

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Hyatt Regency Birmingham

Birmingham, Alabama

APRIL 4, 2017

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 John Greene.....Alabama
- 11 Kevin Anson.....Alabama
- 12 Patrick Banks.....Louisiana
- 13 Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi
- 14 Doug Boyd.....Texas
- 15 Roy Crabtree.....NMFS, SERO, St. Petersburg, Florida
- 16 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
- 17 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 18 Martha Guyas (designee for Nick Wiley).....Florida
- 19 Kelly Lucas (designee for Jamie Miller).....Mississippi
- 20 Campo Matens.....Louisiana
- 21 Lance Robinson (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 22 John Sanchez.....Florida
- 23 Greg Stunz.....Texas
- 24 Ed Swindell.....Louisiana
- 25 David Walker.....Alabama

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- 28 LCDR Leo Danaher.....USCG
- 29 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC

STAFF

- 32 Steven Atran.....Senior Fishery Biologist
- 33 Matt Freeman.....Economist
- 34 John Froeschke.....Fishery Biologist-Statistician
- 35 Douglas Gregory.....Executive Director
- 36 Karen Hoak.....Administrative & Financial Assistant
- 37 Morgan Kilgour.....Fishery Biologist
- 38 Ava Lasseter.....Anthropologist
- 39 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 40 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 41 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 42 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative Assistant
- 43 Carrie Simmons.....Deputy Director

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- 47 Luiz Barbieri.....FL
- 48 Randy Boggs.....Orange Beach, AL

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2 Glen Brooks.....GFA
3 Chris Conklin.....SAFMC
4 Nick Farmer.....NMFS
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19

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4 to modify the red snapper annual catch target for the federal
5 charter/for-hire sector. [The motion failed on page 18.](#)
6

7 [PAGE 33](#): Motion to recommend to the council to approve Reef
8 Fish Amendment 36A and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of
9 Commerce for review and implementation, and deem the codified
10 text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial
11 license to make the necessary changes in the document. The
12 Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the
13 codified text as necessary and appropriate. [The motion carried](#)
14 [on page 33.](#)
15

16 [PAGE 42](#): Motion to recommend to the council to approve Reef
17 Fish Amendment 46 and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of
18 Commerce for review and implementation, and deem the codified
19 text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial
20 license to make the necessary changes in the document. The
21 Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the
22 codified text as necessary and appropriate. [The motion carried](#)
23 [on page 43.](#)
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25 [PAGE 45](#): Motion in Action 1 to make Alternative 2, Option 2a
26 the preferred alternative. [The motion carried on page 46.](#)
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28 [PAGE 46](#): Motion in Action 2 to make Alternative 2, Option 2b
29 the preferred alternative. [The motion carried on page 47.](#)
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31 [PAGE 48](#): Motion in Action 3 that the preferred alternative be
32 Alternative 2. [The motion carried on page 49.](#)
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34 [PAGE 50](#): Motion in Action 4 to make Alternative 2 the preferred
35 alternative. [The motion carried on page 51.](#)
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37 [PAGE 51](#): Motion to recommend that the council approve Framework
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39 Commercial Size Limit and that it be forwarded to the Council
40 for final action and sent to the Secretary of Commerce for
41 review and implementation, and deem the codified text as
42 necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to
43 make the necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair
44 is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text
45 as necessary and appropriate. [The motion carried on page 52.](#)
46

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48 alternative. [The motion carried on page 85.](#)

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3 Alternatives 2 and 3. [The motion carried on page 86](#).

4
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6 alternative. [The motion carried on page 88](#).

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10 the yield when fishing at F 26 percent SPR. [The motion carried](#)
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13 [PAGE 108](#): Motion to add an action item to include cyclical
14 redistribution of red snapper to Amendment 41. [The motion](#)
15 [carried on page 109](#).

16
17 - - -
18

1 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at the Hyatt Regency Birmingham,
3 Birmingham, Alabama, Tuesday morning, April 4, 2017, and was
4 called to order by Chairman Johnny Greene.

