fish in there, towards the
48 tail-end, but our average was almost six pounds, 5.85 pounds,

1 and that is slightly down from the previous year of 6.6 pounds,
2 and, when we look at our bag distribution per angler trip, you
3 can see that the number of snapper per angler trip in federal
4 waters is right above one fish per angler. The pounds of
5 snapper per angler trip were more in that seven-pound range, and
6 smaller percentages and weights within the state water, at 2.59
7 pounds of snapper per angler trip in state waters and half a
8 fish per state-water angler, and that is it.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Dakus. Any questions
11 for Dakus? Mr. Strelcheck.

12
13 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Dakus, in some of the other presentations, they
14 had summaries of angler trips and trends over time, and are you
15 able to provide that information?

16
17 **MR. GEESLIN:** We can certainly do that, yes. Absolutely, and I
18 will get that back to the council.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. I am not seeing any further questions
21 for any of the state reps, and so I appreciate all of those
22 reports. We will go ahead and move on to our next agenda item,
23 and that will be a final action item, Recalibration of Red
24 Snapper Recreational Catch Limits and Modification of Gray
25 Snapper Catch Limits, and Dr. Hollensead will lead us through
26 that, but I don't know -- Are you going to walk us through the
27 action guide part of that, or do you want Ryan to do that?

28
29 **FINAL ACTION: RECALIBRATION OF RED SNAPPER RECREATIONAL CATCH**
30 **LIMITS AND MODIFICATION OF GRAY SNAPPER CATCH LIMITS**

31
32 **DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD:** Sure, and I can give a quick introduction.
33 If the committee will recall, at the last meeting, in April, we
34 saw this document, and preferreds were selected, and so the IPT
35 took that for final action, and so that includes developing
36 Chapters 3 and 4, as well as the other necessary sections to be
37 considered for final action.

38
39 In addition to developing the document, we also have a public
40 comment summary, as well as codified text to present to the
41 committee, and so, before I get into the document, I will
42 transfer it over here to Emily to give us a summary of the
43 public comment in this document.

44
45 **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED**

46
47 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Thank you. So we -- Since this is
48 a framework action, we produced a short video hearing, and we

1 had 1,617 views of that public hearing video, and, strangely, we
2 only received one comment. In that comment, we heard that
3 calibrations are an inherent and ongoing component of the state
4 management system, and we also heard support for a standardized
5 database that would house all state survey data and regularly
6 report them to the council for each state, both pre and post-
7 season, to improve transparency in the process, and that's it.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Emily. Are there any
10 questions? Okay. Dr. Hollensead, back to you.

11
12 **DOCUMENT**

13
14 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Bernie, if you wouldn't mind pulling up the
15 document, please, ma'am. As I mentioned before, the committee
16 had the opportunity to review Chapters 1 and 2 and the purpose
17 and need at the last meeting. Just to make sure we're thorough
18 here, I will go ahead and re-review the purpose and need with
19 the committee, just to double-check, and so, Bernie, if you
20 wouldn't mind going to the purpose and need.

21
22 Again, the purposes of these actions are to update the state-
23 specific private angling component calibration ratios and ACLs,
24 to provide a more accurate estimate of state landings for red
25 snapper management, and, again, this is considering the states
26 of Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida.

27
28 The second purpose is to update the gray snapper catch limits,
29 including the OFL, ABC, and ACL, based on SEDAR 75, and so the
30 newest stock assessment, and as approved as BSIA, or best
31 scientific information available, by the SSC, and so this
32 language is the same that you saw last time, and so I was just
33 going to double-check that everyone was okay or if they saw any
34 edits, or comments, to make at this time. Okay.

35
36 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going down to Action 1, please, and
37 so, again, kind of going back, this is Action 1, and so this
38 considers the update to the red snapper private recreational
39 catch limits, and, again, this is just for the states of
40 Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida, based on more recent landings
41 information to inform this calibration ratio.

42
43 Alternative 1 is the no action, and so it would retain those
44 current state private data calibration ratios, and so there's
45 only two alternatives in this action, and so 1 would maintain
46 those calibration ratios, whereas Alternative 2 would update
47 those for those three states, based on more recent data, more
48 recent landings. At the last meeting, the committee selected

1 Alternative 2 as the preferred, and so it would update those.

2
3 One thing that I do want to note is, if you recall from the last
4 meeting, there are currently catch limits for red snapper that
5 are on the books, but there is also catch limits that are in the
6 hopper, right, and so they're about to come online here fairly
7 soon, which is why we've kind of got this bit of a table action
8 going on here in this Action 1.

9
10 Once that rule goes through and is made final, and we're hoping
11 that will be done soon, the IPT will streamline this table, and
12 streamline the document, and so there would be no current and
13 proposed, and it would be what is codified, and so it would just
14 -- That table would be a lot more simplified, and so, as it gets
15 transmitted, and if that happens, I just wanted to make
16 everybody aware that that table might look a little different.
17 If there's no questions on Action 1, we can move into Action 2.

18
19 Okay, and so Action 2 is going to update the gray snapper stock
20 catch limits, and the no action would retain the current catch
21 limits, and this is no longer consistent with BSIA, given the
22 stock assessment that was recently conducted, SEDAR 75.

23
24 Alternatives 2 and 3 both achieve the management targets, and
25 both are scientifically defensible and are recommended by the
26 SSC. Alternative 2 provides a decreasing yield stream, which
27 may not necessarily be desirable for management implementation,
28 and so the SSC had also recommended a constant catch, using the
29 five-year average, and that's represented in Alternative 3, and
30 that is what the committee had selected at the past meeting, and
31 so that is now still represented here in Action 2. Mr. Chair,
32 that sort of concludes my review, unless anybody had any
33 questions on any of the other chapters.

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

36
37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** No questions, but just related to the comments
38 about the red snapper ACL change, and the rule will be
39 publishing this week, and so we will finalize that rulemaking,
40 and we can proceed with adjusting the amendment accordingly, or
41 the framework action accordingly.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That's good news, and so, again, this is a
44 final action item, right, and go ahead.

45
46 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Mr. Chair, I don't know if we wanted to go over
47 the codified text as well. There is some notes in the codified
48 text that alludes to the upcoming change to the catch limit, and

1 so I believe all the regulation writers are on the same
2 wavelength with that as well.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and we'll go ahead and pull up the
5 codified text, and, Kevin, while we're doing that.

6
7 **MR. ANSON:** I will be brief. Andy, I know you were asked this
8 several meetings ago, as we were developing this framework
9 action, and I will ask the same question that was asked then,
10 and that is just, you know, the council staff has worked very
11 diligently, and the IPT team has worked very hard in trying to
12 meet the deadline that we kind of imposed, which is this
13 meeting, with the intention of trying to get this implemented
14 for the end of the year, and is that still likely, that it would
15 be approved and in place before December 31 of this year?

16
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I can't make a specific commitment, and
18 there's a lot of factors, right, and how quickly will council
19 staff be able to submit it for agency review, how quickly can we
20 get the proposed rule published, and if there's ways of waving,
21 or reducing, comment periods, if it's justified, and, I mean,
22 there's a number of factors that could play into how quickly we
23 could get the rulemaking done, but we will certainly commit to
24 moving this forward as quickly as possible.

25
26 **REVIEW OF CODIFIED TEXT**

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Kevin, for that question, and
29 Andy for the response, and so we've got the codified text pulled
30 up, and, Dr. Hollensead, if you want to comment on anything
31 specifically in the margins of the text.

32
33 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** No, sir, and I don't have anything to comment
34 on, but just if anybody reviewed or had any questions, and I
35 wanted to make sure that they had an opportunity.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mara, did it all look good to you?

38
39 **MS. LEVY:** Yes, and, I mean, I would just note that the values
40 in there presume that the new red snapper catch limits would be
41 implemented, and so that's what it's reflected here, and so
42 what's in here is what would be proposed once that other rule
43 becomes final, and the gray snapper is just changing the one
44 catch limit in that one section, and so it's pretty
45 straightforward.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I would agree, and so we've got just a couple
48 of placeholders in there, and they're highlighted and ready to

1 plug-and-play. All right, and so, if there's no questions
2 related to the codified text, again, it's a final action item,
3 and I would certainly entertain a motion to that effect, to move
4 this forward using our standard language to the Secretary. Mr.
5 Anson.

6
7 **MR. ANSON:** So moved.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. It's seconded by C.J., and I will
10 read the motion into the record. **The motion is to recommend the**
11 **council approve Framework Action: Recalibration of Red Snapper**
12 **Recreational Catch Limits and Modification of Gray Snapper Catch**
13 **Limits and forward it to the Secretary of Commerce for review**
14 **and implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and**
15 **appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the**
16 **necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair is given**
17 **the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as**
18 **necessary and appropriate.** Okay. Is there any further
19 discussion on this motion? **Is there any opposition to this**
20 **motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** All right. Thanks,
21 guys.

22
23 Okay, and so we will move to the next item on the agenda, and
24 that would be the Draft Framework Action: Modifications to
25 Recreational and Commercial Greater Amberjack Management
26 Measures, and that will be Tab B, Number 7 in your briefing
27 materials. Mara.

28
29 **DRAFT FRAMEWORK ACTION: MODIFICATIONS TO RECREATIONAL AND**
30 **COMMERCIAL GREATER AMBERJACK MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

31
32 **MS. LEVY:** Thank you. Just related to that, just so that the
33 council knows, Anne Kersting, from my office -- She joined our
34 office a few months ago, and she is the lead on this particular
35 action, and so she is on the webinar, but I just wanted to let
36 you know that she is the attorney that is the lead on this.
37 Thanks.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. Thanks, Mara. All right, and so we
40 will go through the action guide first related to this item.

41
42 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. If the committee will
43 recall, this topic for modifications to the greater amberjack
44 recreational fixed season and commercial trip limit came up for
45 discussion back in January. Some work was being done, through
46 some of the analyses and things like that, and so it didn't make
47 the April meeting, but those have been completed, and so this is
48 why we're bringing this up again here at this meeting in June.

1
2 A draft of Chapter 1 and 2 have been developed for the
3 committee's consideration here. I am going to go through a
4 presentation, and so, unlike the previous document, this one has
5 got a little bit more balls in the air here to juggle, and so
6 we'll have to go through a PowerPoint for this one, and so, if
7 there's no questions about that, I will go ahead and jump right
8 into it.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead.

11
12 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Okay. Bernie, if you wouldn't mind pulling up
13 that presentation. A little bit of a presentation overview, and
14 I'm going to provide some background. As I had mentioned, the
15 committee hasn't seen this since January, and so we'll touch on,
16 again, a little bit of background, review the purpose and need
17 statements for this document, as well as review some of the
18 document actions.

19
20 Action 1, originally, when we were going to bring this, it had
21 four alternatives, but, when the IPT started looking through
22 things, and looking at some of the season projection analyses,
23 they suggested, or recommended, two more, and those are also in
24 the document as Alternatives 5 and 6. The IPT also had some
25 other recommendations, and so I will go through those.

26
27 Action 2, the modification to the commercial trip limit, still
28 retains those four alternatives from January, and I will go
29 through that as well, and then I will follow-up with some
30 discussion and feedback, here at the end of the presentation.

31
32 A little bit of background, and Amendment 54 -- The council went
33 final in October of 2022, and catch limits were markedly reduced
34 for both sectors, and we're talking on the order of
35 approximately 79 percent relative to the previous ACL, and so
36 the belt was cinched tight. It revised sector allocations using
37 MRIP-FES, and it also adjusted those average landings from 1993
38 to 2019, which resulted then in a 20 percent commercial and an
39 80 percent recreational allocation.

40
41 Recognizing that, you know, coming down the hopper, and down the
42 line here, was going to be some reductions to the catch limits,
43 an emergency rule for the recreational season was put in place
44 for the 2022 and 2023 season, and so that season opened in
45 September and October, but not for May of 2023, and this
46 emergency rule is effective through July 28, 2023. The
47 recreational sector will open on August 1 of 2023 and close when
48 NMFS projects the ACT will be met, and so that's sort of what's

1 been going on in sort of the management world.
2
3 In terms of this framework action, and this last bullet sort of
4 is directed towards the recreational season, the framework
5 action to modify the management measures here, as I mentioned,
6 for the recreational sector, would be 2024, at the earliest. At
7 the January 2023 meeting -- Originally, that document had some
8 considerations for other jacks species, and that has been
9 removed.
10
11 There has also been an added alternative to Action 1 to open the
12 season November 1 through December 31, and so that is now
13 included in the document here, as well as adding that
14 alternative to Action 2, which would establish a commercial trip
15 limit of seven fish.
16
17 Here is the purpose and need statement, and this is a draft, and
18 so certainly, if anybody had any comments or anything, we can go
19 through that, but the purpose is to modify the greater amberjack
20 recreational fixed closed season and commercial trip limits to
21 extend the fishing season duration.
22
23 Now, the need statement is where it would be good to have some
24 feedback for the IPT, and so the need statement, right now, says
25 to maintain recreational and commercial access, and so that word
26 I'm probably going to use a little bit throughout the talk, and
27 just please keep it in the back of your mind, as I go through
28 the slides, access, and what exactly that might mean, for both
29 the recreational and commercial sector.
30
31 To the greater amberjack component of the reef fish fishery with
32 expected substantial decreases to the ACL as part of Amendment
33 54, while targeting the objectives of the greater amberjack
34 rebuilding plan, and so that's sort of the working purpose and
35 need that we're going off of right now.
36
37 Action 1 deals with the recreational fixed closed season, and
38 Alternative 1 would be the no action, and so this gets at that
39 open August 1 to October 31, with that month of May component to
40 it, and Alternative 2 would only open the season for the month
41 of August. Alternative 3 would open the season starting
42 September 1 through October 31, and Alternative 4, and that's
43 the alternative that was recently added, would open from
44 November 1 to December 31.
45
46 When the IPT sat down and reviewed some of these, they had a
47 couple of recommendations, and they recommended adding two
48 alternatives here, Alternative 5, which would open the season

1 September 1 through October 31 and have an opportunity to open
2 in May, as well as Alternative 6, which would open the season
3 for the month of September and then also for the month of May.

4
5 Now, the IPT -- You see that little asterisk there in
6 Alternative 2 and Alternative 4, and the IPT recommended moving
7 these alternatives to Considered but Rejected. For Alternative
8 2, opening on August 1 sort of functionally has the same outcome
9 as Alternative 1, and so, if you open in August, the season is
10 only projected to go for about three weeks. Alternative 2 does
11 not allow for any potential for a May season.

12
13 Alternative 4, the IPT recommended to move to Considered but
14 Rejected, and there is no data available for those months,
15 making it very difficult to project a season length or give the
16 committee any context with which to sort of make that decision,
17 and so that was the rationale provided by the IPT.

18
19 One of the things that I do -- Again, remember that I asked you
20 to remember the word "access", and the IPT has been working on
21 this action based on what we've heard from public testimony as
22 well as the discussions around the table, that there's a desire
23 to have a fall and a spring open recreational season, and so
24 that's why those two alternatives have been recommended there.
25 Now, in terms of what the committee is interested in, in terms
26 of access, and is the longest season possible, the longest
27 continuous season possible, maybe just in the fall, or is it
28 having a component that could be opened in the fall and the
29 spring, for example?

30
31 Just thinking about how the season may run, again, is just
32 something to keep in the back of your minds. If you would like
33 the IPT to take a different direction, certainly just guide us,
34 and we'll get the alternatives up there for you, and so it's
35 just something to think about.

36
37 Seeing it written out is one thing, but being able to have it in
38 a table certainly for me is a lot more helpful, and so the table
39 up top reflects those open recreational season dates that were
40 in the first slide there, and this table below -- The first
41 column gives you the various alternatives, and the second
42 column, again, reflects what would be considered the open period
43 fishing season, and that third column is based on the season
44 projections, and so that's when the ACT would be expected to be
45 met.

46
47 As you can see, as I mentioned before, in Alternatives 1 and 2,
48 whether you select one of those -- They would functionally, you

1 know, meet the ACT about the same time, within the month of
2 August, or Alternative 3, having a September 1 opening, for
3 those two months of September and October, the ACT is expected
4 to be met at about October 26.

5
6 Again, Alternative 4, looking at the November and December
7 opening, the ACT can't be predicted, when that would be met,
8 just due to lack of landings data. Alternative 5, again, opens
9 for two months in the fall, September and October, as well as
10 the potential for May.

11
12 Now, the ACT is expected to be met in the fall, and Alternative
13 5 would open the season just for one month in September, and one
14 month there in May, and so the season projection indicates that
15 perhaps you would have a realized fall and spring component,
16 with a closure around May 18.

17
18 This comes from the projections, the recreational season
19 projection analysis, and so this is the graph that came out from
20 this, and so this gives you an idea of the landings, by month,
21 from 2019 to 2022, specifically looking at the fall months, and
22 one of the things you will notice is that August has very high
23 landings during that period.

24
25 Now, one of the questions is, in that time period -- Generally,
26 that's been the reopening of the season, and so, thinking about
27 fishing behavior, perhaps a starting date of September 1 -- You
28 could also see higher landings, because of the behavioral
29 component of the fishery, that that's when the season opens, and
30 that you may have higher effort in that time, but, for now,
31 August, relative to September, has those higher landings, and so
32 that's just why you're seeing the projection analyses the way
33 that they are for starting off in August there, that sort of
34 high effort in that month.

35
36 This graph we put up here just to sort of illustrate the maximum
37 number of days and how it is related to the number of days,
38 based on the projection analysis, and so the maximum number of
39 days is the black bar, the number of days projected to be open
40 until the ACT is met is those green bars for each alternative,
41 and so, for Alternative 1 and 2, the days to the ACT is met is
42 the same.

43
44 Alternative 3, you get a little closer to what you max days may
45 be, for the projection analyses, but, again, there's no
46 possibility of a May season. Alternative 4, it's not that there
47 won't be a season, that it's zero, but it's just unknown, and so
48 that's why there's a question-mark there, and so Alternative 5

1 and 6 would get you similar days, you know, fifty-five or so
2 days, but with a possibility of a fall and May spring component
3 there, and so that's just something else to think about.