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

10 **CHAIRMAN JOHNNY GREENE:** Good morning. We've got a full agenda
11 ahead of us today. We are going to get through it all today,
12 someway, somehow, because I don't really like to roll them into
13 two days. We're going to have a few things to look at on the
14 agenda.

15
16 Just skimming through it really quick, it looks like there is
17 three or four things that we're going to finish up, potentially,
18 at this meeting that we can move on to some other things that
19 need to move on.

20
21 With that, we will look at the Adoption of the Agenda. Does
22 anyone have any changes to the agenda, additions or deletions?
23 Seeing no changes to the agenda, we will proceed with two
24 notices that I have.

25
26 I have been asked by National Marine Fisheries staff to move a
27 discussion of Amendment 28 in right after -- Which would be
28 first up, right before the federal recreational fishing season
29 discussion. Then, first thing right after lunch, we will have
30 Mr. Sam Rauch that will speak to us as well, and so, with those
31 additions to the agenda, if no one has any opposition, we will
32 move forward with that. Seeing no one in opposition, we will
33 adopt the agenda as modified.

34
35 The next agenda item will be the Approval of Minutes. Is there
36 any changes to the minutes? Seeing no changes, we will adopt
37 them as written. The next thing on your agenda is the Action
38 Guide and Next Steps, Tab B, Number 3, which I find very useful,
39 and I appreciate the hard work that goes into that. With that,
40 we will move on to our first item of the morning, which will be
41 Discussion of the Amendment 28 Lawsuit and Ms. Levy.

42
43 **DISCUSSION OF AMENDMENT 28 LAWSUIT**
44

45 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Thank you. I think you all got a copy of the
46 decision. Essentially, the court vacated the Amendment 28 final
47 rule on one basis, a violation of National Standard 4 and the
48 fair and equitable piece of that National Standard, finding that

1 the allocation was not fair and equitable.

2
3 She found for the agency on the rest of the Magnuson Act claims,
4 and did not address some NEPA issues that were raised, and so,
5 essentially, what the order says is that the 2017 recreational
6 fishing season needs to be based on the prior allocations,
7 before Amendment 28, and that the -- That we need to shift,
8 essentially, the allocations back and release the quota that was
9 held back from the commercial sector back to the commercial
10 sector.

11
12 It's relevant, because you're going to be talking about the
13 recreational fishing season, and so you just need to know that
14 the projections are based on the prior allocation and not the
15 allocation in Amendment 28.

16
17 Also, just an FYI that we got an order in the Amendment 40 case
18 that was filed by Fishing Rights Alliance in the Tampa District
19 Court, and so you will recall that the agency won the Amendment
20 40 challenge that was filed in Louisiana, and there was an
21 appeal, and the 5th Circuit upheld that. Then the Tampa court
22 just recently ruled in favor of the agency on Amendment 40 as
23 well, and that case has a final judgment in it, and so there is
24 a time for appeal. If the plaintiffs don't appeal, then that
25 case would be over as well.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further discussion? Dr.
28 Simmons.

29
30 **DR. CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to
31 say, can you guys speak into the microphone? We have a lot of
32 background noise back here, and it's very difficult to hear.
33 Thank you.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. The next item on our agenda is the
36 Projection for the 2017 Federal Recreational Season and
37 Discussion of State Seasons and Dr. Crabtree.

38
39 **PROJECTION FOR 2017 FEDERAL RECREATIONAL FISHING SEASON AND**
40 **DISCUSSION OF STATE SEASONS**

41
42 **DR. ROY CRABTREE:** I believe we have Nick Farmer dialing in to
43 give us a presentation.

44
45 **DR. NICK FARMER:** Good morning, everyone. This is Nick. I
46 wanted to apologize, first off, for not being there in person.
47 We've got a real tight travel ceiling this year, and I wasn't
48 able to make it for this brief presentation.

1
2 I did want to thank, real quick, John Froeschke and David
3 Records for their assistance in preparing some of the
4 information in here, and also thank the data providers, which
5 would be Vivian Mater and Kelly Fitzpatrick at the Science
6 Center. Then Joey Shephard and Mark Fisher from LA Creel and
7 TPWD for delivering me some landings estimates, and also thanks
8 to Andy Strelcheck and Sue Gerhart for their helpful review of
9 this presentation.