4
5 Again, this is that same table that is illustrating when the
6 season would be open for the recreational for each alternative,
7 and then the table below has some pros and cons for each one,
8 and so the first column is alternatives, and that second column
9 is pros, and so, for example, Alternative 1, one of the pros is
10 we've got some recent data for those months, and the season
11 structure has been in place for a little bit of time, and then
12 there's a possibility of a May season. The con is that that
13 will likely exceed the ACT, the emergency rule in place, and to
14 try to avoid an overrun and payback, and that payback would have
15 to come to those substantially-reduced catch limits in Amendment
16 54.

17
18 Alternative 2, a pro is that we do have some recent data for
19 August, and a con is they've generally been pretty high, which
20 would -- Then, of course, with this alternative, there's no
21 possibility of a May season.

22
23 For Alternative 3, again, the pros are we've got some recent
24 data for September and October, and the con is there's moderate
25 landings in those months, and so it's likely to close before the
26 end of October, and then, again, there is no possibility for a
27 spring season.

28
29 Alternative 4, and so this would potentially avoid periods of
30 high landings, and it's sort of in the wintertime, when not many
31 people are fishing, and you might get some days out of that,
32 but, generally, the weather is bad, and people just can't make
33 it out, but, also, it's a little speculative, because we just
34 don't have any data on it, and so we can't predict a season
35 length.

36
37 Alternative 5, we've got some recent data, again, for September
38 and October, and this would allow a possibility for May, and,
39 again, moderate landings in those months, and it's likely to
40 close before the end of October, but the possibility still
41 remains for May. For Alternative 6, again, we have some recent
42 data for September, with the possibility of May, but this would
43 shorten the fall season, and the fall season is down to one
44 month. I think, actually, Bernie, I'm going to stop right
45 there, if anybody has any questions on Action 1, before I move
46 to Action 2.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Dr. Hollensead. Again, this is just a

1 document with two action items on it, one related to the
2 recreational season and the other one to the commercial trip
3 limit, and so I have a quick question with regard to the
4 schedule, right, the action schedule, and so, originally, this
5 document was intended to go final at our next council meeting,
6 and I recognize that there was a delay, right, in putting it
7 together, and is that still the intention, to move this forward
8 to final action in August? Dr. Simmons.

9

10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We can try.
11 We are down a social scientist/anthropologist position, and so
12 it will have to be -- It will mainly depend on what kind of help
13 we can get from the Regional Office to fill in the gaps right
14 now, until we hire someone else, and so that could delay things
15 for this document, but we can try to get it done through all of
16 this.

17

18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. No pressure, and I'm just trying to
19 make sure that I understand and if there is any sensitivities
20 with regard to moving it forward, and, I mean, I think the
21 intent is, right, if we can get it through -- Originally, the
22 intent was, if we could get it through in August, then we would
23 be able to work through the process, and so the regulations
24 would go in place for 2024, right, and, if we had to extend it
25 out into October, would we be jeopardizing that? What do you
26 think, Andy?

27

28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Pushing final action to October?

29

30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes.

31

32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, the commercial season will start in
33 January, and so we could get a change in place for the
34 recreational season for 2024, but the commercial season would
35 not have any change in their trip limit, until probably mid-
36 season at that point, probably during the spawning closure, at
37 the earliest.

38

39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Well, we can make -- I appreciate
40 the staffing issues, right, and I guess we can go ahead and make
41 every effort to try to move it forward in August, but, if we do
42 that, obviously, we're going to need to pick some preferreds
43 here, right, and go ahead, Dr. Simmons.

44

45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I
46 think that would be a good thing to think about, and I think it
47 also depends on if you want that May season, and I think the IPT
48 had a recommendation for consideration of potential removal, or

1 considered but rejected, of two alternatives, to help us
2 streamline it, and so it would be good to have some discussion
3 about that and get feedback on that as well at this meeting.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes. Good idea. All right, and so let's go
6 ahead and deal with the first part of that issue, right, and so
7 the IPT recommended moving several of those alternatives to
8 Considered but Rejected, and, Bernie, maybe we can move back up
9 to that slide in the presentation.

10
11 So there are two, Alternative 2 and Alternative 4, that were
12 considered -- You know, the IPT recommended moving them to
13 Considered but Rejected, and so I would open the floor to see if
14 people agree with that recommendation or not, and, if they do,
15 then we'll certainly need a motion to do that. Ms. Boggs.

16
17 **MS. BOGGS:** So, I'm the one that suggested looking at November
18 to December, because this is a species that, everything we've
19 done, nothing seems to have worked, and trying to keep the
20 fishery open, not necessarily when people fish, and I
21 understand, and so I have -- **We were trying to think outside the**
22 **box, and so I will be happy to make the motion, but, before I do**
23 **that, I know I've asked this, but I want to hear it one more**
24 **time.**

25
26 We keep looking at trying to push a season over into May, and
27 the commercial sector has a spawning closure of March, April,
28 and May, and so why in the world would we want to open the
29 recreational and charter/for-hire fishery, the headboat fishery,
30 in May during the spawn?

31
32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That's a legitimate question to ask, right,
33 and it may be reflected in the preferred that is selected by the
34 council, and so we'll circle back on that issue, I guess, after
35 we can get perhaps a second to your motion, which is to accept
36 the IPT's recommendation to consider moving to Considered but
37 Rejected Alternative 2 and Alternative 4. Is there a second to
38 that? C.J. Sweetman seconded, and so, Bernie, if we can get
39 that on the board.

40
41 **Okay, and so the motion on the board is, in Action 1, to move**
42 **Alternatives 2 and 4 to Considered but Rejected.** Is there any
43 further discussion of this motion? Go ahead, Andy.

44
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't feel strongly with regard to the
46 motion, and I am certainly supportive of moving Alternative 2.
47 Alternative 4, I just, I think, want to make it clear that I
48 would not remove it just simply because we don't have the data

1 to analyze it, right, and that was at least some of the
2 discussion that was presented to us, and I think that runs afoul
3 in kind of -- Yes, we may have more risk, in terms of
4 considering a season where we've been closed for a time period,
5 but management evolves and changes, and we might have to
6 actually look at time periods when we don't have data and
7 reconsider them, but, with regard to Susan's rationale as to why
8 she would remove it, I am okay with that, and I would support
9 the motion.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Is there any further discussion on the
12 motion? **Any opposition to the motion?** All right. **Seeing none,**
13 **we'll consider the motion passed.**

14
15 All right, and so now we will circle back to the remaining
16 alternatives in that action, and so that would be Alternatives
17 1, 3, 5, and 6. C.J.

18
19 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe I can help answer
20 Susan's question about why May has been considered in there,
21 and, obviously, there's a lot of Florida anglers that like to
22 harvest in May. Now, having said that, I am not in favor of
23 having a May season, because of the spawning season closure and
24 the status of the stock, but I just kind of wanted to provide
25 some context as to why that option has been on there,
26 historically.

27
28 Having said that, and now that we've removed 2 and 4 to
29 Considered but Rejected, when you're sitting here looking at
30 these alternatives, I mean, Alternative 5 is effectively -- I
31 mean, based on what the projections close dates, of when the ACT
32 would be met, it's effectively similar to Alternative 2, but,
33 having said that, the stock is in very bad shape, and having a
34 spawning season closure on all sectors I think would be
35 preferable here, at least from my perspective, and then, when
36 the fishery gets better, perhaps we can reconsider that.

37
38 Having said that, I believe that Alternative 3 would be likely
39 the most effective one here, and that was open September 1
40 through October 31, and it aligns with what we did in the
41 emergency rule, and so we do have some data to look into that,
42 and it kind of aligns with, potentially, where we're going with
43 gag, and so it could deal with some issues there, as it relates
44 to discard mortality, and I'm willing to make a motion to make
45 that the preferred alternative, if desired.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** C.J., if we might get a little more discussion
48 about the various alternatives before we do that, but, if not,

1 we'll circle back to you. Okay. Is there any other thoughts on
2 any of these particular alternatives in this action item? Ms.
3 Boggs.

4
5 **MS. BOGGS:** I mean, I think my question plays into the motion
6 that C.J. just made, and I understand that, C.J., yes, that
7 people want to fish, and I will say it again, and I would like
8 red snapper in January and February, and triggerfish in January
9 and February, but that's not realistic. I hope, one day, we
10 have a body that sees how effective other alternatives in
11 management can be, but, right now, we don't have that.

12
13 I am not being insensitive to what I hear the Panama City fleet
14 saying, that they need these fish in May. Well, again, I can
15 give you the same argument in other different areas for
16 different species year-round, but, if closing the season during
17 the spawn is what we need to do to help this fishery make a
18 comeback, and this may not work either, and we don't know, but
19 that's why I was asking why, and is it just because that's when
20 people want to fish, and we're not mindful of the fact that
21 that's a spawning season? I mean, we do it for gag, and we do
22 it -- You know, it's inconsistent with what we do, and so, if
23 we're going to close it for the commercial sector, then I think
24 the recreational sector should also be closed, because we're not
25 being consistent.

26
27 Either that or open it up in May for the commercial sector, and
28 that's why I asked the question of what is the rationale of --
29 Why, in the past, have we always opened this fishery in May, and
30 I keep asking, and I have never gotten a clear answer. All that
31 being said, if C.J. makes the motion, I would second your
32 motion.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Susan. Mr. Strelcheck.

35
36 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, and Clay can add to this, but a dead fish
37 is a dead fish, right, and so, if you kill the fish before the
38 spawning season, they're not even able to spawn, right, and you
39 can kill it during the spawning season, and, if we're managing
40 mortality correctly, right, then harvesting during a spawning
41 season might not be problematic.

42
43 Now, with that said, certain species form spawning aggregations,
44 and so it could be very disruptive to the spawn, and ultimately
45 have negative implications and consequences on the health and
46 status of the stock, but the key is really controlling fishing
47 mortality in the first place and allowing a sufficient number of
48 species to reach spawning age to spawn, and then, as you're

1 pointing out, the added layer of protection is you're not going
2 to kill them during the spawning season, but it all comes down
3 to controlling fishing mortality.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Clay.

6
7 **DR. PORCH:** Yes, I would agree with that. Unless there is some
8 reason you would expect, during the spawning season, that
9 fishing disrupts the spawning of the fish, even the ones that
10 aren't caught, and, you know, for instance, just an extreme
11 example, but, you know, if someone -- Someone was talking
12 recently about throwing M80s in the water, and so, if you did
13 something like that, that shuts down -- The fish just would
14 freak out, right, and so, if you did something about fishing
15 where you disrupt their spawning, in addition to just taking
16 fish out of the water, then, yes, you would want to close it
17 during the spawning, or, if you're having challenges tracking
18 the catches, and so, again, with uncertain recreational
19 statistics, and you're concerned about how well you're able to
20 in-season monitor, the problem of catching during a spawning
21 season, when the fish might be more vulnerable, or more
22 aggregated, is it's easier for a big catch to go undetected
23 until it's too late, and so that would be the other reason.

24
25 If you think about it, for instance, with grouper, that form
26 aggregations, it's really easy to target them, and you could
27 wipe out the stock very quickly, before it shows up in the catch
28 statistics, and so, if you thought that was likely, that's
29 another reason that you might not allow fishing during the
30 spawning season.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Boggs.

33
34 **MS. BOGGS:** I have to ask. Then why is there a closure for the
35 commercial fishermen during the spawn? I mean, if you're
36 looking at discard mortality, and you're worried about catching
37 these fish and releasing them and them not surviving, why do
38 they have the closure, and I think this is a very important
39 discussion to have, because we're talking about discard
40 mortality, and that seems to be a question at this table
41 constantly, is what are we going to do about discards, and, if
42 that helps with the discard problem, then why is it -- That may
43 be what the commercial fishermen want, and I don't know, and
44 this is just -- This is just one of those pondering things that,
45 if I don't understand it, I can't make an informed decision,
46 and, if you don't want to answer it, I understand that as well.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Strelcheck.

1
2 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I don't -- I wasn't at the council when
3 they decided on the three-month spawning season closure, and so
4 we have an amendment, and we can go back and look at that record
5 and see what they said about, you know, the decisions made at
6 that time and why they did that. I mean, you bring up a good,
7 valid point, right, in terms of differences between commercial
8 and recreational and whether they're valid and should we
9 reconsider that.

10
11 I will say that, obviously, the commercial season starts on
12 January 1, and then it closes and then reopens, and it could go
13 until the end of the year, and there's much more time to
14 actually harvest the quota, and, obviously, now that the quota
15 is reduced, it's going to be a much shorter season, whereas, in
16 the recreational fishery, we're talking about, you know, months
17 of fishing, at best.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons and then Mr. Anson.

20
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we
22 would have to go back and look at that amendment, like Mr.
23 Strelcheck suggested, but I think one of the reasons, Ms. Boggs,
24 that commercial was closed during spawning is the size limits
25 were quite different. Their size limit is quite a bit larger,
26 and we know that the females are significantly larger than
27 males, and there was some evidence that more females could be
28 taken at that size limit, and so they decided to protect it
29 during the spawn, I believe, but we can go back and check all of
30 that and get back to you during Full Council.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Kevin.

33
34 **MR. ANSON:** I think some of the discussion also related to it's
35 a little bit of a directed fishery, as far as type of baits and
36 gears that you would use, relative to other reef fish, and so
37 you could be selective, so to speak, in not targeting those, at
38 least during that time period, and have less of a chance of
39 catching them and having to discard them, and so the same might
40 hold true in the recreational fishery too, is that, you know,
41 there are a good number of fishermen that want to go fish for
42 amberjack, and know they need to kind of switch their techniques
43 and gears, and so, if the season were closed, they may not
44 engage in that type of gear, you know, and fish for other
45 species, of which you have a less likely chance of encountering
46 that species, or catching that species.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks for all that input. Mr.

1 Dugas.

2
3 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple of points,
4 talking about discard mortality and dead discards, and the
5 western Gulf is, to me, a different amberjack fishery, and the
6 fishery, to me, is going to suffer more, pushing the season
7 later, when all the recreational snapper fishermen in the
8 western Gulf incidental catch -- You know, it's going to be
9 amberjack, and the likelihood of releasing them alive is very
10 slim, and so I just wanted to make that point, because we talked
11 about, last October, starting a document for an east and west
12 split for amberjack, and we haven't heard anything about it, and
13 it's at the bottom of the list, but I just wanted to raise those
14 couple of points. Thank you.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, J.D. Mr. Diaz.

17
18 **MR. DIAZ:** Just a couple of things. I know, a while back, we
19 tried to shift amberjack to the fall, and what was happening,
20 before we did that, is the ACL was getting caught up in the
21 spring, mostly in the eastern Gulf, and the guys in the western
22 Gulf were saying they didn't have a shot at them, because it's
23 mostly a fall fishery for them, but, as far as talking to the
24 alternatives here, I support what Dr. Sweetman was proposing
25 earlier, and one reason that I support that is that it starts at
26 the beginning of a wave. Alternative 2 would start in the
27 middle of a wave, and I think that's problematic for us, where
28 at least Alternative 3 would cover a full wave.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Mr. Diaz. Okay. Any
31 other thoughts? I am not seeing any, and I will circle back to
32 Dr. Sweetman and ask if he would like to make a motion for a
33 preferred.

34
35 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Sure thing, Mr. Chair, and so, Bernie, I would
36 say, in Action 1, to make Alternative 3 the preferred.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so we have a motion on the board.
39 Is there a second to that motion?

40
41 **MS. BOGGS:** I told C.J. that I will, but I might change my mind
42 at Full Council.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Way to jump all in. It's reluctantly seconded
45 by Ms. Boggs. C.J.

46
47 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just some further justification here. You know,
48 as I mentioned before, we've already got one year on the books,

1 based on the emergency rule, to see how this might play out, and
2 I think it ended up at like 71 percent, or something along those
3 lines, of the ACT, and, as I mentioned, you know, as we're
4 making progress in the gag grouper amendment, this could
5 potentially line up with some of the seasonal components of
6 that, to mitigate some discard issues. As Dale mentioned, this
7 would cover nearly an entire wave, and it would start at
8 September 1, at the beginning of a wave, which is beneficial to
9 us being able to react to what's going on in the fishery, and,
10 as well, the AP supported this alternative as well.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Is there
13 any further discussion on the motion? **Is there any opposition**
14 **to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** All right.
15 Thanks, guys. Dr. Hollensead, we'll go -- Andy.

16
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Maybe I missed it, but do we only have the two
18 alternatives in the document, or did we add Alternatives 5 and
19 6?

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Alternatives 5 and 6 would be added to the
22 document, and so there will be four in there. Mr. Anson.

23
24 **MR. ANSON:** Do they need to be?

25
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That's a good question. I mean, let me look
27 at staff for a minute, and, Ms. Boggs, I will get to you. I
28 mean, part of the issue with moving this document forward is the
29 workload in developing Chapter 3, in particular, right, 3 and 4,
30 and, by removing those alternatives, would that substantially
31 free up some time, or does it matter? You can answer, but then
32 I will go to Ms. Levy as well. In essence, if we removed
33 Alternative 5 and 6, which were recommended by the IPT --

34
35 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** If you removed Alternative 5 and 6, then there
36 would only be two alternatives in the document, the no action
37 and then that Alternative 3.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.

40
41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I think we need, just from a NEPA standpoint,
42 at least a third alternative, and I would recommend, if we're
43 going to only include one of those, that we include the one that
44 would be September and May, and not have the October opening,
45 because I feel like Alternative 5 is functionally equivalent to
46 Alternative 3, and so Alternative 6 would be my recommendation
47 to include.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Alternative 6 to cleave or keep?
2
3 **MR. STRELCHECK:** To keep, plus I like the fact that it adds the
4 September, which I didn't realize. Sorry.
5
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so are you making a motion,
7 Andy?
8
9 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I will make a motion to add
10 Alternative 6 to the greater amberjack framework action.
11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Well, it's already in there, because --
13
14 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Is it in there?
15
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I believe it's in there, and so which one do
17 you want to cleave? That's what I am asking.
18
19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Okay, and then the action would be to remove
20 Alternative 5, to remove Alternative 5 to Considered but
21 Rejected.
22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so is there a second for that
24 motion? It's seconded by Mr. Anson. Is there any further
25 discussion on the motion? I am not seeing any. **Is there any**
26 **opposition to that motion?** Okay. **Seeing none, the motion**
27 **carries.** We have simplified, to the best of our ability, the
28 document, and hopefully that will ease the workload just a
29 little bit, and maybe or maybe not, but we're trying. All
30 right. Dr. Hollensead, and maybe we'll move on to Action Item
31 2.
32
33 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. One thing, before we
34 move into Action 2, to Mr. Dugas, is, at the January meeting, it
35 was requested that we have some state-specific landings. In
36 your briefing materials, there's a supplemental material that's
37 got landings broken down, commercial and recreational, and by
38 state as well, and if, at any point, you want to go through
39 that, we can. I didn't include it in the document or the
40 presentation, but, inevitably, it always comes up, and so I
41 wanted to make sure that you had that. Thank you.
42
43 We can go into Action 2 then. Bernie, that would be Slide 10.
44 Thank you, and so a little bit of background. As it was
45 discussed around the table, the fishing season for the
46 commercial sector begins on January 1, with that fixed closure
47 March through May, and implemented in 2020 was a trip limit,
48 from 1,500 pounds gutted weight down to 1,000 pounds gutted

1 weight, with a step-down to 250 pounds when 75 percent of the
2 commercial ACT is harvested, and that step-down has not been
3 triggered since the implementation.

4
5 There has been some recent discussions, in terms of structuring
6 the alternatives for a commercial trip limit for greater
7 amberjack in fish numbers versus weights, and this came up at
8 the Reef Fish AP. They stated, for example, that five fish
9 could weigh 200 to 256 pounds, and it turns out that it's about
10 150, and that setting a trip limit in number of fish, instead of
11 pounds, would be easier for fishermen to follow. Earlier, or
12 yesterday, during the Law Enforcement Update, you also heard
13 that the law enforcement had mentioned that, from an enforcement
14 standpoint, counting number of fish for a trip limit was also a
15 little more feasible. Then just a reminder what the commercial
16 ACL and ACT will be under Amendment 54, down below.

17
18 Here are the alternatives, and these are also what were in the
19 document from January, and, again, that Alternative 1 would be
20 the no action, and these are in whole weight, again, and so
21 that's why the numbers are a little bit different here, as
22 opposed to the previous slide.

23
24 Alternative 2 would have a trip limit of about 260 pounds whole
25 weight, and Alternative 3 would have a limit of seven fish,
26 which translates to about 218 pounds whole weight, and
27 Alternative 4 would have a limit of five fish, which translates
28 to 155 pounds whole weight.

29
30 One thing to think about is, if the committee is interested in
31 having, you know, a trip limit that is about 250 pounds or so,
32 that would be eight fish, for example, and, if you would like
33 the IPT to move in that direction though, I believe that would
34 take a motion, to expressly spell that out, so that the IPT
35 could follow through with that, and so just keep that in mind.

36
37 The table down below here has the alternatives in Column 1
38 there, and Column 2 has the predicted change in those annual
39 landings, depending on how you set those trip limits, as well as
40 predicted closure dates, and so, for example, in Alternative 1,
41 under Amendment 54, it's expected that that step-down would
42 actually be triggered by February 4, and then, when the season
43 goes to open up in the summer, there wouldn't be much of a
44 season, and it's expected to be met by June 6, and so a
45 predicted season length of sixty-three days.

46
47 It does this for every alternative, and so you can see, for
48 Alternative 2, that's about a 260-pound trip limit, and you make

1 it down to mid-September, 155 days in length, and a little bit
2 more of a reduction in Alternative 3, which would get you to
3 fall, deeper into the fall, more like mid-October, for 185 days
4 open, and then that really reduced catch limit of five fish,
5 about 155 pounds whole weight, would -- You would remain open
6 for the length of the season, with a predicted days of 273.

7
8 This last column here has got the proportion of trips that
9 landed that trip limit or less, to give you a little bit of an
10 idea of what proportion of trips are sort of landing what, and
11 so, if you -- Let's say, for the sake of argument, you would say
12 that a trip that landed a thousand pounds, or a little bit more,
13 would be sort of a targeted trip, and it's a small portion,
14 proportion, of the trips, but it's not zero, right, and so there
15 are some component of the sector that is targeting, the
16 commercial sector that is targeting, greater amberjack.

17
18 There is also -- On the other side, there also seems to be a
19 portion of the commercial sector that is harvesting -- This is
20 more of a bycatch fishery as well, and so, when I had mentioned
21 access before, in terms of the purpose and need statement, that
22 this was sort of an idea, potentially, and do you allow for some
23 maybe directed trips, commercial trips, here, recognizing that
24 it might shorten the number of days that the season is open, but
25 it does allow that opportunity a little bit, or is it, you know,
26 more desirable to have access open all year, in which case it
27 would remain mostly a bycatch fishery, and so, again, that's
28 just something to think about as the committee thinks about
29 these things. Next slide, Bernie.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Real quick, Mr. Diaz.

32
33 **MR. DIAZ:** You may have said this, and, if I missed it, I
34 apologize, but did you all have some discussions about what got
35 us the biggest reduction of dead discards out of these
36 alternatives?

37
38 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** No, and we hadn't really gotten that far. I
39 would have to speak with our data analysts, in terms of if they
40 have some of that information that they could provide to us, so
41 that we could put that together for you. I would have to
42 double-check with the data analysts.

43
44 **MR. DIAZ:** I mean, I think it would be valuable for the council
45 to know, you know, and I don't know, from just looking at it,
46 which one it would be, and it would be valuable to know which
47 one got the biggest bang for the buck on reducing dead discards,
48 especially in a fishery in this bad shape, and so, if you could

1 let us know that, the next time we see this document, that would
2 be great. Thank you.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Dale, for that question. Ms.
5 Boggs.

6
7 **MS. BOGGS:** Lisa, you mentioned that the Reef Fish AP was
8 talking about the five fish, but did they -- That it would weigh
9 a certain amount, and that it would be easier to count fish than
10 the pounds of fish, but did they indicate -- I saw your graph on
11 the next slide, but did they indicate what the average number of
12 fish caught on a trip that would equate to? I mean, I know you
13 did it by pounds, but are they saying that eight fish is the
14 average of what they would catch, or -- I'm just trying to get
15 an idea of what they might --

16
17 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** I don't think they necessarily broke it down in
18 this what I average catch, but they had just mentioned that it
19 would be easier for them to count the number of fish, and they
20 had actually estimated five fish to be a little bit larger, for
21 example, than what we've got as an average, and so, again,
22 that's why I had mentioned that, if the committee was either
23 adding an alternative or, for example, modifying that
24 Alternative 2 to be number of fish, that just a motion be made,
25 so that it would be explicit to the IPT, so that we could report
26 that out to you.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. You can go ahead, Lisa, with the
29 presentation.

30
31 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay. We finally are here to the discussion
32 and feedback request, and I certainly appreciate the feedback
33 that the committee has provided so far, and I talked a little
34 bit about the emergency rule and the timing of Amendment 54, and
35 I talked about it a little bit for the recreational sector.

36
37 From the commercial sector, depending on the timing for
38 Amendment 54 and when that is final, you know, from what I
39 understand, there's also a rule package that's in the hopper and
40 ready to go that would likely close the commercial fishery, to
41 adhere to Amendment 54 catch limits, and I certainly would let
42 anybody from the Regional Office expand on that, if they would
43 like to.

44
45 In terms of the committee feedback request, I certainly
46 appreciate everything that the committee has done in looking at
47 Action 1, and then, as I mentioned before, any other
48 alternatives for Action 2, or certainly any direction that the

1 committee would like to provide to the IPT.

2
3 Just to let you know what our next steps would be, I would take
4 everything that we've spoken to here at the council meeting, and
5 I would report that back to the IPT, and we can modify the
6 document as requested, and then we can bring that revised draft
7 back in August, again perhaps thinking about going final,
8 whatever the will of the committee, and certainly the IPT will
9 work towards that, and so that concludes the presentation.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. All right. We are
12 going to talk about these alternatives, but, C.J., did you have
13 a question with regard to the --

14
15 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Sure, and so, relative to -- Andy, this is going
16 to be for you, and so, relative to the recreational fishing
17 season for this year for greater amberjack, obviously, the
18 emergency rule went in place last year, and I'm curious what
19 you're thinking is going to be done this year.

20
21 **MR. STRELCHECK:** We aren't at the point of announcing the
22 season, but it will open on August 1, and I will just say that
23 it will be comparable to what you're seeing in terms of some of
24 the projections in this document, and so we'll try to get the
25 dates out as soon as possible.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Andy. All right, and so we have a
28 request, I guess, from the staff to consider whether or not we
29 want to add any alternatives, or are we happy with the
30 alternatives in this action item as they exist, and, if we are,
31 is there an appetite to move one of those forward as a
32 preferred? All right. C.J.

33
34 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so I think probably the most preferable
35 of these, at least, you know, listening to the AP meeting, I
36 think their preference was Alternative 4, a limit of five fish,
37 about 155 pounds whole weight. Basically, this is the only
38 option that allows them to keep the fishery open year-round, and
39 it does shift it to a bycatch fishery, I believe they said, and,
40 basically, all these options would be a bycatch fishery, and I
41 think they said they needed a minimum of 500 pounds to have a
42 directed fishery, and so, yes, that would be my preference here,
43 and I'm curious to see what other's thoughts around the table
44 are about a trip limit of five fish.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Any others? Again, I will circle back
47 to a motion on that, if anybody would like to add on to the
48 discussion there. Susan, I didn't see your hand up.

1
2 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I was just about to say that I don't know that
3 I am ready to make a decision on this, and I would like to hear,
4 tomorrow at public comment, what their thoughts are, and I am
5 sensitive to Dale's comments about the discards, because, if
6 they all say, well, you know, I'm throwing back four fish, and
7 if I could have kept eight, then I would just as soon that they
8 keep the eight than be throwing four fish of discards back, and
9 that's kind of my rationale with that, but I would like to hear
10 some comments tomorrow, before I make a decision.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Any other thoughts at this point? We
13 can certainly listen to public testimony tomorrow, and my
14 preference would be that, following that testimony, that we do
15 in fact pick a preferred during Full Council, so we can allow
16 staff an opportunity to move this forward in an expeditious
17 manner, so we have an opportunity to take it final at our August
18 meeting, and I guess do we need any type of a public hearing for
19 this, or are we good? Dr. Simmons.

20
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is a
22 framework action, and so what we would plan to do is the same
23 thing we just did for the previous red snapper and gray snapper
24 framework action, which would be to produce a video and collect
25 public comments, written comments, that way to provide to the
26 council.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you very much. We'll be prepared
29 to do that as well, and let me see where we are in the agenda.
30 Okay, and so we are a little bit ahead of schedule at the
31 moment, and so I just wanted to make sure that there's no other
32 questions with regard to AJs, but I see Ms. Boggs. Go ahead.

33
34 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, so I was trying to look back, and I'm looking
35 at the document, and so the Reef Fish AP did make a motion, at
36 their, what, October 2022 meeting, and the Reef Fish AP
37 recommends that the council add an alternative that establishes
38 a five-fish trip limit for greater amberjack until 75 percent of
39 the commercial ACT is met, and, thereafter, the commercial trip
40 limit is two fish. Did we consider that at all in this
41 document? I didn't see, or did we and then we rejected it? I
42 don't recall.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** John.

45
46 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Sorry. I didn't hear the question. We were
47 talking about the --

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So there was a recommendation made in the AP
2 about setting a limit at five fish, and, after 70 percent, or
3 75, and I can't remember if it was 70 or 75 percent, of the ACT
4 is caught, then you would step it down to two, and I don't
5 believe that that AP motion was discussed by the council, or
6 maybe we missed it.
7

8 **DR. FROESCHKE:** In general, we talked about this, but, given
9 that the five fish was not projected to meet the season, that it
10 was not projected to result in a closure, there would be no
11 reason to step it down, and, given that we have the step-down in
12 place already that we've never used, it's not thought that this
13 is particularly efficient.
14

15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I appreciate that, John. That makes sense.
16 Okay. All right. Is there any other items with regard to AJs?
17 Mr. Strelcheck.
18

19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** With Alternative 2, we just have the pounds,
20 and I guess I'm trying to understand why that would be different
21 than Alternatives 3 and 4 and whether we would want to just
22 recommend, for consistency, number of fish, to be commensurate
23 with that poundage.
24

25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Well, I think Alternative 1 is still in
26 pounds, right, and, I mean, that's the standard way of doing it,
27 and so I think that's the reason that it's in there, to give you
28 two kind of just pound-related alternatives and two that have
29 numbers of fish. I don't feel strongly about it one way or the
30 other. Dr. Simmons.
31

32 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** It's not to this, and so I will
33 come back.
34

35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Is there anything, Andy, that you see as
36 problematic, by having that in pounds?
37

38 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, from a standpoint of what the fishermen
39 have been telling us, right, it just seems like we would want to
40 put it in numbers of fish, but, right now, it doesn't seem like
41 we're honing-in on that as a preferred alternative, and so I
42 don't feel strongly.
43

44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Dr. Simmons.
45

46 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we
47 can do that, and I guess a question, maybe for the Science
48 Center, and I believe the trip tickets are all going to still be

1 in poundages, and so do we need to try to get more information
2 on the average size of fish, as we move towards these low
3 landings that we're trying to estimate, because I think the
4 commercial fishermen still have to report in pounds of fish and
5 not numbers.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Clay.

8
9 **DR. PORCH:** I mean, that's correct, but you're not going to
10 monitor each individual -- The poundage on each individual trip,
11 and so I'm not sure that you actually would need that, because,
12 ultimately, the quota is still going to be in pounds, right?

13
14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, that's correct. All right. Maybe
15 there's a little bit of discussion to take place, and background
16 on this, but, again, I feel like we'll get some public
17 testimony, but we'll also talk about this issue, about pounds
18 and numbers of fish and necessary conversions, and if that
19 complicates things, moving forward, and we can hopefully clarify
20 that at Full Council. All right. Any other discussion related
21 to AJs? I am not seeing any, and so we are, again, still a
22 little ahead of schedule, and, Mr. Chair, do you want to take a
23 break now?

24
25 **DR. STUNZ:** (Dr. Stunz's comment is not audible on the
26 recording.)

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so we will take a break now for
29 fifteen minutes.

30
31 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so we are going to go ahead and
34 pick up with the SSC Summary Report for the May 2023 Meeting,
35 and John Mareska is going to lead us through that, and that
36 would be -- The presentation is Tab B, Number 8(a) in your
37 briefing materials, and so welcome, John.

38
39 **SSC SUMMARY REPORT FROM THE MAY 2023 MEETING**

40
41 **MR. JOHN MARESKA:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so I will start
42 out with the recent landings that the SSC reviewed for black
43 grouper and yellowfin grouper. We considered different time
44 periods when evaluating that data, and we settled upon a twelve-
45 year stable time period.

46
47 We talked about concerns over the relationship between landings,
48 or the difference, actually, between the landings and fishery-

1 independent indices and, if those trends were different between
2 the data streams, which one was actually more probable, and we
3 asked questions about are the landings representative of the
4 stock condition, and we had a lot of discussion on the large
5 annual variations in the MRIP-FES landings.

6
7 Ultimately, the SSC determined that Tier 3a would be most
8 appropriate, and we would also be interested in reviewing
9 available updated fishery-independent data for the next
10 assessment.

11
12 The motion is the SSC discussed the shallow-water grouper
13 complex with the potential for providing OFL and ABC catch
14 advice. Previously, the SSC has provided catch advice for scamp
15 and yellowmouth grouper, leaving black grouper and yellowfin
16 grouper within this complex for consideration. Given a lack of
17 fishery-independent data available, as well as very high
18 uncertainty in the landings data for black grouper and yellowfin
19 grouper, the SSC recommends additional fishery-independent data
20 sources be examined for the next stock assessment. The SSC
21 recommends using Tier 3a for setting the OFL, which is mean plus
22 two standard deviations, and Option a for the ABC, with a mean
23 plus one-and-a-half standard deviations, for the black grouper
24 and yellowfin grouper, with both to be converted to MRIP-FES
25 units. The reference period used for landings is recommended to
26 be 2010 through 2021. The motion carried twelve to four with
27 one abstention and four absent. Ultimately, the catch advice is
28 the OFL would be 359,255 pounds gutted weight, and the ABC is
29 307,752 pounds gutted weight.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think, John, we'll circle back on this
32 element of the report, but we'll go ahead and do the midwater
33 snapper complex now.

34
35 **MR. MARESKA:** All right. In addition, the SSC reviewed the
36 recent landing trends for blackfin, queen, and silk snappers.
37 Those are the remaining three species in the midwater snapper
38 complex.

39
40 Previously, the SSC had recommended that wenchman be removed,
41 during the March 2023 meeting of the SSC, and so the midwater
42 snapper landings appear to be stable over the last ten-year
43 period, and, ultimately, the midwater snapper species remaining
44 are considered to be rare-event species, and so, again, we
45 expect a lot of variation in those landings. Again, the SSC
46 determined Tier 3a to be the most appropriate and acknowledged
47 the potential for high landings variability for rare-event
48 species under the MRIP-FES program.

1
2 The motion is the SSC recommends using Tier 3a for setting the
3 OFL and Option a for the ABC for the midwater snapper complex,
4 excluding wenchman, with both to be converted to the MRIP-FES
5 units. The reference period used for the landings is
6 recommended to be 2012 through 2021. The motion carried with no
7 opposition. The OFL is 107,904 pounds whole weight, and the ABC
8 is 96,689 pounds whole weight.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, John, and so there's two
11 elements of this part of the SSC summary report, and one is
12 dealing specifically with black grouper and yellowfin, and we'll
13 certainly need some action from the council on that, and then
14 there's the separate element having to do with removal of
15 wenchman, potentially, from the FMP and setting catch advice, or
16 catch limits, for the remaining, or the residual, species in the
17 midwater snapper complex, and so we'll start out, I believe,
18 with the grouper, and, John, if we need you, we might call you
19 back, but we'll start there.

20
21 I mean, if folks recall, we had got a recent assessment for
22 scamp that allowed us to provide catch advice for that species,
23 right, and, as John pointed out, then the SSC kind of worked
24 through what we might do with the other species, because they're
25 involved in the shallow-water grouper complex, and it
26 complicates, potentially, for those in the IFQ world, right, and
27 so I think we have to think about these recommendations, and,
28 ultimately, we're going to need to modify the amendment that we
29 have for scamp, right, to include black grouper and yellowfin
30 grouper, and then we'll probably also need to direct staff, in
31 that amendment, to consider the implications for the shallow-
32 water grouper complex and what our options might be to
33 incorporate those changes into our management plan there.