10
11 With that said, let's get into it. I just wanted to give you an
12 update on where things are at with Gulf red snapper season
13 length projections. To run through the 2016 preliminary
14 landings, these are from MRIP and the Southeast Region Headboat
15 Survey for Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi, Waves 1 through 6,
16 coming from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center's ACL
17 database. Then we've got LA Creel estimates from Louisiana and
18 some preliminary Texas private and charter estimates from the
19 TPWD creel survey.

20
21 As you can see here, the private and state charter, and so the
22 private angling component, landed a preliminary estimate of
23 about 5.19 million pounds, and so they're about 25 percent over
24 their quota, and the federal for-hire component landed about 2.1
25 million pounds, and so they're at about 70 percent of their
26 quota.

27
28 Overall, that leads us to a preliminary estimate of being at 102
29 percent of the combined recreational ACL, and the preliminary
30 estimate of the overage is 129,906 pounds whole weight for the
31 private angling component, and so that would require a payback.

32
33 I wanted to touch, real quick, on why there was an overage in
34 2016. I went back and I looked at the projected federal catch
35 rates and compared them to what we observed for 2016 from this
36 preliminary data, and the median error on that suggests that we
37 slightly underestimated the private angler component catch rate
38 by about 4 percent, which is well within the PSE, or the
39 uncertainty in those landings estimates data, and then the
40 federal for-hire catch rate was overestimated by about 10
41 percent, and that's also well within the PSE for those landings
42 estimates.

43
44 Really, there were some slight underestimates of the federal
45 private catch rates, but then our major source of error and the
46 reason for the overage was that state catches were much higher
47 than anticipated when the season was set. That had partly to do
48 with the fact that we were unable to accurately predict the

1 impacts of the extension of the state boundaries in the northern
2 Gulf of Mexico from three to nine nautical miles.

3
4 I think the highest simulation that we did was a threefold
5 increase in catch rates, and we actually found some catch rates
6 that were well above that for some of those northern Gulf
7 states, and we also had the expansion of the Alabama and Florida
8 seasons following the federal season announcement. The Alabama
9 season was twenty-three days longer than we predicted.

10
11 The Mississippi and Alabama catch rates were over three times
12 higher than we predicted, and Florida catches were higher than
13 predicted. They landed about 126,526 pounds in Wave 6, with
14 that end-of-season extension.

15
16 In general, the overage was due to us slightly underestimating
17 that federal private catch rate and then underestimating the
18 impact of that state boundary extension and then having two
19 states extend their seasons longer than anticipated. In
20 addition, Louisiana is managing towards a percentage of the ACL
21 rather than the ACT, and so that pushed us a little bit over.

22
23 Here is a breakout of the Gulf of Mexico 2016 red snapper
24 recreational landings in graphical form. You can see, on the Y-
25 axis here, we've got the federal for-hire component, the federal
26 private, and then the state season. Now, that federal private
27 and state season are combined together to form the private
28 angler component, and so you can see that's a pretty big bar
29 when you stack them on top of each other.

30
31 Then the color coding denotes where the landings were coming
32 from, and so you've got green for Alabama, yellow for Florida,
33 orange for Louisiana, blue for Mississippi, and then gray for
34 Texas, and so you can see some relatively high catches coming
35 from different places and different modes of fishing. For
36 example, Alabama federal private landings were very high.
37 Florida state season private landings were very high.

38
39 That leads us to the preliminary 2017 quotas, and Mara has
40 already touched on the decision in the legal case regarding Reef
41 Fish Amendment 28. This ACL is based on the 49 percent
42 allocation, the pre-Reef Fish 28 allocation, and it also
43 includes a 129,906-pound payback for the private angler
44 component, and so that leads us to a Gulf-wide recreational ACL
45 of about 6.6 million pounds.