34
35 I am going to stop there, and maybe entertain any specific
36 questions, before we land on a motion directing staff to move
37 forward, and so are there any questions? C.J.

38
39 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I am not sure who I'm addressing this to, but I'm
40 curious the thoughts, any benefits or impacts, of actually
41 separating out these species, based on the stock status, and
42 sorry, and I'm going back to the grouper.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Bernie, we might want to -- We'll scroll back
45 up in John's presentation. Right there. Again, what was your
46 question, C.J.?

47
48 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Really, what would be the benefits, or impacts,

1 really, and I think you've touched on it a little bit, with how
2 it could potentially impact IFQs, splitting out black grouper
3 and yellowfin, and I'm curious on the thoughts about what
4 benefits would be for actually splitting that out, considering
5 the stock status of this complex.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ryan, do you want to take a stab at that one?
8

9 **MR. RINDONE:** Sure, I will swing, Mr. Chair. With respect to
10 scamp and yellowmouth grouper, the catch limits that you see
11 recommended, or that you saw recommended, by the SSC for those
12 two species are under -- They're using an MSY proxy of a fishing
13 mortality at 40 percent spawning potential ratio, which is a
14 more conservative proxy for MSY than we see for some of our
15 other reef fish stocks, and those are usually around like 30
16 percent SPR.

17
18 Scamp are protogynous hermaphrodites, and so they start off as
19 female and change sex to male later in life, and they do have a
20 smaller size at which 50 percent of individuals are thought to
21 be sexually mature than some of the other groupers, but, given
22 the, you know, general uncertainties about other aspects of
23 their life history, the increase in landings in recent years,
24 especially from the recreational sector, as technology has
25 improved and access to the deeper water, where scamp are being
26 found, has improved, and it's become more common, and, you know,
27 just the general increase in the targeting of scamp by the
28 directed fleets, the SSC thought that it might be worth -- The
29 SSC thought that it would be worth using a more conservative
30 proxy for MSY.

31
32 That does result in a decrease in what the catch limits can be
33 for scamp. Further, the biomass trend for scamp in the
34 assessment was also decreasing.

35
36 With respect to black grouper, the difference there is that the
37 SSC had some doubts about the connectivity between what they
38 were seeing in the landings versus what the trends in the
39 available indices might be showing, and they also considered
40 some information that they had heard from a fisherman that was
41 present during the meeting about where black grouper were
42 generally being caught in southwest Florida and the frequency
43 with which those landings were coming in.

44
45 Generally speaking, in that area -- You know, sometimes the
46 intercepts can be a little bit more spotty, on occasion, and so
47 getting all of those landings recorded could be a little bit
48 more problematic for black grouper in the Gulf, and so the SSC

1 wasn't quite convinced that the landings were indicative of a
2 decline in the stock, and so that's why they went with Tier 3a,
3 and, if John wants to get up here and talk to any of this too,
4 by all means, John.

5
6 For black grouper, there's not -- You know, unlike scamp, there
7 is not a stock assessment on the books for it. The last time a
8 stock assessment was attempted for black grouper, there were
9 major data issues, mostly stemming from misidentification in the
10 historical part of the time series with gag, and so, until a
11 different approach can be attempted for black grouper, we don't
12 have an assessment on the books for it, but we do have a good
13 landings history, but it's just whether or not that landings
14 history is representative of what's going on in the stock, and
15 the SSC did not think that to necessarily be the case, and so
16 that's -- We can't really say what's happening with scamp is
17 also happening with black grouper, or vice versa, and that's why
18 the SSC has separate catch limit recommendations for both pairs
19 of species.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** C.J., to follow-up a little bit on that,
22 right, I mean, I guess part of your question is what are the
23 pros and cons of keeping them in a complex or for splitting them
24 out, and, although the SSC felt like there was pretty good
25 confidence, right, and it felt good with the scamp assessment,
26 where they landed, but it's a considerable reduction in the
27 catch for that species, and what Ryan was pointing out is that
28 the SSC felt pretty confident that the black grouper, and
29 yellowfin, catches were relatively stable over the recent record
30 anyways, and they tried to preserve those catch levels.

31
32 There's a possibility, depending on how you handle this, if you
33 combine them and keep them in a complex, that one of those
34 species, scamp for example, could become a choke species and
35 limit the accessibility to the black grouper, and so that's part
36 of the equation.

37
38 When you think about, you know, getting a motion moving forward,
39 you know, we have catch advice, right, and we can set an ACL for
40 scamp, and we can do the same for the other in that amendment,
41 but, in so doing, we have to consider what the implications are
42 for treating them all as a complex in the IFQ fishery, and that
43 is yet to be worked out.

44
45 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Along those lines, is there something that links
46 black grouper and yellowfin grouper, as to why those would be
47 considered as a species complex?

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone.
2
3 **MR. RINDONE:** They're just what is left, and there is very, very
4 low yellowfin grouper landings in the Gulf, like handfuls of
5 fish.
6
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Boggs.
8
9 **MS. BOGGS:** So I just want to make sure that I'm clear. This
10 OFL and ABC recommendation is only for the black grouper and
11 yellowfin grouper, correct?
12
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That's correct. Okay. Are there any more
14 questions about scamp, black, yellowfin grouper? Dr. Porch.
15
16 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you. Just a little clarification, and
17 yellowfin being rather uncommon, and formerly linked to scamp,
18 and why are we taking that one out and treating it on its own,
19 giving it its own separate ACL?
20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone.
22
23 **MR. RINDONE:** Yellowfin isn't being given a separate ACL. It's
24 being combined with black grouper.
25
26 **DR. PORCH:** I know, but, I mean, still, why link yellowfin to
27 black, instead of just, you know, the scamp assessment?
28
29 **MR. RINDONE:** Scamp and yellowmouth are linked together because
30 of similarities in how they appear, where they occur, other life
31 history synergies, especially in its smaller sizes, and that was
32 the impetus for including both species together in SEDAR 68.
33 Essentially, that just leaves the remaining two species in the
34 complex, which were previously included together as part of the
35 shallow-water grouper complex, and an ACL established through
36 the Generic ACL/AM Amendment, in that they can be caught in
37 similar areas, and they have some similarities in their history.
38
39 As far as continuing with that here, that's largely the impetus
40 for doing that, is they're the last two species left in the
41 shallow-water grouper complex, and so this was -- This effort by
42 the SSC, from looking at the landings, sets catch limits based
43 on the data available for those last two species.
44
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Any further questions? I think, in the
46 absence of any questions, or any further discussion, I'm
47 thinking that staff is going to require a motion to further
48 develop, or add to the amendment, right, and it's already been

1 started for scamp, and you started an amendment for scamp,
2 right, Ryan?

3
4 **MR. RINDONE:** Well, we have it on the list to start it, but it
5 has not actually begun development yet, and so there's a line.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** There you go, and so I am looking for somebody
8 other than the chair to make the motion here, but I am happy to
9 fall back in and do it, if you want. All right. **I will go**
10 **ahead and make the motion to direct staff to modify the**
11 **amendment for scamp OFLs, ABCs, and ACLs to include black**
12 **grouper and yellowfin grouper. In the amendment, consideration**
13 **should be given also to implications to the IFQ fishery**
14 **involving the shallow-water grouper complex. Will that get you**
15 **there, Ryan?**

16
17 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, and it's scamp and yellowmouth grouper, and
18 so for scamp and yellowmouth grouper OFLs, in the first
19 sentence, Bernie. I mean, our understanding, from this, would
20 be that, you know, considerations would be, if the shallow-water
21 grouper complex is kept together, then there would have to be
22 consideration of perhaps scamp and yellowmouth grouper serving
23 as a choke species to how the IFQ program and the recreational
24 fisheries would be prosecuted in the future, and, if scamp and
25 yellowmouth and then black grouper and yellowfin grouper are
26 separated into separate pairs for share categories, that would
27 be another option that could be explored. If there's anything
28 else explicit, beyond that, any feedback from you guys would
29 certainly be helpful, once you get a second.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** First of all, I would say I realize that it's
32 potentially complicated, right, and I don't think that we're
33 probably in a position here to expand or have a discussion
34 there, and I think we'll need to get some feedback, to see what
35 the full range of implications are, and so I'm good with your
36 understanding of that, and we don't have a second yet, but I saw
37 that Mara had her hand up. Okay, and so we have a second to the
38 motion from Mr. Diaz. Mara, did you have a question?

39
40 **MS. LEVY:** Well, I think you just said it, about the complexity,
41 and so I guess I am just wondering, and you're not looking for
42 the development of like actions and alternatives at this point,
43 right, an amendment, and you're just looking for a discussion
44 related to the implications of keeping them together or
45 separating them.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and I think the development of this
48 document is kind of the intent, and it will certainly involve --

1 But we need enough information to have I think a more informed
2 discussion to move forward, and I think, Ryan, as long as you
3 feel like you have enough direction at this point, I'm good with
4 that.

5

6 **MR. RINDONE:** I am looking over at Dr. Diagne.

7

8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons.

9

10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think it looks good, I would just
11 add to include black grouper and yellowfin grouper updated catch
12 advice, or updated SSC recommendations, because we did get
13 updated estimates from the SSC for those species, catch advice.

14

15 **MR. RINDONE:** Say "SSC catch recommendations" at the end of the
16 first sentence, Bernie. After "yellowfin grouper", just put
17 "SSC catch recommendations". Tom and Dale, do you guys like
18 that?

19

20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I am good with that amendment. Dale? All
21 right. The seconder is good as well, and so is there any
22 further discussion on this motion? Ms. Boggs.

23

24 **MS. BOGGS:** So do we want to be specific about IFQ, because, I
25 mean, ultimately, would it not affect -- If you're creating two
26 OFLs and all, it would also affect the recreational side too,
27 would it not, or will it still remain one complex for the rec
28 side?

29

30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** No, and I think that -- I mean, they would be
31 independent for the rec side, is my understanding. I mean, I
32 think -- Sorry. John Froeschke.

33

34 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, I guess I was just going to say I think
35 that's what we're going to have to figure out at the IPT level,
36 is how we're going to do this, and, you know, in the past, there
37 was some partitioning of black grouper and things, in terms of
38 the commercial and the recreational, although there's not an
39 allocation to do IFQ, and how these are going to be combined,
40 and so we're going to have to figure all of that out, and I
41 guess that would be the basis of what we would bring back to you
42 the next time you look at this, to figure out how we want to
43 proceed.

44

45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Again, I just think that, I mean, we have to
46 start to work on this amendment, right, and clearly there is a
47 fair amount to work out, but I'm hoping that we can get the ball
48 rolling, right, so we can start the discussion, and it will

1 certainly become more involved as we move along. Okay. All
2 right. Is there any other discussion related to this motion?
3 **Is there any opposition to the motion?**

4
5 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I abstain.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. **Besides one abstention, is there**
8 **any opposition? Not seeing any, the motion carries I guess**
9 **sixteen in favor, and you don't want to do it that way? Just no**
10 **opposition?** Okay. Mr. Diaz.

11
12 **MR. DIAZ:** I was just a minute or so later getting back to my
13 chair, and you all were discussing wenchman when I sat down, and
14 I don't want to make you repeat yourself, but, either you or
15 Ryan, and so, at the last meeting, we asked the staff to look
16 and see if we could remove wenchman from the midwater snapper
17 complex, and I see, in the report, that it says that the SSC is
18 recommending to remove them, and so do we need a motion at this
19 point to remove them?

20
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, I think we are, and so we would need a
22 motion, right, to remove wenchman from the FMP, right, and,
23 similarly, Dale, we're going to have, in that motion, or a
24 subsequent motion, to set ACLs, right, or establish ACLs, and
25 accountability measures for the remaining species in the
26 midwater snapper complex.

27
28 **MR. DIAZ:** All right, and so I would like to make that motion
29 now, and I apologize to the staff for not sending it. **I would**
30 **like to make a motion to remove wenchman from the midwater**
31 **snapper complex, from the FMP, and to set ACLs and AMS for the**
32 **remaining species.** I guess I could name those species.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think you should, and so maybe for the
35 **remaining species in the midwater snapper complex, and we can**
36 **identify them as individuals.**

37
38 **MR. DIAZ:** Okay. **For the remaining species in the midwater**
39 **snapper complex, and then, in parentheses, you could put**
40 **blackfin snapper, queen snapper, and silk snapper.** I am looking
41 at Mr. Rindone, and does that capture what you need?

42
43 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, sir, it does, and just a reminder that there
44 are ten questions, if you will, that the council will need to
45 consider when evaluating whether to remove wenchman from the
46 FMP, and another option would be to consider whether the council
47 would want to keep wenchman around as an ecosystem component,
48 and we have the information to go through with you guys when

1 we're developing that.

2
3 **MR. DIAZ:** The intention, at the end of the day, is I would like
4 to allow some harvest of wenchman, from the boats that are
5 catching them now, at a level that we can determine that is a
6 safe level for that species, and so --

7
8 **MR. RINDONE:** So, generally speaking, as far as that's
9 concerned, one of the issues that the SSC ran up against for
10 wenchman was large annual variability in the landings, and a lot
11 of those landings coming from a fleet that is pursuing a fishery
12 that the council does not manage, and so the SSC -- I mean, the
13 tweet-length version of it is that the SSC didn't have the data
14 necessary to be able to manage, or to consider management, of
15 wenchman on an annual basis or to evaluate the stock status.

16
17 It puts it in kind of a difficult situation, which is why we've
18 got to where we are here. Now, the only thing between removing
19 it completely from the FMP or not is whether you want to keep it
20 around as an ecosystem component, and the commercial landings
21 that do come in would still be reported through commercial trip
22 tickets and the seafood dealers and be reported by GulfFIN, at
23 the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, and so, if you guys
24 wanted to retain it, for data collection purposes, as an
25 ecosystem component, that's something that you could talk about
26 when we're going through this.

27
28 If you decided that, you know what, we'll let the data be
29 collected the way that they would be through GulfFIN, and then
30 occasionally you could ask Mr. Donaldson, hey, how is wenchman
31 doing, and then he could give you a quick update on it.

32
33 **MR. DIAZ:** Okay. Well, we'll probably decide that if we go
34 through the ten questions, at that point, and so as long as -- I
35 don't want to hurt those people that is catching them, and I
36 want to make sure we don't do anything to harm them, and I want
37 to help them, is what I'm trying to do, and so okay.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Just real quick, because I know that -- I
40 mean, we've talked about kind of some of the science issues
41 here, but I know that Mara wants to talk a little bit about
42 probably some other elements of removing wenchman from the FMP.

43
44 **MS. LEVY:** Well, just to make it clear, and I think Ryan
45 mentioned it, right, but that it has to be a plan amendment to
46 remove it, and so we're not just removing it. The motion makes
47 it sound like we're just removing it, but we all know there's a
48 process, and then I guess what kind of set me off, in terms of

1 just a little bit of alarm too, was Dale talking about managing
2 catches to some sort of sustainable level, and that would not be
3 consistent with removing it from the FMP, right? If you remove
4 it from the FMP, you're not managing it, and so I just wanted to
5 throw that out there.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so --

8
9 **MR. DIAZ:** I would just change my motion to consider removal of
10 wenchman from the FMP. Then I think it's all right. And set
11 ACLs. I think it's okay there now. Thank you, Ms. Levy.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so did we have a second for this
14 motion? It's seconded by Billy Broussard. All right. Is there
15 any further discussion on this motion? C.J.

16
17 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so the concern that I
18 have here, and maybe Ryan can help with this, is what removal of
19 wenchman from that FMP would do to the other ACLs and relative
20 to the catch history for the other remaining midwater snapper
21 complex, blackfin, queen, and silk snapper, and it would be my
22 fear that -- You know, obviously, we're talking about this
23 because of the incident last year, or the year before, and the
24 interactions with one fisherman and the butterfly fishery and
25 wenchman, and ultimately closing down the midwater snapper
26 complex, and that's not good.

27
28 Obviously, we don't want that, and that's why we're kind of
29 discussing this right now here, but the question is how -- Maybe
30 you can't answer this, but the catch levels, in the past, and
31 I'm just curious how they would set up relative to potential
32 ACLs that we might have for the other species.

33
34 Then just another thing to consider here, and, you know, we're
35 talking about -- Clay gave a nice presentation about multiyear
36 ACLs here, and these are rare-event species, and one year, you
37 know, can really drastically impact what that is for future
38 years, and so I'm just throwing that out there for an idea, when
39 we're talking about setting ACLs.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone.

42
43 **MR. RINDONE:** With respect to the last ten years of landings,
44 which was the period that the SSC considered, 2012 through 2021,
45 the OFL would not have been exceeded for the three remaining
46 species during that time period. The ABC would have been
47 exceeded a couple of times, and we do know that these species,
48 generally speaking, are rare-event species, from a recreational

1 standpoint, but blackfin snapper and queen snapper and silk
2 snapper, especially the last two, are targeted in some parts of
3 the Gulf, specifically in southwest Florida, by the recreational
4 fisheries.

5
6 The council could be thoughtful in how it considers
7 accountability measures for those three species, in terms of
8 being aware of the rare-event nature, or the data collection for
9 those species, in that, you know, certain spikes in the landings
10 might not necessarily be cause for alarm, but routine spikes in
11 landings might, and so something just for you guys to consider
12 when you're evaluating the AMs and how you would want those AMs
13 to be structured for the three remaining species in this
14 complex.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Ryan. **We have the motion**
17 **on the board to consider removal of wenchman from the FMP and**
18 **set ACLs and accountability measures for the remaining species**
19 **in the midwater snapper complex (blackfin snapper, queen**
20 **snapper, and silk snapper). Is there any opposition to the**
21 **motion?**

22
23 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I abstain again.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so the motion carries with one
26 **abstention.** All right, and so let's see where we are in the
27 agenda here, unless anybody has any other burning desire to talk
28 about midwater snapper. All right, and so, Mr. Chair, we're a
29 little ahead of schedule here.

30
31 I know that we have two areas to discuss tomorrow, in the
32 morning, and one is the final action on Draft Amendment 56,
33 which is dealing with gag grouper, and the second one is a
34 discussion on Snapper Grouper Amendment 44, specifically the
35 yellowtail snapper, and so, if it's okay with you, perhaps we
36 can take up the latter and deal with the yellowtail snapper this
37 afternoon.