46
47 The ACT then for the all recreational sector is about 5.3
48 million pounds. For the private angling component, that has the

1 payback factored into it, and it's going to be 3,047,803 pounds.
2 The federal for-hire will be 2,234,342.

3
4 Then the next thing needed to estimate, in order to figure out
5 what might happen for the 2017 fishing season, would be what the
6 state seasons were going to be, and so I have this table here,
7 and this represents the best information I had available at the
8 time of assembling the presentation, based on either announced
9 seasons from Alabama, Louisiana, and Texas or indications from
10 state directors with regards to the Florida and the Mississippi
11 season.

12
13 It looks like Florida's season will be seventy-eight days,
14 Alabama's sixty-seven, Mississippi will be 102, Louisiana will
15 be managing towards a percentage of the quota, and Texas will
16 have a year-round, four-fish bag limit, and a fifteen-inch
17 minimum size limit season, as they have the last several years.

18
19 Also, due to the congressional budgetary resolution and the
20 continuing resolution on that, the state-water boundary
21 extension from 2016 from three to nine nautical miles is
22 anticipated to remain in effect for the red snapper season, and
23 so I wanted to touch real quick on season lengths through time.

24
25 You can see, on the Y-axis here, these are the seasons, in days,
26 and the black line represents the federal private season length.
27 Then the colored lines represent the different states. Texas is
28 up here in the red, with 365 days, since 2004, and you can see,
29 as the federal season has shortened, especially following 2012,
30 we have seen some substantial extension on the state seasons,
31 and so a lot of the red snapper fishing we're seeing these days
32 is now taking place in state waters during these extended state
33 seasons, and that leads me to my next slide, which is the
34 projected state season catches for 2017.

35
36 These basically apply the observed catch rates and average
37 weights from 2016 to the season that I just showed you in the
38 previous table from the different states in 2017, and so you can
39 see here that the states are projected to catch between 77 and
40 79 percent of the overall private angler ACT, leaving
41 approximately 0.7 million pounds for the private federal season,
42 or about 21 percent of the ACT. That's a relatively small
43 amount, much lower than we have seen in any previous year.

44
45 In 2016, also, and I just wanted to touch base, that the federal
46 for-hire component caught 88 percent of their ACT. In 2017, the
47 federal for-hire quota is reduced by about 2 percent, by the
48 Reef Fish 28 legal decision. 2017 is actually projected to be

1 the first year where state season catches will exceed the
2 private federal catch, and that's where we're at right now with
3 regards to the projections for the red snapper season, and so,
4 if anyone has any questions, I am standing by.
5

6 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you, Nick. Any questions? Mr. Diaz.
7

8 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** Thank you, Dr. Farmer. We appreciate your hard
9 work, and that was a good presentation. I do have two questions
10 for you. I noticed that you were emphasizing the word
11 "preliminary" throughout your presentation, and I know we have
12 discussed this before, but I just can't remember. When do we
13 actually say these numbers are final, generally, and I have one
14 more question after that.
15

16 **DR. FARMER:** I believe the Wave 6 estimates from MRIP are
17 preliminary at this point and also the TPWD estimates for the
18 entire 2016 Wave 2 for TPWD, or their high-use wave, are
19 preliminary. Those were provided to me by TPWD.
20

21 My understanding is that they're going to have some final
22 estimates relatively soon, and those will need to run through
23 our Southeast Fisheries Science Center, because what I did is I
24 got landings estimates from them in numbers, and so I applied
25 average weights from the 2015 season, in order to come up with
26 an estimate of what that poundage was, but I did receive an
27 indication from TPWD that their landings in 2016 were lower than
28 they had seen in 2015, and that certainly was supported by the
29 numbers that I saw coming through from them. I would anticipate
30 in the next probably month or two that we might be able to call
31 those landings estimates final.
32

33 **DR. DIAZ:** Thank you for that, Dr. Farmer. Have you calculated
34 the number of days that we're projecting for the federal for-
35 hire season?
36

37 **DR. FARMER:** That's still a work in progress. Based on the
38 quota and last year's landings, I think it's probably safe to
39 assume that it will be equal to or slightly longer than last
40 year, but we're still winnowing in on a final analysis for that.
41

42 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. I have Dr. Stunz and then Dr.
43 Crabtree.
44

45 **DR. GREG STUNZ:** Nick, I have a question for you on your second
46 slide, where you gave the table of the preliminary landings
47 broken out with the total landings. You briefly touched on it,
48 but I was wondering what the error surrounding those estimates -

1 - For example, the private or for-hire is five-million, and 2.1
2 for the charter/for-hire, but do you recall what those, I think
3 you said the PSEs, are surrounding those landings?
4

5 **DR. FARMER:** I can give you a pretty definitive answer on that
6 if you guys can give me just a moment.
7

8 **DR. STUNZ:** The reason I'm asking, while you're looking, Nick,
9 is we had some discussion around the table about getting a
10 better understanding of the variability around those landings
11 estimates, and so I thought, while we had you on the phone here,
12 you might have those handy.
13

14 **DR. FARMER:** If you can see my screen right now, I have an Excel
15 workbook open. Basically, what I'm showing here, on the Y-axis,
16 is the PSE estimates through time. On the Y-axis are the years,
17 and what you're looking at are the estimated uncertainties in
18 the catch rates, and that's what I have available and off-hat,
19 during the federal season for the for-hire mode in blue and for
20 the private mode in red and then for headboat in green.
21

22 In general, what you're looking at here is, for the for-hire
23 mode, you're seeing a reduction in PSE over the past few years,
24 basically since Reef Fish 40 was put into effect, of about 4
25 percent in the east, of about 21 percent reduction in the west,
26 and then for private during that same time period, you are
27 seeing a reduction in PSE of about 12 percent in the east and 27
28 percent in the west. Those are mean reductions in PSE.
29

30 In 2016, for the private mode, it looks like the mean PSE in the
31 east was about 18 percent. In the west, it was around 26
32 percent. I don't know if that answers your question entirely,
33 Greg, but that's what I have available at the moment.
34

35 **DR. STUNZ:** That's it, Nick. That was good, but what was it on
36 the for-hire in the east and west for 2016?
37

38 **DR. FARMER:** In the east, it was around 12 percent. In the
39 west, it was around 13 percent.
40

41 **DR. STUNZ:** Okay. Thanks, Nick.
42

43 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Dr. Crabtree.
44

45 **DR. CRABTREE:** So a couple of questions. I think we are still
46 waiting for Florida to finalize their season, and I wonder,
47 Martha, if you could let us know when you expect that.
48

1 **MS. MARTHA GUYAS:** Sure. Our commission meets later this month,
2 I think the 20th is the date of their meeting where they will be
3 talking about marine items, including the season, and so April
4 20th is our date. I mean, they have a proposal on the table,
5 which is what Nick used for this analysis.
6

7 **DR. CRABTREE:** I think Nick said that Mississippi has not
8 finalized a season yet, and is that correct, Kelly?
9

10 **DR. KELLY LUCAS:** That is correct.
11

12 **DR. CRABTREE:** Do you know when that might happen?
13

14 **DR. LUCAS:** I believe they're scheduled to bring it up at the
15 next commission meeting, which would be the third Tuesday of the
16 month.
17

18 **DR. CRABTREE:** Okay. That's what we're kind of waiting on to
19 finalize the season. My expectation is the for-hire component
20 season is going to be a little bit longer than it was last year.
21 We only have 700,000 pounds to catch in federal waters. We have
22 seen catch rates on the order of 250,000 to 300,000 pounds a
23 day, and so that's just where the math comes out, but we need to
24 finalize our season no later than May 1, and so that's kind of
25 the timing that we're on.
26

27 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Is there further discussion? Seeing no
28 further discussion on that red snapper recreational season, we
29 will move on to our next agenda item. I'm sorry. Mr. Diaz.
30

31 **MR. DIAZ:** I have talked about this for the last couple of
32 meetings, but I want us to have a good discussion about it
33 today, and so I'm going to make a motion to facilitate that
34 discussion. **My motion is going to be to direct the staff to**
35 **start a framework action to modify the red snapper annual catch**
36 **target for the federal charter/for-hire sector.** If I get a
37 second, I will discuss it a little bit more.
38