38
39 **DR. STUNZ:** Yes.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so let me make sure that we're all
42 squared away to do that, because I think Ms. Somerset was going
43 to lead us through that presentation, and we'll give her just a
44 minute to get squared away.

45
46 **DR. STUNZ:** Tom, while she's getting squared away, just one
47 brief update, and Dakus sent around -- Some of you, and I think
48 Andy, requested about some trip-level information reporting

1 coming from Texas, and Dakus has provided that presentation, and
2 that should be distributed around.

3
4 **MS. CARLY SOMERSET:** Are you ready, Mr. Chair?

5
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I am, and so either you or Ryan can go through
7 the action guide.

8
9 **DRAFT: SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT 44/REEF FISH AMENDMENT 55:**
10 **CATCH LEVEL ADJUSTMENTS AND ALLOCATIONS FOR SOUTHEAST U.S.**
11 **YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER**

12
13 **MS. SOMERSET:** Right, and so, for the action guide, I will just
14 review this presentation on this joint amendment for
15 southeastern U.S. yellowtail snapper, and it evaluates -- The
16 last interim analysis was performed as an update to SEDAR 64,
17 and the stock seems healthy.

18
19 There was an interim analysis after the full SEDAR 64, and that
20 was used to update the recreational landings and calibrate it to
21 FES. They're currently in MRFSS, and so I will discuss that,
22 the change in the data units, and that requires an evaluation of
23 the jurisdictional allocation, which I will go over, and a few
24 other alternatives that are specific to the Gulf, and some that
25 are specific to the South Atlantic that I will just mention, and
26 so we'll evaluate all of those and if you could review the
27 proposed options, ask any questions, and provide me with some
28 feedback, that would be greatly appreciated.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Excellent. All right. We'll go ahead and
31 pull up the presentation, which is Tab B, Number 10(a) in the
32 briefing materials, and it's all yours, Carly.

33
34 **MS. SOMERSET:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. All right, and so, again,
35 I will just go over some background, as a refresher, and I think
36 it's been a while since both councils, the Gulf and the South
37 Atlantic, have seen this amendment, and so it is joint for U.S.
38 yellowtail.

39
40 I've got a -- I apologize, and it was supposed to be -- In the
41 presentation, it would have shown -- This is the PDF, but each
42 map at one time, but I can explain this here, and, basically, I
43 wanted to show the jurisdictional boundaries, and you see the
44 South Atlantic boundary, and then the Gulf of Mexico, and so I
45 guess the most important map is that white one on the bottom-
46 right-hand corner, and that shows the jurisdictional split
47 between the South Atlantic and the Gulf around the Keys, and so
48 that portion is Monroe County, and so I just wanted to point out

1 that those landings are apportioned to the -- They go to the
2 South Atlantic, and so about 90 percent of the Florida landings
3 have occurred in Monroe County, and those go to the South
4 Atlantic, and so just to point that out.

5
6 All right, and so some background, and so the majority of the
7 yellowtail stock is allocated to the South Atlantic, and that's
8 based on historical landings, and so, in the Gulf, the landings
9 primarily come from the commercial sector, but there has been a
10 trend of increasing recreational landings, and a majority of the
11 discards are also from the recreational sector, and so here are
12 two tables, and one is the Gulf commercial and recreational
13 landings, and then on the right-hand side are the South
14 Atlantic.

15
16 For context, these are shown in -- They are from 2012 to 2021,
17 and the recreational portion of the landings are in MRIP-FES,
18 and the Gulf ACL, and so stock ACL, and there is no sector
19 allocation, and so that is -- That has the combined commercial
20 and recreational.

21
22 Also, here, you will see that, in 2016, there's a split, or a
23 combined, and so there was a framework action, in 2017, and one
24 in 2016 on the South Atlantic, that changed the fishing year for
25 both the recreational and commercial sectors to August 1 through
26 July 31, to be -- So that they could be consistent, and so, for
27 this reason, 2016 includes January through July 31 of 2016, and
28 so I just wanted to note that that's why you see 2016 and then
29 2016-2017.

30
31 There have been no in-season closures on the Gulf side since
32 2012, but there have been in-season closures on the South
33 Atlantic side, and those are noted with the small asterisk, and
34 there was one in 2015 and then again in 2017, and so I just
35 wanted to point that out.

36
37 All right. Management on the Gulf side, the fishing season is
38 open year-round, from August 1 to July 31, and possession --
39 There is no limit for commercial. On the recreational side,
40 there's a ten-fish-per-person-per-day, and that is within the
41 ten-snapper aggregate limit. The minimum size for both sectors
42 is twelve inches.

43
44 This is just some more on the jurisdictional allocation, and so,
45 in the Gulf, it's apportioned 25 percent of the ABC, and it's
46 managed with the stock ACL, and, like I said, there's no
47 allocation between the recreational and the commercial. There's
48 an 11 percent buffer between the ABC and the ACL, and there is

1 some post-season accountability measures, and so, similar to
2 other species, if the ACL is exceeded, then, that following
3 year, the season is closed when the ACL is expected to be met.

4
5 Briefly, on the South Atlantic side, they have 75 percent of the
6 ABC, and they do have sector allocations, and so that is in this
7 document as an option that they are considering changing on
8 their side. It's about 52 percent commercial and 47 percent,
9 roughly, recreational. They have some accountability measures
10 on the commercial side, in-season and post-season, and then also
11 some recreational accountability measures, in-season and post-
12 season, similar to ours.

13
14 All right, and so why are we here? The stock assessment, SEDAR
15 64, was completed in 2020, with a terminal data year of 2017,
16 and, like I said with the action guide, a subsequent interim
17 analysis showed -- It updated the data through -- It was
18 finalized in 2022 and updated the data through 2020, and so that
19 is changing the data units from MRFSS to MRIP-FES, and so, with
20 that, we need to adjust the historical landings estimates.

21
22 Again, similar to some other species, the recreational landings
23 are generally higher than previously thought, and this does have
24 some impacts to catch limits and the allocation between the
25 councils. As far as the stock status, the fishery is healthy,
26 and it's not overfished and not undergoing overfishing.

27
28 All right, and so current allocations and catch limits, and the
29 stock ABC is 4.05 million pounds whole weight, and the current
30 OFL and ABC are based on the previous assessment, and that was
31 SEDAR 27A, and that was back in 2012, and those are the catch
32 limits that are set in MRFSS, and so we need to update that,
33 which is what SEDAR 64 did, and the following interim analysis
34 to MRIP-FES.

35
36 The ABC is split 75 to the South Atlantic and 25 percent to the
37 Gulf, and this split is based on 50 percent of average landings
38 from 1993 to 2008 plus 50 percent of the average landings from
39 2006 to 2008, and that is in the Marine Recreational Fisheries
40 Statistics Survey, and so that all needs to be updated, and then
41 you can see the ABCs for the South Atlantic and the Gulf, based
42 on that 75/25 percent split.

43
44 There are some recommendations from the SSC, and the OFL, ABC,
45 and all the subsequent catch level recommendations need to be
46 based on the 2022 SEDAR 64 interim analysis. The resulting
47 catch limits from that interim analysis begin higher than the
48 current MRFSS catch limits, but they use MRIP-FES data units,

1 and then you can see this table of the OFL and the ABC, based on
2 the interim analysis, and there's a decreasing yield stream that
3 allows for fishing to the stock's equilibrium SSB at MSY.

4
5 All right, and so the actions in this amendment, generally,
6 Action 1 is looking at modifying the yellowtail stock OFL, ABC,
7 and then the jurisdictional allocation of that ABC between the
8 South Atlantic and the Gulf jurisdictions. Action 2 revises the
9 total ACL and annual OY, and that's specific to the South
10 Atlantic, and so the annual OY for the South Atlantic, and then
11 it also revises the total ACL for yellowtail in the Gulf, and
12 then Action 3 revises the South Atlantic yellowtail snapper
13 sector allocations and sector ACLs.

14
15 Just to pull out the actions that are applicable to the Gulf,
16 that's Action 1, modifying the yellowtail OFL and ABC and then
17 the jurisdictional allocations, and then Action 2, Sub-Action
18 2b, revises our Gulf ABC buffer to set the ACL.

19
20 All right, and so, getting into Action 1, that's modifying the
21 stock OFL, ABC, and then the jurisdictional allocations, and,
22 again, the current allocation is 75 to the South Atlantic and 25
23 percent to the Gulf, and that's based on MRFSS, using those 50
24 percent of average landings from 1993 to 2008 and then also 50
25 percent of average landings from 2006 to 2008, and so this is
26 not a viable alternative, because it's not best scientific
27 information available, because it's in MRFSS, and the SEDAR 64
28 and the interim analysis have update that to the current units
29 of MRIP-FES.

30
31 Using those updated FES landings, we could retain the same
32 allocation percentage, that 75/25, and distribute the updated
33 ABC based on this allocation. We could use the current formula
34 above, that 50 percent of average landings from those specific
35 years, to determine the stock ABC, and this results in an
36 allocation of 81 percent to the South Atlantic and 19 percent to
37 the Gulf, and so that's a little lower than the current
38 jurisdictional allocation, or using landing estimates from 2012
39 to 2021, and so that's updating the historical landings to more
40 recent years and using that to determine the stock ABC, and that
41 would result in an allocation of 84 percent to the South
42 Atlantic and 16 percent to the Gulf, and so that's even a little
43 bit lower than the 81/19, and, again, just to note that the
44 landings in Monroe County are attributed to the South Atlantic
45 and not to the Gulf.

46
47 All right, and so still on Action 1, and Alternative 1 is the no
48 action, and so that's retaining the current yellowtail OFL and

1 stock ABC and the allocation of the stock ABC between the South
2 Atlantic and Gulf jurisdictions. That current jurisdictional
3 allocation is 75 percent to the Gulf and 25 percent to the South
4 Atlantic, and that's in MRFSS, and that's based on that 50
5 percent average landings from those years, and, again, this is
6 not a viable alternative, because it's not consistent with the
7 SSC recommendations of the best scientific information
8 available, but, just showing the table here, it gives the
9 Alternative 1, changes in the OFL and ABC, and then the
10 jurisdictional split, and you can see that they're constant, and
11 they remain the same, from 2023 up through 2028.

12
13 All right and so Alternative 2 would update the yellowtail OFL
14 and stock ABC based on the SEDAR 64 interim analysis and the
15 SSC's recommendations, and so this one is the one that would
16 retain the current jurisdictional allocation at 75 South
17 Atlantic and 25 Gulf, but then use the updated stock ABC between
18 the South Atlantic and Gulf jurisdictions to update the
19 allocation, and so that would be in MRIP-FES units and not
20 MRFSS.

21
22 Just to point out that, for all these alternatives, again, the
23 recreational landings from Monroe County are attributed to the
24 South Atlantic, and commercial landings are attributed to the
25 location of reporting from the state trip tickets, and so you
26 can see the Alternative 2, and that would still maintain the
27 25/75, but you can see, as the years from 2023 to 2028, it does
28 -- That is that decreasing yield stream.

29
30 Alternative 3, this would update the OFL and stock ABC based on
31 the SEDAR 64 interim analysis and the SSC's recommendations,
32 but, here, you're applying the MRIP-FES to the current formula,
33 50 percent of the average landings from those years 1993 to 2008
34 and then 50 percent from 2006 to 2008, and this is the one that
35 yields a jurisdictional allocation of 81 percent of the updated
36 stock ABC and MRIP-FES to the South Atlantic and then 19 percent
37 to the Gulf, and, again, the table of what this Alternative 3
38 would look like if the jurisdictional allocations were shifted
39 to those percentages.

40
41 Alternative 4 is, again, updating the OFL and stock ABC based on
42 the new SEDAR 64 IA and the SSC's recommendations, and so this
43 one is updating the historical landings, the historical fishing
44 years, to 2012 through 2021, making them more current, take
45 those average landings, and that shifts the jurisdictional
46 allocation to 84 percent for the South Atlantic and 16 percent
47 to the Gulf, and you can see the alternative as it decreases
48 from 2023 to 2028.

1
2 Just to put it all together, this is the entire table, and these
3 are all in the document, and so I'm happy to -- We can pull that
4 up, if needed, but it just shows you that you can compare all
5 the alternatives to each other and how the ABC and the
6 jurisdictional allocations change, depending on whichever
7 alternative is chosen. Just to note that Alternative 1 cannot
8 be directly compared to the others, because of that difference
9 in units, the MRFSS to the MRIP-FES.

10
11 All right, and so the recommendations from the Snapper Grouper
12 AP in the South Atlantic and our Reef Fish AP pertain to what I
13 just went over, and so I am putting them here, just to -- So
14 that you all know what they recommended.

15
16 The Snapper Grouper AP just met recently, in April, and they
17 wanted to take a precautionary approach overall, and they did
18 ask, several times -- They wanted to consider what Gulf
19 fishermen would prefer, and so, specifically, the AP members
20 there wanted to -- They were very considerate of the commercial
21 fishermen over here, since a lot of the landings come from the
22 commercial sector, and they wanted to make sure that the season
23 stays open year-round for both sectors in the South Atlantic,
24 and then some members suggested a hybrid option between
25 Alternatives 2 and 4 that you just saw, and so having the Gulf
26 allocation somewhere between 16 and 25 percent and the South
27 Atlantic somewhere between 75 and 84 percent.

28
29 As far as the Gulf Reef Fish AP recommendations, they did not
30 want to give more fish to the Atlantic, because that might
31 result in some seasonal closures, which they like the fishery
32 how it is now, and they don't want any closures, and another
33 suggestion is, since it is a Florida species, they asked if the
34 SRFS data could be applied for any future analyses.

35
36 The other one that applies to the Gulf is Action 2, Sub-Action
37 2b, and that's revising the buffer between the ABC and the ACL,
38 and the ACL totals for alternatives under this action are,
39 obviously, dependent on Action 1, that jurisdictional
40 allocation, and so, again, yellowtail snapper is not overfished,
41 and it's not undergoing overfishing, and the current buffer
42 between the ABC and the ACL is 11 percent, and so I will show
43 you the following options, but either -- Using 2017-2018 through
44 2020-2021 fishing years, the buffer could be reduced to 8
45 percent, or another option is to eliminate the buffer
46 completely.

47
48 All right. Modifying this ABC buffer to set the Gulf ACL,

1 Alternative 1, again, is the no action, and so this would retain
2 the current 11 percent buffer between our apportionment of the
3 ABC and the ACL, and this would use the buffer to update our ACL
4 based on the jurisdictional allocation, whichever one is
5 selected in Action 1, and the 11 percent buffer is calculated
6 using the ACL/ACT Control Rule, but that was also using MRFSS
7 landings from 2008 to 2011.

8
9 Alternative 2 would modify that buffer for apportionment of the
10 ABC and ACL, and, again, it would use the ACL/ACT Control Rule,
11 but it would use MRIP-FES, instead of MRFSS, and, again, based
12 on the jurisdictional allocation from Action 1, and this would
13 be an 8 percent buffer that would be using MRIP-FES landings
14 from 2017-2018 through 2020-2021.

15
16 All right, and so this last alternative in Action 2 is
17 Alternative 3, and that would just eliminate the buffer
18 completely between the ABC and the ACL for the Gulf, and so the
19 Gulf's ACL would be equal to the updated jurisdictional
20 allocation in MRIP-FES.

21
22 To summarize all of that, the Action 2 alternatives are all
23 dependent on the jurisdictional allocation that would be chosen
24 in Action 1, and so, just to reiterate those, the current stock
25 ABC is 75 percent/25 percent split, and that's in MRFSS, and so
26 that's that non-viable alternative, and then there's three
27 updated stock ABCs, either using the current allocation of 75
28 percent to the South Atlantic and 25 percent to the Gulf in
29 MRIP-FES or a slight decrease to the Gulf's jurisdictional
30 allocation to 81 percent South Atlantic and 19 percent Gulf, or,
31 finally, 84 percent South Atlantic and a 16 percent allocation
32 to the Gulf, and all of those are in MRIP-FES.

33
34 As far as the buffer, you could retain the current buffer
35 between the Gulf ABC and ACL of 11 percent, and that's in MRFSS,
36 with landings from 2008 to 2011, or you could modify it to 8
37 percent, and that's in MRIP-FES, with updated landings from
38 2017-2018 through 2020-2021, and the last alternative for that
39 action is to eliminate the buffer altogether between the ABC and
40 the ACL.

41
42 Keep in mind here that I have highlighted at the bottom that
43 there are possible seasonal closures with this decreasing yield
44 stream and a decreasing shift in the Gulf jurisdictional
45 allocation, and so keeping in mind all these options together,
46 the buffer, the allocation, the decreasing yield stream, and
47 there could be possible seasonal closures in the Gulf.

48

1 This next slide will show you a table, and it's also in the
2 document, and I modified it a little here, just so that you
3 could -- It's a little easier to see, and there's a lot of
4 information on the screen.

5
6 Essentially, any of the highlighted yellow are showing a
7 possible closure, and so that closure date is the first date
8 that the season could possibly close, and that's based on
9 reaching the upper 95 percent confidence interval of the
10 projected landings.

11
12 In Action 1, maintaining the same jurisdictional allocation, you
13 can see that, with all the alternatives, a closure is not likely
14 at all, but, when you move to the decreasing jurisdictional
15 allocation for the Gulf of 19 percent, and depending on what
16 alternative is selected, there are some possible closure dates,
17 and those are occurring in July, and so, again, in Alternative
18 4, you have even less of an allocation to the Gulf, at 16
19 percent, and you can see that every alternative for that buffer
20 results in a possible closure.

21
22 I just wanted to put on here the South Atlantic actions that
23 they're considering, and so they're also looking at modifying
24 the OFL, ABC, and jurisdictional allocation, and that's Action
25 1, and they also have an annual OY, and so one of the actions
26 that they're looking at is to modify the ACL, their annual OY,
27 to reflect the new OFL, ABC, and jurisdictional allocation
28 that's shifting from MRFSS to MRIP-FES, and then they also have
29 sector allocations and sector ACLs, and so they need to discuss
30 that when they see it, and they will be seeing it next week.

31
32 All right, and so next steps here is just to get your input on
33 the current alternatives, so that they can -- As they will see
34 it next week, and they will also be seeing it for the first time
35 in a while, and your feedback here will help with their
36 discussion, as they go through this amendment, and so I have
37 here a proposed timeline.