39 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Let's give staff just a second to get the
40 motion up on the board, and then we will review it and ask for a
41 second. We have a motion going up on the board, and Mr. Diaz
42 has read the motion into the record. Is there a second for this
43 motion? It's seconded by Dr. Frazer. Is there discussion? Mr.
44 Diaz.
45

46 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have been talking about this
47 for the last couple of meetings, and I think what I really would
48 like to accomplish is I would like us to try to get the ACT for

1 the charter/for-hire where it's more accurate. I don't think
2 it's as accurate as it can be, and I think we should explore
3 that.

4
5 Just to give you a little bit of history, in 2014, the sectors
6 were combined, and, that year, both sectors combined, they
7 fished 89 percent of the ACT and 71 percent of the ACL. In
8 2015, sector separation went into effect. In that year, the
9 charter/for-hire fished 93 percent of its ACT and 74 percent of
10 its ACL. In 2016, which is this year, from the report that Dr.
11 Farmer has just given us, the charter/for-hire fished 88 percent
12 of its ACT and 70 percent of its ACL.

13
14 I just believe, if we get the staff to work like we did when we
15 set the original ACT in 2014 -- We were given the risk at
16 different buffers of what the likelihood of exceeding the ACT
17 was, and I think if we could start a framework action and look
18 at different percentages for the ACT and what risk, the
19 likelihood of going over, correlates to those percentages, I
20 think we could make a better decision and get it more accurate
21 and fair for the charter/for-hire fishery. I will leave it at
22 that for now.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Dr. Crabtree.

25
26 **DR. CRABTREE:** I mean, we can do this if you want, but I think
27 it will be difficult to look at the -- We're talking about
28 revisiting the buffers, the 20 percent buffer, and I think it
29 will be difficult to just look at the for-hire buffer in
30 isolation. I think you will have to look at the for-hire and
31 the private sector buffer to do a proper analysis.

32
33 If you go down that path, you may end up concluding that the
34 for-hire buffer could be smaller, but the private buffer needs
35 to be larger, and so you need to think about that, but I think
36 it will be difficult to do a defensible analysis on this without
37 looking at both components and the buffers and how it relates to
38 the overall recreational quota, since remember they are
39 connected through Section 407(d) of the statute.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Mr.
42 Diaz.

43
44 **MR. DIAZ:** I just want to point out a few things. I think I've
45 said these at some previous meetings, but one reason I think we
46 could probably handle this fleet at a lower buffer is, one,
47 history, but it's fewer boats. It's a fixed number of boats,
48 and so it's not the same as the private recreational that we

1 really don't know the accurate number before we start a season.
2 We know with this fleet.

3
4 They cannot fish in the state-water seasons, and so that part of
5 the uncertainty is gone. They have to stay in federal waters,
6 and so it's a more controlled group. It's a smaller group, and
7 I believe we can look at tightening this up and coming up with a
8 better buffer for that charter/for-hire fleet. Thank you, Mr.
9 Chair.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further discussion? Ms. Levy.

12
13 **MS. LEVY:** I guess we can think about it, but I tend to agree
14 with Roy. You have a situation where there is a recreational
15 ACL, and that's the level that we're not supposed to be
16 exceeding.

17
18 In the past, we have come very close to it, or, this year,
19 slightly over it, but the reason we haven't gone over it more
20 and in years past, since we've done this buffer, is because you
21 have had the 20 percent buffer on both components, and so the
22 for-hire has been so far below that the private angler being
23 above hasn't made the total go above the ACL.

24
25 We're going to be in year one now, where we potentially -- It
26 looks like we have an overage of the ACL, and I think, if you're
27 going to start looking at this framework, you need to look at
28 what's going to happen to the total ACL and how you're going to
29 stay below that.

30
31 The National Standard 1 Guidelines say, if you exceed the ACL
32 more than once in a four-year period, you're supposed to
33 reevaluate, and so, if we exceed it this year, that's year one.
34 If we exceed it again, then we really should be looking at the
35 whole scheme again, but to look at one of them in isolation
36 without the other one, when your target is the total
37 recreational ACL and not exceeding that, and that's the goal, I
38 am not sure that will work out very well.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Dr.
41 Stunz.

42
43 **DR. STUNZ:** I am just wondering, Dale, or maybe this is a
44 question to staff, about perhaps just getting some early
45 preliminary analysis first, just to see where we're at, before
46 we actually start a framework amendment to do something, and how
47 difficult that would be, just to see where we are, broadly.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Gregory.

2
3 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DOUGLAS GREGORY:** I am sorry, but I don't
4 fully understand that question. If my memory is right, the
5 total catch in 2016 was about 99 percent of the ACL, because the
6 private sector went over and the charter/headboat sector did
7 not, and I think it totaled about 99 percent. Was that what
8 you're kind of referring to, how close we are to the overall
9 ACL?

10
11 **DR. STUNZ:** No, what I'm talking about was related to the
12 comment of what Roy and Mara just brought up, about looking at
13 them in tandem. Before we proceeded down the route of an entire
14 framework action, just see what those numbers -- Some early
15 analysis, but, if that's not possible or feasible, that is fine.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Diaz.

18
19 **MR. DIAZ:** I actually would kind of like to see the numbers
20 before we go down the path, but the problem I see with putting
21 it off is our system takes so long to do something. If there is
22 even a chance at doing something to correct this for the 2018
23 season, the further we push it back, the less chance there is to
24 impact it and help out these charter/for-hire guys for the 2018
25 season, and so that's why I am reluctant to wait.

26
27 We are waiting for final numbers, and then final, final numbers,
28 and I do think we're at a point now where the numbers should not
29 change very much. What I see for the last wave is a fairly low
30 number. Even if it's adjusted some, it shouldn't be a big
31 impact, although I don't know exactly how much it could be
32 adjusted for Texas, but I still don't think there's a large
33 amount of an adjustment coming, and so that's my reluctance to
34 wait, Greg.

35
36 I agree with exactly what Mara said. Because there has been an
37 underage on the charter/for-hire side, that has helped the
38 overall picture, but we decided to separate these two sectors
39 back in 2014. We made that decision, and it just comes down to
40 where I think we can get it more accurate and fair. Thank you.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? All
43 right. **By a show of hands, all those in favor of the motion on**
44 **the floor before you, please signify by raising your hand.**

45
46 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** Seven yeas.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** All those opposed, like sign.

1
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** Eight no. The motion fails seven
3 to eight.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further discussion before we
6 leave the snapper season? Seeing none, we will move on to our
7 next agenda item, which will be Final Action on Amendment 36A
8 and Dr. Lasseter.

9
10 **FINAL ACTION - AMENDMENT 36A - MODIFICATIONS TO COMMERCIAL IFQ**
11 **PROGRAMS**

12
13 **DR. AVA LASSETER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have brought you
14 a draft that, as noted, is prepared for final action. I will
15 note that you do have preferreds selected for all of the
16 actions, and we have received some public comments. We had a
17 webinar for this, and so I'm going to turn it over to Emily to
18 provide us a summary of the public comments received on the
19 document.

20
21 **SUMMARY OF PUBLIC HEARING AND WRITTEN COMMENTS**

22
23 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you. We performed a direct mailing
24 for this. We produced a guide and sent a letter to all permit
25 holders, commercial permit holders, and also share account
26 holders. Is that right, IFQ share account holders?

27
28 **DR. LASSETER:** Everybody that has an account, yes, and so
29 allocation only as well as shareholders. It was everybody
30 that's a participant in the program, as well as commercial reef
31 fish permit holders.

32
33 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you for clarifying. In that letter, and
34 also in that guide, we solicited comments either online via
35 email, and we also hosted a webinar and directed them to that
36 webinar, and so we did host that webinar, and we had fifteen
37 members of the public attend, and two members spoke.