38
39 Because the South Atlantic is the lead council on this, they
40 have proposed timelines that incorporate both of our meeting
41 schedules, and so, here, we are reviewing this document and
42 providing guidance on the actions and options, and then there is
43 a proposed September/October, that we could come back and review
44 these actions and alternatives again, select preferreds, maybe
45 approve it for public hearings, and then, in November of 2023,
46 conduct those public hearings, and, I guess, if there's any
47 feedback on whether those need to be in-person or online,
48 virtual, that would be helpful.

1
2 Then, in December, the South Atlantic could consider final
3 approval of the final draft, and then we could do the same in
4 January, and so we'll take any questions or feedback. Thank
5 you.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Carly. Excellent job, and so,
8 before we get started, I think Dr. Sweetman may throw a little
9 wrinkle in all of this. C.J.

10
11 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, and so let me provide
12 some context here, and so all right, and so, just for some
13 background, there were some original discrepancies -- We had,
14 you know, the initial amendment was generated in 2012. From
15 2008 up to 2016, there were some discrepancies between FWC and
16 NMFS data that ultimately discovered that there was basically an
17 area change error relative to the trip tickets for the Tortugas
18 region, which, obviously, is in Monroe County.

19
20 Those landings in the state waters were applied to the Gulf
21 rather than to the South Atlantic, as they should have been, and
22 so that issue was addressed earlier on, back in 2016, but there
23 was a stock assessment that was ongoing, and so work on that was
24 paused.

25
26 Now, ultimately, you know, the South Atlantic Council staff is
27 aware of this issue, and, you know, the objective was, in the
28 next amendment, to address that change there that occurred back
29 then, and it currently has not been addressed.

30
31 Some of these landings were significant, you know, and sometimes
32 17 percent in a given year, and so that has a very significant
33 effect on what the initial allocation would have been between
34 the different councils, and so I feel like that this kind of
35 needs to be addressed, considering we're talking about a
36 potential stock reallocation here.

37
38 You know, my thought process here would be to have the IPT
39 formally look at this issue and try and formulate a solution on
40 this, but I really think that this should be resolved prior to
41 making any allocation decisions, and I'm happy to answer any
42 questions, because I understand that was a little nuanced there.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, C.J., for that exciting new
45 development. Mr. Diaz.

46
47 **MR. DIAZ:** That's the first that I've heard of what Dr. Sweetman
48 is talking about, and I'm not sure where that leaves us. I

1 mean, we've got a stock assessment that we got some time back,
2 and that data is getting old, and we're trying to move a
3 document through, to utilize that information before it's so old
4 that it's not relevant, and, anyway, I just don't know why we
5 haven't addressed this up to this point, and, I mean, it seems
6 like it would have been addressed, from something that was known
7 from 2016, and I just don't know how we got right here.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** C.J.

10
11 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I can't answer exactly why it hasn't
12 been addressed to this point here, but, yes, I mean, certainly
13 we do not want to slow this amendment down, and I hear you loud
14 and clear, and that was why we reran that run on that stock
15 assessment, because of that, because the data was getting old,
16 and so we do not want to delay this any further.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dale, to that point, and then John Froeschke,
19 and then Susan Boggs.

20
21 **MR. DIAZ:** I don't want to slow it down either, but, I mean, I
22 don't like trying to move forward on stuff that we know is
23 incorrect, and it's just not -- It's not a good way to do
24 business, for us to move forward with data that we know is not
25 right, and, in the past, I've argued against us doing that, but,
26 at the same time, we've got this issue of our data getting
27 stale, and so I don't know where to go from here, and I am just
28 trying to figure it out, and maybe some of this other
29 conversation might help.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes. John, do you want to weigh-in here, real
32 quick?

33
34 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes, and, I mean, operationally, I guess what I
35 would think is we would need to go and request the data, the
36 landings data, that considers this change from the Science
37 Center, get a new landings, and we could apply the existing
38 formulas, to consider if we need new options for allocation,
39 and, once you have that, then we would need to update the
40 projection scenarios, and, I mean, I don't think any of that is
41 computationally difficult, but the challenge I see is it
42 probably is going to further exacerbate this issue of lots of
43 scenarios with closures in the Gulf, but, other than that, I
44 mean, I think the IPT -- It doesn't seem unprecedented, and like
45 we could work through the issue.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** But, until we actually go through that
48 exercise, John, right, we won't actually know the numbers to

1 consider, and so, to Dale's point, you know, until we have that,
2 that full complement of information, including the potential
3 closure dates, it is really premature, I think, to provide any
4 suggested advice at this point, and so that's my thought. I
5 will come back to that. Ms. Boggs.

6
7 **MS. BOGGS:** So this is based on a SEDAR 64 interim analysis that
8 was in 2022, if I'm correct, and so when is the next stock
9 assessment that would address this, if we -- I mean --

10
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I don't think there is one in the near future
12 in the SEDAR schedule. Dr. Simmons.

13
14 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** We're pulling up right now, Mr.
15 Chair, and so I guess I'm a little confused, because we just
16 received this email, and, to me, it's not clear that there
17 actually is a coding error that hasn't been fixed, and so I
18 think we should seek clarification on that, maybe this
19 afternoon, and the email that I got is very vague on whether
20 it's correct or not.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so we clearly have some issues that
23 we need to resolve, and so go ahead, Mr. Anson, before I make my
24 suggestion.

25
26 **MR. ANSON:** I was just going to -- Referring to the
27 presentation, I am just curious, and there is the reference in
28 here, early on in the presentation, where it talks about an
29 increase in Gulf landings, or harvest, of yellowtail, and I'm
30 just -- In the context of how much, you know, the historical
31 share of the catches are, from the Gulf and the Atlantic, you
32 know, it may be a very small number, but, you know, I am just
33 concerned about, you know, when you hear increasing catches, and
34 we talk about climate change and these types of things, and it
35 is a Florida fishery, and so you're just talking about, you
36 know, the Atlantic versus the Gulf, you know, and so I'm kind of
37 torn as to how -- I am just curious if Ryan might now, or Carly
38 might now, and is that 10,000 pounds, or 20,000, and, I mean,
39 what's the magnitude of that, the increase in the -- If anyone
40 has any ideas.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Kevin, I was going to ask a similar question,
43 right, and so, anecdotally, you hear, obviously in the southwest
44 part of Florida, an increasing number of encounters and catches
45 of yellowtail, and we don't know if that's real or not, you
46 know, a shift in the distributional patterns of fish, and I
47 don't know if the State Reef Fish Survey data coming from
48 Florida has the resolution to determine whether there is a

1 distributional shift or not, but that's something that I
2 certainly would like to explore as we're thinking about
3 potentially changing those allocations, because our general way
4 of doing business is to rely on the historical record, but the
5 reality is that the world is changing, and maybe we should be
6 thinking a little more forward, right, and so -- All right.
7 Peter.

8
9 **MR. HOOD:** I just wanted to mention that one of our staff in the
10 South Atlantic Branch said that, you know, the error was caught
11 in the interim analysis, and so, I mean, it wouldn't be fixed in
12 the SEDAR assessment, but the data, if it was fixed in the
13 interim analysis, would then be available to us probably to look
14 for it, and so it may be there, and it's just a matter of asking
15 some of the right questions to get at some of this stuff,
16 particularly the historical landings.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so maybe though we can -- A small
19 group of us can kind of reconvene a little bit, after we adjourn
20 this evening, to think about it, because clearly I think we need
21 to revisit this, and let's step back, and let's see where we
22 are, and what our likely path is forward, and we can bring this
23 up first thing in the morning, to make sure that we have a
24 viable path forward, or at least a path where people know where
25 we're going to go, with the appropriate timeline. With that
26 said, are there any other general questions having to do with
27 the yellowtail snapper? Kevin.

28
29 **MR. ANSON:** I am trying to think, and I think, for the most
30 part, when we have both jurisdictions involved with management
31 of a stock, or a fishery, that the landings from the Gulf, that
32 are caught in the Gulf, but landed in Monroe County, are
33 attributed to the Atlantic, the South Atlantic, and that's
34 generally across-the-board, for cobia and -- I just was trying
35 to think of that. Thank you.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** C.J. was just saying that's not universally
38 true, but it is the case for yellowtail snapper. All right.
39 Any other questions? I apologize for this last-minute little
40 hiccup, but we'll work through it, and we will provide an update
41 tomorrow, and hopefully that will allow us a path -- It will
42 help us provide a path forward for you, Carly. Okay? So I
43 think, Mr. Chair, I am done for the evening.

44
45 **DR. STUNZ:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Frazer. We really don't have
46 enough time to take up anything else, but just a few maybe kind
47 of announcements, or plans, for tomorrow. Tom, we'll meet again
48 at 8:00, and we'll pick up with finishing out with Reef Fish in

1 the morning, and it's looking like we're a little ahead of time,
2 and so, just as a heads-up, we may try to get some of the
3 liaison reports and some of those type of things, maybe a
4 presentation or two, out of the way, and we'll get staff to
5 notify you if that's the case. That way, we can make progress
6 ahead of public comment in the afternoon, in Full Council, and
7 so, if there's no other questions or anything, we'll adjourn for
8 the day, and I will see everyone at 8:00.

9
10 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed on June 6, 2023.)

11
12 - - -

13
14 June 7, 2023

15
16 WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

17
18 - - -

19
20 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
21 Management Council reconvened at The Battle House Renaissance in
22 Mobile, Alabama on Wednesday morning, June 7, 2023, and was
23 called to order by Chairman Tom Frazer.

24
25 **DR. STUNZ:** Good morning, everyone. We'll call the meeting back
26 to order. Just a few things before we pick back up with Reef
27 Fish. Also, yesterday, several folks mentioned there might be
28 some difficulty in the back of the room hearing, and I just want
29 to encourage you all speaking to please talk into the
30 microphone, and, if there are problems back there, please let us
31 know, so we can get that fixed.

32
33 Then, moving forward, you know, we were discussing yellowtail at
34 the end of the day yesterday, and we discovered some issues that
35 might need to be worked out, and I think we're almost there with
36 that, but not quite, and so we're going to move -- Well, we'll
37 move on to a couple of things, but we'll take up gag first, and
38 then hopefully we'll have time to get what we need, and then
39 we'll move back into yellowfin, and so, with that, Tom, if
40 you're ready to pick up with Reef Fish, whenever you're ready.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so we're going to
43 start off with gag today, and it's a final action item. It's
44 Draft Amendment 56: Modifications to Gag Grouper Catch Limits,
45 Sector Allocations, and Fishing Seasons. The first item on the
46 agenda though, before we get into a presentation and discussion
47 of the actions involved, SERO is going to provide an update with
48 regard to the interim rule. Peter.

1
2 **FINAL ACTION: DRAFT AMENDMENT 56: MODIFICATIONS TO THE GAG**
3 **GROUPEL CATCH LIMITS, SECTOR ALLOCATIONS, AND FISHING SEASONS**
4 **UPDATE: GAG INTERIM RULE**
5

6 **MR. HOOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just so you know, the interim
7 rule published on May 3, and it was effective upon publication,
8 and so it will be in effect for 180 days, which takes it to
9 October 30, and then we can, you know, renew it for another 186
10 days, and then the action -- There were two actions in it, and
11 one was to set new commercial and recreational ACLs and ACTs,
12 and those were reduced to be close to, you know, what's in this
13 document, to get the rebuilding plan started, and then it also
14 delayed the opening of the recreational gag season from June 1
15 to September 1, and that's it.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Peter. Any questions with
18 regard to the interim rule? Okay. Seeing none, we will look to
19 the action guide and get a presentation from Mr. Rindone. Ryan.
20

21 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Peter already went through
22 the review of the timeline for the interim rule. Right now,
23 we're still in the midst of developing this final action item
24 for Amendment 56, which is going to be the rebuilding plan for
25 gag, based on the results of SEDAR 72, which used the State of
26 Florida State Reef Fish Survey landings for private recreational
27 vessels and determined that gag is overfished and undergoing
28 overfishing, as of 2020.

29
30 We did public hearings for Amendment 56 twice virtually and with
31 four in-person locations in west Florida last month, and Emily
32 is going to give you a summary of that and of the written
33 comments that have been received. You guys should evaluate your
34 current preferred alternatives and review the codified text and
35 determine if any modifications are necessary, and, if you find
36 the proposed regulations to be necessary and appropriate, you
37 should recommend that the council request the proposed
38 regulations be adopted and implemented. Mr. Chair, if you want
39 to start with Emily.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Ms. Muehlstein.

42
43 **PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY AND PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED**
44

45 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** All right. Thank you, and so I'm going to go
46 ahead and give a brief summary of each of the hearings that we
47 conducted, and then I will move on to the comments that we
48 received through our online comment form and through email.

1
2 Our first hearing was conducted on May 8, and it was a virtual
3 hearing, and we had twenty-six people in attendance. Some of
4 the things that we heard at that hearing included that gag is
5 healthier now than it has been, that the science is already five
6 years old, that the lease price of gag is too high already,
7 based on the cuts this year, that Action 2 addresses three large
8 issues at once, and it should be separated into smaller pieces,
9 to allow for proper allocation review.
10
11 We did hear support for Action 2, Alternative 2, and the
12 rationale provided was that cutting commercial harvest and
13 giving to the unaccountable recreational sector doesn't make
14 sense, especially when a stock is in peril. We also heard that
15 99 percent of the gag discards are recreational, and so we
16 shouldn't allocate more to them.
17
18 We did hear support for the June 1 opener, so that charter
19 clients don't have to throw back gags during red snapper
20 fishing, and we heard that gag should be open for the duration
21 of red snapper season. We also heard support for the October 1
22 opener, and we heard support for increasing the size limit over
23 changing the season of gag.
24
25 Next, we went to Fort Myers, and that was on May 15, and we had
26 four people in attendance at that meeting. At that meeting, we
27 also heard that the gag stock is healthy and that the science is
28 wrong and assessments take too long. We also heard that an
29 interim assessment should be requested for gag.
30
31 Here, we also heard that the price of gag quota has gone up too
32 high, and non-fishermen are buying them, and we heard that the
33 IFQ system needs to be overhauled and that no commercial
34 representation on the council does not work. We heard that the
35 recreational sector should be subject to reporting requirements,
36 and we heard support for the June 1 opener, so that charter
37 clients don't have to throw back gag during red snapper season.
38 We heard that opening the season on September 1, during peak
39 hurricane season, is tough.
40
41 We conducted a meeting in Cedar Key on May 15 and had twenty-
42 seven people in attendance. There, we did hear that the gag
43 stock is not quite what it used to be, that the bait have
44 disappeared since the big red tide event up there, and that was
45 causing issues with gag and other larger predatory fish, and we
46 heard that the stock is nothing like it was fifteen years ago.
47
48 We also heard concern that sampling methods used to determine

1 the sex ratio were not done properly and that there are too many
2 variables being introduced in the assessment that could create
3 misrepresentation of the status of the stock.

4
5 In Action 1, we heard that there should be more options for
6 being less conservative for setting our MSY proxy, and we also
7 heard that, generally, harvest of gag should not be cut. We
8 heard that cutting the gag quota will cause effort shifting to
9 other species, and we heard support for Action 2, Alternative 2,
10 and the rationale we heard was that reallocating for the rec
11 sector penalized the commercial sector for the recreational
12 sector behavior and that it's a double hit for the commercial
13 fishery.

14
15 We heard that a number of recreational anglers -- The number of
16 recreational anglers contributes to the discard issue and that
17 the council shouldn't reallocate to a sector that doesn't
18 report.

19
20 We also heard support for Action 1, Alternative 3, or, I'm
21 sorry, Action 2, Alternative 3. Even with reallocation, the
22 proposed changes to the annual catch target for both sectors
23 evens things out. We heard that allocation should be split
24 50/50. We heard support for an October 1 season opening,
25 support for a September 1 season opening, and we also heard the
26 desire to see target management measures to address protections
27 to the male population, such as support for a slot limit to
28 protect the breeding stock. We also heard that a bag limit
29 reduction should be considered to increase the season length.

30
31 Next, we'll move to Destin, which we also met on May 15, and we
32 had four people in attendance there. We heard that a weekend-
33 only recreational season should be considered, and we heard
34 support for Action 1, Alternative 2, and we heard that
35 reallocating is inappropriate. We heard support for Alternative
36 3 in Action 3.1, which is the recreational buffer alternative,
37 and we heard support for that 20 percent buffer. We also heard
38 support for the 5 percent commercial buffer for the ACT.

39
40 In Action 4, which deals with the seasons, we heard support for
41 the September 1 opener, and we also heard support for the June 1
42 opener, to reduce discards, and we heard support for a closure
43 during the spawning season and improved recreational data
44 collection methods, and we also had anglers there ask for an
45 interim assessment of gag.

46
47 On May 17, we conducted a meeting in St. Pete and had thirty-six
48 members of the public in attendance there. We heard there that,

1 in the last few years, gag have rebounded incredibly and that
2 they're everywhere. We heard that the science management
3 timeline needs to be streamlined, that grouper stocks are
4 crucial, or are cyclical, and I'm sorry, and that we're managing
5 to the dip right now, when there's actually a pulse in the
6 population.

7
8 We heard that we need more information on the normal gag sex
9 ratio, because, at under 2 percent, there doesn't seem to be any
10 collapse in the fishery. We heard that there needs to be more
11 sampling and better data before harvest cuts are made, and we
12 heard many fishermen are willing to give their fisheries data,
13 if the agencies would be willing to receive it.

14
15 For Action 2, we heard that it was not appropriate to change
16 allocation right now, because the fishery is in trouble, because
17 we're already changing the status determination criteria,
18 because the fish should not be taken from an accountable sector,
19 especially during rebuilding, and that reallocation will hurt
20 the commercial sector without significantly benefitting the
21 recreational sector.

22
23 We also heard support for the twenty-two-year rebuilding time in
24 St. Pete, especially since fishermen report that the stock is so
25 healthy and it would be less disruptive to harvest limits in the
26 interim. We heard support for the June 1 opener, because gag
27 should be open during red snapper season, and we also heard that
28 the June 1 opener wouldn't really reduce discards, because it
29 will only be open for a short time during the red snapper
30 season.

31
32 We did hear support for a November 1 start date, because it's
33 the best economic option, and we also heard that catchability in
34 November and December is too high, and it would actually cause
35 an effort spike. We heard that management should be broken into
36 smaller areas to address local depletion, and we also heard
37 support for state management of gag, and we heard that the
38 council should consider reducing the bag limit to increase the
39 season and that black grouper should not be included in gag
40 management considerations.

41
42 Finally, we went out for our second virtual hearing, and that
43 was on May 30, and we had twenty-one members of the public in
44 attendance. During that meeting, we heard that the fishery is
45 rebounding and that gag are healthy. We heard that science and
46 management need to catch up and that an interim analysis would
47 be appropriate. We also heard support for the twenty-two-year
48 rebuilding timeline during this meeting, and we heard that we

1 should not reconsider allocation while changing the status
2 determination criteria.

3
4 During this meeting, we heard support for the September 1
5 opener, because it avoids that derby summer season, and we heard
6 that the amendment lacks sufficient management changes that will
7 result in rebuilding success. We also heard that there should
8 be more options for the MSY proxy and that catch levels should
9 be set using a constant catch scenario. We also heard that
10 alternatives don't address the main drivers of mortality,
11 including discards, and that an environmental buffer should be
12 added to protect this vulnerable stock.

13
14 Next, I will move on to summarizing the written public comments
15 that we received. We had 328 views to our public hearing video,
16 and we got fifty comments online. Those comments that pertained
17 to Action 1, the modifications of the status determination
18 criteria, noted that the council should explore additional
19 options which can set at baseline levels and do not proceed with
20 catch increases. A constant catch should be used. We also
21 heard support for the Preferred Alternative 2, which is based on
22 the best available scientific information.

23
24 In regard to Action 2, which deals with catch limits, sector
25 allocations, and rebuilding timelines, we did hear support for
26 Alternative 2, because it's the only viable and legal
27 alternative, because the Reef Fish Advisory Panel unanimously
28 supported this alternative, and because reallocating from an
29 accountable sector to a sector that is responsible for 98
30 percent of discards will not help recovery of the stock, and we
31 heard that reallocation reduces the total amount of fish
32 available for harvest and that it's not fair and equitable,
33 because it forces the commercial sector to subsidize dead
34 discards in the recreational sector, and, finally, that
35 reallocation fails to follow the council's own allocation review
36 policy.

37
38 We also heard support for Action 2, Alternative 3, because the
39 allocation shift makes sense, because, as Florida's population
40 grows, the number of recreational anglers increases, because
41 this alternative uses the most recent, best scientific data to
42 calculate the allocations, and, since SRFS will be used to set
43 catch limits and monitor the fishery, the allocations should be
44 set using that same currency.

45
46 We did hear support for Option b, which is the eighteen-year
47 rebuilding time, and we also heard support for Option c, which
48 is that twenty-two-year rebuilding time.

1
2 In Action 3.1, which deals with the recreational annual catch
3 target, we heard support for Alternative 3, which would set that
4 20 percent buffer, because precautions should be taken, and it
5 will be difficult for NOAA to accurately predict the
6 recreational season closure.

7
8 In Action 4, which deals with the recreational season and
9 accountability measures, we heard support for the June 1 open
10 date, because closing gag during the federal red snapper season
11 is going to have a negative economic impact on charter
12 businesses and that, in the winter, gag are shallower, and it
13 makes sense to discard them then, instead of in the summer, when
14 they will die.

15
16 We heard support for Alternative 3, which was a September 1
17 season date, and we also heard some dissent for Alternative 3,
18 because it would open gag during peak hurricane season and that
19 it wouldn't solve the summer discard issue, and we heard support
20 for Alternative 4, which would open the season on October 1,
21 because the weather in September is too hot, and it requires
22 long offshore runs to target gag. Opening later, when the fish
23 are closer and shallower, will improve survival of discarded
24 fish, and then, finally, we heard support for an open season as
25 late in the year as possible, and the idea was that we could
26 calculate backwards from the turn of the year and open it
27 whenever it would be appropriate, because smaller boats will be
28 able to target them as they move closer inshore, and because
29 discards will be reduced.

30
31 We heard some other things about the gag stock, including that
32 it's much healthier than the assessment reflects, that the
33 inshore gag fishing is the best it's ever been, that there are
34 more large gag now than there have been historically, that
35 Hurricane Ian eliminated numerous boats, reduced access, through
36 ramp closures, and limited shrimping in the areas, and this
37 protected the fish and their food source.

38
39 We heard that gag are rebuilding and managing with old data is a
40 huge problem. We heard that the time lag between stock
41 assessments and management actions result in fishing quotas that
42 do not reflect what's happening on the water. We heard that
43 recreational landings information is not accurate, and a tag
44 system should be considered to manage the recreational sector,
45 and that recreational reporting should be required.

46
47 We heard that the council should obtain better discard data and
48 should initiate a process to monitor dead discards and track

1 them against a predetermined annual mortality limit. We heard
2 that a new assessment of gag should start now, that an interim
3 analysis should be performed as soon as possible, and even
4 annually, for a minimum of three years.

5
6 We heard that spear fishermen shoot all the keeper-sized fish,
7 and so hook-and-line fishermen should not be punished. We heard
8 that commercial harvest should be prohibited when the stock is
9 overfished, and we heard that there is no evidence to suggest
10 that recreational fishermen have a greater impact than
11 commercial fishing.

12
13 We heard that charter vessels should be limited to one trip a
14 day, and we heard that the council should consider options which
15 explore closed areas to protect males, that the slot limit
16 should be considered to protect the fish, that the rebuilding
17 plan has a low probability of success, that the council should
18 cut the bag limit to increase the season, that proposed changes
19 don't protect gag spawning, and that we should consider
20 increasing the gag size limit for both sectors, because it has
21 worked for gag in the past, and for other species as well, and,
22 finally, there is a vast resource of potential fishermen and
23 diver volunteers that are willing to help gather gag data. That
24 concludes my report on the comments that we heard about gag.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Ms. Muehlstein, and so
27 that will lead us into a presentation from Mr. Rindone.

28 29 **PRESENTATION**

30
31 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, sir. Okay, and so a lot of this you
32 guys have seen before, and so, like we said in the scope of
33 work, the last SEDAR assessment estimated that gag is overfished
34 and undergoing overfishing. The assessment does incorporate an
35 ecosystem-based analysis to account for red tide blooms, which
36 is a pretty cool advancement for Gulf stock assessments, and,
37 like Ms. Muehlstein talked about in the public comments, the
38 proportion of males in the population is estimated to be pretty
39 low, only about 2 percent.

40
41 The assessment uses an amalgam of different surveys in order to
42 produce the recreational landings estimates, and it uses the
43 Florida State Reef Fish Survey for private recreational landings
44 and discards from private vessels and then MRIP-FES for shore
45 landings and for-hire landings and then the Southeast Region
46 Headboat Survey for headboats.

47
48 Of course, the council is obligated to end overfishing, and the

1 interim measures that Mr. Hood talked about are in place as of
2 May 3, and they can be renewed for up to an additional 186 days
3 after the first 180-day period. The SSC recommended reduced
4 catch limits, referencing the OFL and the ABC, and to revise the
5 criteria used to determine stock status, and so the MSY proxy,
6 to F 40 percent SPR.

7
8 The catch limits need to be updated to this new data currency,
9 and allocations between the commercial and recreational sectors
10 can be reconsidered to align them with new estimates of
11 recreational harvest.

12
13 The purpose is to modify the status determination criteria,
14 optimum yield, catch limits, accountability measures, sector
15 allocations, and the recreational fishing season and establish a
16 rebuilding timeline for gag. The need is to use the best
17 scientific information available to end overfishing on gag and
18 rebuild the stock to a level commensurate with MSY, consistent
19 with the Magnuson Act.

20
21 This slide is just for your reference, if any of the acronyms
22 that we're going to go through in the following action for
23 modifying the status determination criteria need some
24 explanation.

25
26 Alternative 1 would retain the current status determination
27 criteria for gag, where MSY is equal to the yield when fishing
28 at the maximum yield per recruit, or F_{max} , and MFMT is also
29 equal to F_{max} , and MSST is set at 50 percent of the biomass at
30 F_{max} , and optimum yield is at 75 percent of the yield at F_{max} .
31 F_{max} is not considered BSIA by either the SSC or NMFS, and so
32 Alternative 1 is not a viable alternative, and you guys
33 currently prefer Alternative 2, which would adopt the SSC's
34 recommendation of using 40 percent spawning potential ratio, or
35 F 40 percent SPR, as the proxy for MSY, and it revises MFMT to
36 be equal to F at MSY, instead of being specifically defined as a
37 proxy for MSY.

38
39 MSST also uses 50 percent of the biomass at the MSY proxy, and,
40 in this case, it would be 40 percent SPR, and then optimum yield
41 is conditional on the rebuilding plan, and so, if the stock is
42 in the rebuilding plan, optimum yield is equal to the ACL. If
43 the stock is not under a rebuilding plan, then optimum yield is
44 equal to 90 percent of MSY, or its proxy. Any questions about
45 Action 1? Great.

46
47 Moving to Action 2, Action 2 talks about gag catch limits,
48 sector allocation, and the rebuilding timeline, and, under all

1 the potential rebuilding timelines, the catch limit
2 recommendations constitute a large reduction from where we are
3 now, as Ms. Muehlstein talked about during the public comments.
4 The council has to select ACLs that are below the new -- At or
5 below the new ABC, and current allocations are set using the old
6 MRIP-CHTS currency, and so it's not to say that you can't
7 maintain the current allocations, but it's just telling you
8 where that came from, and they used the average landings from
9 1986 to 2005.

10
11 Catch limits must be updated so that they're in the same units
12 that were used in the assessment, and the allocation, however,
13 you guys can decide what you want to do there.

14
15 With respect to the years that were used, you guys might
16 remember that, in August of last year, when we were in Texas, I
17 brought up that Excel sheet, and we went through about six
18 different time periods and looked at different resulting
19 percentages for the recreational and commercial allocation
20 ratio, and, across all the options that were considered for red
21 grouper in Amendment 51 and the options that we were also
22 considering at the time for gag, the differences weren't more
23 than about 4 percent, and so you guys decided to stick with the
24 two alternatives besides Alternative 1 that were in Action 2 for
25 consideration.

26
27 The no action alternative isn't viable, because it retains the
28 current catch limits, which are beyond what the stock can
29 sustain, and, saying that, I will just go ahead and go to the
30 next slide.

31
32 Alternative 2 would revise the catch limits for gag and
33 establish the rebuilding time for the stock. The catch limits
34 would be based on an FMSY proxy of the yield when fishing at F
35 40 percent SPR, and the ABC is equal to the stock ACL, which
36 equals the combined total ACLs from both sectors. Alternative 2
37 would retain the current sector allocation percentages of 61
38 percent recreational and 31 percent commercial, and the
39 recreational ACL would be informed by the amalgam of data that
40 we talked about before.

41
42 Option 2a is the minimum time to rebuild the stock is the
43 absence of direct fishing pressure, and it does not include dead
44 discards, and so Option a, in both Alternatives 2 and 3,
45 effectively shuts the fishery down, and the council has, in the
46 past, expressed a desire to try to avoid this when it can.
47 Option b, in both Alternative 2 and 3, uses -- Its sets the
48 yields at 75 percent of F 40 percent SPR, or it sets the

1 rebuilding time of eighteen years, and Option c, in both
2 Alternative 2 and 3, sets the rebuilding timeline at the minimum
3 time to rebuild times two, or twenty-two years.

4
5 It's important to note that, regardless of whether Option a, b,
6 or c, in Alternative 2 or 3, is selected, they all rebuild the
7 stock to the same place, and they just do so at a different
8 pace.

9
10 Alternative 3 would revise the catch limits for gag and
11 establish the rebuilding time. Again, the catch limits are
12 based on the yield at 40 percent SPR, and the ABC is equal to
13 the stock ACL, which equals the combined total ACLs from both
14 sectors, but Alternative 3, which you guys currently prefer,
15 would revise the sector allocation to 65 percent recreational
16 and 35 percent commercial, using the same time series as before,
17 but incorporating that SRFS data for the private recreational
18 vessels. The recreational ACL is informed in the same manner.

19
20 The tables under the options here show you what you would be
21 looking at as far as yields, and, currently, the council prefers
22 Option 3b in Alternative 3 to set the catch limits using the
23 yield at 75 percent of F 40 percent SPR, which would be
24 projected to rebuild the stock in eighteen years. Any questions
25 about Action 2? We're cruising.

26
27 Action 3 would modify the sector ACTs, and ACTs are set lower
28 than the ACL to account for management uncertainty and reduce
29 the likelihood that the ACL would be exceeded and accountability
30 measures triggered. Gag has ACTs for both sectors, and the use
31 of ACTs is discretionary, but the council does have a storied
32 history of using it for overfished stocks, and ACTs that are set
33 in this action are predicated on the ACLs chosen in Action 2.

34
35 The recreational ACT is currently set a little more than 10
36 percent below the ACL, and it accounts for uncertainty
37 associated with setting fishing season projections, which
38 becomes increasingly difficult as fishing season durations
39 shorten.

40
41 Alternative 1 is no action, which would retain the current
42 buffer of a little more than 10 percent, which is based on the
43 yield at 75 percent of Fmax. This is not viable, because Fmax
44 is not considered to be consistent with the best scientific
45 information available, and so Alternative 2 sets the
46 recreational ACT at exactly 10 percent below the ACL, using the
47 council's ACL/ACT Control Rule, based on the 2018 to 2021
48 fishing years and using MRIP-CHTS data. The reason why we had

1 to use CHTS for this is because that was the data that were
2 being used to collect landings data at the time.

3
4 Preferred Alternative 3 would set the recreational ACT 20
5 percent below the recreational ACL, and the council's
6 justification, at the last meeting, for selecting this as the
7 preferred alternative was they thought that it would provide a
8 little bit of an additional buffer to try to account for
9 unknowns related to discards. Any questions on the first part
10 of Action 3, which is Sub-Action 3.1, talking about the
11 recreational ACT? Press on. All right.

12
13 Sub-Action 3.2 talks about the commercial ACT, which is set
14 almost 9 percent below the commercial ACL, and, again, this was
15 using the yield at 75 percent of the fishing mortality
16 associated with F_{max} , and that is not BSIA. Additionally
17 though, the commercial quota was set 14 percent below the
18 commercial ACT, and so this results in the commercial quota
19 being about 21.6 percent below the commercial ACL, and this was
20 originally implemented at the beginning of the IFQ program, due
21 to uncertainty about the commercial discards, and, from the
22 beginning of the program to now, commercial discards of gag are
23 estimated to be much lower, and commercial landings and discards
24 are both explicitly included in the stock assessment and are
25 thought to be known with greater precision than at the time when
26 this buffer was put in place.

27
28 Alternative 1 would retain the current buffer between the
29 commercial ACL and ACT, and this is, again, not in keeping with
30 best science, because it relies on the yield at 75 percent of
31 F_{max} , and F_{max} is not BSIA.

32
33 Alternative 2 would set the commercial quota for the gag IFQ
34 program equal to the commercial ACT, and the commercial ACT
35 would be fixed at 86 percent of the commercial ACL, and so
36 reserving the part of Action 1 that would still be able to be
37 considered, as it relates to what was done at the beginning of
38 the IFQ program.

39
40 Preferred Alternative 3 would set the commercial quota for the
41 gag IFQ program equal to the ACT, and the commercial ACT would
42 be fixed at 95 percent of the commercial ACL, and this still
43 allows some wiggle room for multiuse shares to be able to
44 function, and the council currently prefers Alternative 3 here
45 for the commercial sector. Any questions, comments, or
46 revisions there? We're rolling.

47
48 This is what you guys could expect for 2024 for the ACTs for the

1 recreational sector, which is the left-hand blue box, and so
2 230,000 pounds for 2024, and 147,000 pounds for the commercial
3 ACT.

4
5 Action 4 is the modification of the recreational fishing season
6 start date and accountability measures, and, since the
7 recreational catch limits are being reduced, and the fishing
8 season is going to be shortened, or the fishing season will need
9 to be shortened, to ensure that the ACL isn't exceeded, the
10 council is considering shifting the recreational season start
11 date to balance the number of days the season will be open with
12 the need for reduced mortality specifically on male gag, where
13 it's possible.

14
15 This slide shows you what the monthly landings have been for
16 2019 in black, 2020 in gray, 2021 is in mustard, and then the
17 blue-dashed line is the projected landings, like the mean for
18 those three years, but landings that occur inside the blue box,
19 prior to the opening of the start of the federal season, is from
20 the previous FWC spring season, which the FWC has since closed,
21 in recognition of gag's current stock status.

22
23 Just to note that, you know, when we're looking at these season
24 duration projections, it's simply monthly landings divided by
25 the number of days in a month, to provide the daily catch rate
26 for that month, to project expected closure dates, and so,
27 typically, there's a large jump in landings when the season
28 opens on June 1, and then landings trickle down into the hotter,
29 later months of the summer, and then, as the fall starts, and
30 cold fronts start to move in, landings start to pick up.

31
32 Alternative 1 would keep the current June 1 recreational fishing
33 season opening for gag and the requirement for NMFS to prohibit
34 harvest when the recreational ACL is projected to be met.
35 Alternative 2 is the same as Alternative 1, except NMFS would
36 close harvest when the ACT is projected to be met. The council
37 currently prefers Alternative 3, which would open recreational
38 fishing on September 1, with NMFS closing harvest when the ACT
39 is projected to be met, and Alternative 4 would open
40 recreational fishing on October 1, with NMFS, again, closing
41 harvest when the recreational ACT is projected to be met.

42
43 As far as the accountability measures are concerned, Alternative
44 1 states that, if the recreational landings exceed the
45 recreational ACL, then NMFS would maintain the recreational ACT
46 for the following fishing year at the level of prior year's ACT,
47 unless BSIA determines that to be unnecessary, and, if gag is
48 overfished, then a pound-for-pound payback is applied to the ACL

1 and the ACT.

2
3 Alternatives 2 through 4 modify the AMs to direct that NMFS
4 prohibit harvest when the recreational ACT is projected to be
5 met. In addition, it removes the provision that NMFS is
6 required to maintain the prior year's ACT if the ACL is exceeded
7 in the previous year. The payback, however, is retained. Any
8 questions on Action 4?

9
10 Here, you can see, under the Action 2 alternatives, what the
11 projected season closure dates would be for Options b and c in
12 both Alternatives 2 and 3, and this is Action 2, Alternative 2
13 on this slide, and it's only shown for 2024, because this table
14 is large and unwieldy to try to cram into a PowerPoint, and so I
15 would reference you to the document to look for successive
16 years.

17
18 The council currently prefers Alternative 3, Option 3b in Action
19 2, which would revise the recreational and the commercial
20 allocations to 65 percent and 35 percent, respectively, and it
21 would result in an approximately sixty-three-day fishing season
22 under the council's current Preferred Alternative 3 in Action 4,
23 opening the season on September 1, based on the council's
24 current preferred for a 20 percent buffer between the ACL and
25 the recreational ACT. That's it. That's what I have, folks.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Are there
28 any questions on the presentation? I'm not seeing any, and so
29 this is a final action item, and so I guess we are --

30
31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Tom, I have a question.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Andy. I'm sorry that I didn't see
34 your hand.

35
36 **MR. STRELCHECK:** No problem. Can you go back to that last slide
37 that Ryan was showing?

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, we can. Okay. It's up.

40
41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** If you go to the next one, the 65/35
42 allocation, I just want to make sure that this is just a
43 typographical error and not a computational error, and so the
44 ACTs here are not reflective of the 20 percent buffer, and it
45 looks like they're reflective of a 10 percent buffer, and so I
46 just wanted to check if the season dates correspond to the 10
47 percent buffer or the 20 percent buffer.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone.
2
3 **MR. RINDONE:** Give me just a second.
4
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy, while Ryan is looking that up, the
6 concern is that it's not reflective of the buffer that is 20
7 percent, right, and so the projected number of days is
8 potentially longer than it should be.
9
10 **MR. STRELCHECK:** That's what I am asking, right, and is the
11 projected season length corresponding to the 20 percent buffer
12 or the 10 percent buffer in this figure?
13
14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Hang tight.
15
16 **MR. RINDONE:** Mr. Strelcheck is right, and it looks like we
17 didn't update that, and so if you've got -- Bernie, if you could
18 pull up the document, please, so that we can show this. It's a
19 scaled walk-back, based on the reduction in pounds from 259,000
20 to 230,000, and so you guys can kind of conceptualize what the
21 difference ultimately comes out to. Bernie, once you get the
22 document up, I will navigate you specifically where I want you
23 to go. I was hoping that we wouldn't have to dive too much into
24 this big table, but, Bernie, go to Appendix B, please.
25
26 This was just the fastest way for me to get to it, and so I'm
27 assuming that it would be just as fast for you guys, and,
28 Bernie, if you could scroll down to Table 2, to the second page
29 of Table 2.
30
31 Mr. Strelcheck was right, and so this is for Preferred
32 Alternative 3b in Alternative 3 of Action 2, and the right
33 grouping of columns for Action 3.1, the council's current
34 preferred alternative of Alternative 3, with the 20 percent ACT
35 buffer, for 2024, you can see the 230,000 pounds there in the
36 fourth column from the right, and then the season projections
37 for a June 1 open for that ACT, or a September 1, or an October
38 1 open, and so that results in twenty-three days, fifty-nine
39 days, and forty-two days, respectively, and so the difference
40 here between managing to the ACL or the ACT for 2024, assuming
41 everything else as the current preferred, is about four days.
42
43 Then, as the recreational ACT -- Essentially, as all the catch
44 limits increase, with successive years, and all assumptions
45 remain the same, the catch limits increase, as you guys see
46 there.
47
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Diaz.

1
2 **MR. DIAZ:** While Andy is on the line, I just have a question for
3 him. Mr. Strelcheck, there is a couple of public comments about
4 the fact that we're considering opening during the peak of
5 hurricane season, and I know the document says that we will
6 close when the recreational ACT is expected to be met, and, once
7 it opens, do you have the ability of taking into consideration
8 an extreme weather event and to react to that?
9
10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy.
11
12 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Dale, we would have to project the season in
13 advance, just because it's so short, but I would have the
14 ability to take into consideration an extreme weather event and
15 determine whether we could reopen or not, based on what we think
16 was caught up to the point of that extreme weather event.
17
18 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you for that, Mr. Strelcheck.
19
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So, again, Ryan, in the presentation, I think,
21 under the preferred alternative, it was sixty-one days, was the
22 projected season length under this, and, in the document, it's
23 fifty-three, or sixty-three?
24
25 **MR. RINDONE:** It's sixty-three days in the presentation, and, if
26 you decrement the ACT there to the 20 percent that the council
27 current prefers, it would make that fifty-nine days, and so it's
28 about a four-day difference that you get for that 10 percent
29 reduction.
30
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks for clarifying. All right, and so,
32 again, it's a final action item, and we have preferreds for all
33 of the actions, and we've heard a summary of the public
34 comments, based on the various public hearings, and so we can
35 make a motion to move this. Mr. Dyskow.
36
37 **MR. DYSKOW:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to do exactly
38 that. **I would like to move that we approve Amendment 56, with**
39 **the preferreds as listed.**
40
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Dyskow. We will
42 put that motion up on the board.
43
44 **MR. DYSKOW:** Help me clean that up, if I said that incorrectly,
45 and it's early in the morning.
46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It's a pretty standard motion, and so it's
48 final action, and so I will read it into the record. **The motion**

1 is to recommend the council approve Draft Amendment 56:
2 Modifications to the Gag Grouper Catch Limits, Sector
3 Allocations, and Fishing Seasons and forward it to the Secretary
4 of Commerce for review and implementation and deem the codified
5 text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial
6 license to make the necessary changes in the document. The
7 Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the
8 codified text as necessary and appropriate. Is there a second
9 to that motion? It's seconded by Dr. Sweetman. Is there any
10 further discussion of the motion? Ms. Boggs.

11
12 **MS. BOGGS:** I am going to speak in opposition to the motion. I
13 still do not feel like we should be reallocating when we have a
14 species that is overfished and undergoing overfishing, and I
15 know this is committee, but I would like a roll call vote,
16 please.

17
18 **DR. STUNZ:** Susan, hold on just one second, and we're trying to
19 get some clarity on the clicker situation here, but I think
20 we're going to have to revert back to the old-school roll call
21 vote, and we've got three people online.

22
23 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I apologize, Mr. Chair, and I'm a
24 little confused, and so we're in committee still, and we're
25 going to have a roll call vote at Full Council, and are you
26 requesting a roll call vote right now?

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** What I asked for was if there was any
29 opposition to the motion, and Ms. Boggs raised her hand, and so
30 I wasn't sure if she was in opposition or requesting a roll call
31 vote.

32
33 **MS. BOGGS:** I thought you asked if there was any discussion on
34 the motion, and I said that I am going to speak in opposition to
35 the motion and ask for a roll call vote. I know it's committee,
36 but those out in the world there don't know who is voting and
37 how, and I'm sure I'm the only opposition, but still.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Sure, and I apologize if I asked if there was
40 any further discussion, and that's probably true, and, if I
41 misspoke, let's have it, I would say, and then we can -- You
42 have asked for a roll call vote here, and I am -- I guess we can
43 do that, and I'm happy to entertain that. Mr. Diaz.

44
45 **MR. DIAZ:** Based off of Ms. Boggs' conversation, if there's
46 going to be a lot of discussion after this, and, any time we
47 reallocate anything, there's a lot of discussion on it, but I do
48 want to put on the record that, you know, these numbers were

1 come up with a different data collection system, SRFS, okay, and
2 the current preferred applies SRFS to the same years that the
3 last allocation came up with, and so we are using a data
4 collection system, and it's applied to the same years that the
5 previous allocation come from, and so people can get in their
6 own mind whether they think that's a reallocation or not, but I
7 just want to make it clear to the public that's listening to
8 this that there's a new data collection program, and we're
9 applying those new numbers to the same years as we had before.
10 Thank you.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Diaz. Is there any
13 other discussion? Dr. Sweetman.

14
15 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I seconded this motion,
16 and I still do not agree with the allocation shift. Having said
17 that, it's not a recreational versus commercial thing, and,
18 quite frankly, I agree with what Susan is saying to not
19 reallocate when a species is overfished and undergoing
20 overfishing, but, having said that, I feel like we have
21 discussed this at extensive length here, and the gag stock
22 really just needs to have this rebuilding plan implemented as
23 quickly as possible, and so that's why I seconded this motion.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Any other discussion? Okay. I am not seeing
26 any, and so we will go ahead with a roll call vote. Dr.
27 Simmons.

28
29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Diaz.

30
31 **MR. DIAZ:** Yes.

32
33 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Williamson.

34
35 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Yes.

36
37 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. McDermott.

38
39 **MR. MICHAEL MCDERMOTT:** Yes.

40
41 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Dugas is absent. Mr. Geeslin.

42
43 **MR. GEESLIN:** Yes.

44
45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Schieble.

46
47 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes.

48

1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Dyskow.
2
3 **MR. DYSKOW:** Yes.
4
5 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Broussard.
6
7 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Yes.
8
9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Shipp.
10
11 **DR. SHIPP:** Yes.
12
13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Sweetman.
14
15 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes.
16
17 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Ms. Boggs.
18
19 **MS. BOGGS:** No.
20
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Is Mr. Gill online? Okay. Mr.
22 Anson.
23
24 **MR. ANSON:** Yes.
25
26 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** General Spraggins.
27
28 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes.
29
30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Strelcheck.
31
32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes.
33
34 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** It's twelve to one with two absent
35 and two abstentions, Mr. Chair.

36
37 **REVIEW OF CODIFIED TEXT**
38

39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you very much. I think it's
40 probably appropriate, at this point, if we take a quick look at
41 the codified text. I would defer to SERO staff to let us know
42 if there's anything that we need to be concerned about in the
43 codified text. Ms. Levy.
44
45 **MS. LEVY:** Thank you. I think it's pretty straightforward. If
46 you scroll down, it shows the seasonal closure changing, and so
47 it would be January 1 through August 31, right, which would
48 allow for the September 1 open date, and then, if you scroll

1 further down, you will see the changes to the commercial quota
2 and then the recreational and the commercial ACLs and then the
3 recreational ACLs and ACTs, and you will also see the change to
4 the recreational accountability measure that requires NMFS to
5 prohibit further harvest when the ACT is reached, or projected
6 to be reached, and so it's fairly straightforward.

7
8 The one thing that I need to look into, and I will perhaps raise
9 at Full Council, is I heard a brief discussion about an
10 authority to reopen if the ACT is not reached, and I don't think
11 that the regs, right now, allow for that, and there is a general
12 provision that talks about whether a quota or ACL is not reached
13 after it's closed, based on the projection, and it allows for
14 reopening, and I don't think that provision refers to an ACT,
15 and so I'm going to look at it, and we can come back at Full
16 Council.

17
18 If the desire is to have that specific authority for gag, we
19 could potentially just tweak the gag regulations. If the
20 desire, and I need to talk to the NMFS folks about this too, is
21 to add it to the general provision, we could talk about that as
22 well, but I was going to look into that and bring that back for
23 you.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. Thanks, Mara, and so we'll get an
26 update at Full Council on that. Is there any other discussion,
27 as it relates to the codified text? All right. I am not seeing
28 any, and so I think that brings us to the end of our discussion
29 on gag.

30
31 Mr. Chair, if it's all right with you, I think maybe we might
32 take a short break and reconvene and understand where we are
33 with regard to yellowtail snapper and then come back maybe in
34 fifteen minutes or so. Okay. I guess we'll take a break for
35 fifteen minutes.

36
37 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

38
39 **DR. STUNZ:** Tom, I will call the meeting back to order, and
40 we'll pick back up with yellowtail, and so go ahead when you're
41 ready.

42
43 **DRAFT: SNAPPER GROUPER AMENDMENT 44/REEF FISH AMENDMENT 55:**
44 **CATCH LEVEL ADJUSTMENTS AND ALLOCATIONS FOR SOUTHEAST U.S.**
45 **YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER (CONTINUED)**

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yesterday, we
48 started a discussion related to yellowtail snapper, and it was

1 Draft Snapper Grouper Amendment 44/Reef Fish Amendment 55: Catch
2 Level Adjustments and Allocations for Southeast U.S. Yellowtail
3 Snapper, and Ms. Somerset gave a presentation, and we worked
4 through various action items in that combined document, and then
5 we realized that there were some recent developments that caused
6 us to pause on that discussion.

7
8 During last night and early this morning, I think there's been a
9 number of discussions about where we are with regard to the
10 analysis, and I think, before we move forward, I would ask Dr.
11 Simmons to provide kind of a situational update.

12
13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We had a
14 call with Ms. McCawley last night, and so we have some good
15 news. There was not concern about the stock assessment itself.
16 The stock assessment is fine, and there were just some questions
17 about, and it was to the IPT, the historical time series that
18 was used in the Generic ACL/AM Amendment, and apparently that
19 coding error would have occurred there, when the original
20 apportionments between the councils occurred, and she was asking
21 to make sure that we updated that time series of landings, to
22 make sure that, moving forward, as the councils are making
23 decisions on the apportionment, that that's reconciled and is
24 available for discussion as we're making those changes in
25 allocation across the two councils.

26
27 What staff is proposing is, because we haven't been able to
28 reconcile that at this time, but are confident in the stock
29 assessment, is that we bring this back to our council in August,
30 with that information, with the understanding that those
31 apportionments may change some, and there will be some more
32 information in the document about this issue, for you to read
33 and digest, to make sure all that's clear, and then it might be
34 reconciled by next week, by the South Atlantic Council, and so
35 they may move forward with selecting preferred alternatives, but
36 we'll just have to see how that goes, but we'll plan to bring it
37 back in August for the council.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. Thank you, Dr. Simmons, and so I guess
40 my preference would be, and I will look around to the group, but
41 Carly went through that presentation, and there was a number of
42 action items in those, but the numbers in those alternatives are
43 likely to change, but they're probably kind of within the
44 general range of values that were considered in the document.

45
46 Given that, I'm not sure that there's a ton of utility in
47 walking through this document again, or this presentation again,
48 and visiting specific action items, but I did hear, around the

1 table, some primary concern, right, in consideration of any of
2 the alternatives that would lead to seasonal closures in the
3 Gulf, you know, that that should probably try to be avoided.

4
5 If I can get some consensus that that was in fact what I heard,
6 I think we might be able to at least convey that message to the
7 South Atlantic, prior to their meeting next week, and so that
8 would be one, and so is there any opposition, I guess, and I'm
9 just kind of looking around, to making that known? Okay. I am
10 not seeing any problem with that, and so the staff can certainly
11 work with the South Atlantic to convey that message. Is there
12 any other general kind of considerations that we might want to
13 pass along to the South Atlantic, prior to their meeting? Okay.
14 I am not seeing any. Carrie, that's probably sufficient, in and
15 of itself, right?

16
17 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so we will then consider our
20 business with yellowtail snapper to be closed for the day, and
21 we'll see it again in August, and that would lead to the final
22 agenda item, which is Other Business. Is there any other
23 business to come before the committee? Mr. Diaz.

24
25 **OTHER BUSINESS**

26
27 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was hoping to have a short
28 discussion. One or two meetings ago, we passed a motion to
29 start a document related to red snapper private angling
30 allocation, and I was hoping -- First, I would like to ask if
31 the staff could give us an update on the timeline of when that
32 process would likely start.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Sure. Dr. Simmons.

35
36 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we
37 need to have some meetings with the Regional Office and Science
38 Center on this issue. I know we have the upcoming review
39 workshop in the fall for red snapper, and we're going to have to
40 consider how we're going to be using that management advice for
41 the operational assessment, and so I think the timing of this is
42 important, and so I would say we could try to shoot for
43 something in the fall, right now, but we have a lot of ongoing
44 priorities right now, but I will be certainly working with the
45 Regional Office, the Science Center, and council leadership to
46 see when we can bring it, but we can try for October, to start
47 the discussion.

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Diaz.
2
3 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. That would be greatly
4 appreciated, for the State of Mississippi, if we could kick that
5 off in October, and so I know it's -- All these allocation
6 documents seem to take a while, and so, if we could get it
7 started, then that would be much appreciated. Thank you.
8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** General Spraggins.
10
11 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I appreciate it also, and I know that staff
12 has a lot to do, and it's not something that's easy, and I was
13 talking to Ryan a while ago, and there's a lot of things on the
14 agenda, and I appreciate you taking the opportunity to even look
15 at it and try to move it forward, if possible, and there's a
16 possibility to make it where we were a year ahead, as far as the
17 allocation, whenever it came up, and, you know, it may be a year
18 that we would have this allocation done, prior to the next year,
19 which would really help us a whole lot, maybe, and we may or may
20 not gain, and I don't know the answer, you know, but that's not
21 the question, but I do appreciate that. Thank you very much.
22
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, General. All right, and so Dr.
24 Sweetman.
25
26 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just a quick question, and so when were we
27 scheduled to review that in the first place?
28
29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Review what?
30
31 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Sorry. Sorry. The private rec state-by-state
32 allocation, and when -- Obviously, we have this motion to kind
33 of elevate that timeline, and when was the original time
34 scheduled to review this?
35
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I do not have the answer to that.
37
38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** One moment.
39
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Diaz, while we're looking that up, or
41 General Spraggins.
42
43 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I think we were talking April of 2024, and,
44 for some reason, that was in my mind, and that's what I keep
45 thinking, and I think in April of 2024, and staff may have to
46 look at that, to make sure.
47
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We're getting some affirmation from the folks

1 at the Regional Office, and so -- Go ahead, Dale.

2
3 **MR. DIAZ:** What I am thinking that Dr. Sweetman is asking is
4 Assane has a schedule for us to review all allocations at a set
5 time, and is that the question, where that would have come up in
6 the rotation that Assane presented to us a few meetings back?

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and so, Assane, do you want to weigh-in?
9 Assane, hold on real quick, and it looks like Carrie has got it
10 pulled up right here, because we're having a hard time hearing
11 you.

12
13 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The red snapper allocation
14 between the Gulf states is scheduled to be reviewed every five
15 years, and so April of 2024 is the first one, and so,
16 essentially, we started looking into that, but, because of the
17 data issues that were mentioned, potentially the review will be
18 subsumed in this amendment that we are working on.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. Thank you, Assane. All right. Are
21 there any further questions, Mr. Diaz or General Spraggins?
22 Okay. All right. Well, Mr. Chair, I think that concludes our
23 business on the Reef Fish Committee, and so I will send it back
24 to you.

25
26 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 7, 2023.)

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