38
39 Of the comments we heard, we heard that the council should
40 reconsider the distribution of the shares in the programs. Non-
41 shareholding commercial fishermen find it difficult to find
42 allocation to fish, and the current program allows businesses to
43 monopolize the fishery. In some cases, people who aren't even
44 fishermen profit off the resource.

45
46 Specific to the actions, it was mentioned that Action 2.2,
47 Alternative 4, was supported, and that would allow National
48 Marine Fisheries Service to redistribute any of those shares to

1 allocation-only holders, and so these are fishermen who are
2 active fishermen that do not hold shares.

3
4 Then, finally, it was mentioned that, for Action 2.2, which also
5 considers this idea of redistributing shares, that shares should
6 be put to good use in a quota bank to address the need of new
7 entrants or small fishing businesses. The council needs to find
8 a way to improve access for the next generation of fishermen.

9
10 Then, moving on to our summary of the written comments that we
11 received, we did receive comments from forty-one different
12 members of the public, and I have organized these so that they
13 are action specific, and so we'll just go action-by-action here.

14
15 Action 1, which considers commercially-permitted reef fish
16 vessel hail-in requirements, there was support for Alternative
17 1, which is the no action alternative, on the basis that
18 commercial reef fish boats already land with IFQ species and so
19 no action is necessary. Basically, the idea, I think, that was
20 being expressed is that a majority of reef fish vessels are
21 landing IFQ species, and so adding a hail-in won't really help
22 very much.

23
24 There was also support for Preferred Alternative 2. The
25 rationale provided here was that additional regulations are
26 necessary to deter fishermen and dealers from illegally landing
27 IFQ species and that expansion of hail-in requirements will
28 improve enforcement and close loopholes that undermine the IFQ
29 program.

30
31 Moving to Action 2.1, which considers returning non-activated
32 IFQ shares to National Marine Fisheries Service, there was
33 support for Alternative 1, the no action alternative, with the
34 rationale that taking what isn't yours is considered stealing
35 and that NOAA should have made a rule to take the shares from
36 non-activated accounts when the IFQ program was implemented.

37
38 There was also support expressed for Alternative 2 and
39 Alternative 3, because allowing commercial access to allocation
40 associated with non-activated accounts will help achieve optimum
41 yield and provide economic benefit to the fishery. The council
42 should take a step further and take back shares that haven't
43 been accessed in the last three years. Finally, accounts that
44 haven't been used for a year should be closed, and so that sort
45 of decides to sort of take even a step further there.

46
47 Moving to Action 2.2, which discussed the methods of
48 redistribution of shares in those non-activated accounts, there

1 was support for the no-action alternative expressed, and also
2 support for Alternative 2, because businesses that are fishing
3 in the industry should have an opportunity to harvest all
4 species.

5
6 Then there was a lot of support for Alternative 4. This
7 alternative should be based on landings from 2016 and 2017, and
8 so folks were wanting this to be based on a more recent time
9 series rather than the 2015 that is in the document now.

10
11 Distributing shares to allocation-only fishermen would save on
12 wasteful discards by reducing bycatch. Shares should be
13 distributed to active fishermen that do not already have shares,
14 rather than distributing to existing shareholders. It's time to
15 help out fishermen who lease allocation.

16
17 Then, finally, historical participation should be taken into
18 account, so distribution is based on the length of time somebody
19 has been in the fishery and not necessarily landings. Finally,
20 it was suggested that an alternative be added to distribute the
21 annual allocation associated with shares through an industry-run
22 quota bank. Shares should be redistributed in a way that
23 maximizes their value, by using them to address clearly-defined
24 fishery problems, such as red snapper discards or transition to
25 the next generation.

26
27 Moving to Action 3, which considers retaining allocation before
28 a quota reduction, there was support for the no action
29 alternative, with the rationale that National Marine Fisheries
30 has enough power and shouldn't take away fish. There was also
31 support expressed for Alternative 2 and Alternative 2, Option a.

32
33 Moving to Action 4, this deals with our dealer notification
34 requirement for beginning to offload IFQ species, and there was
35 support expressed only for Alternative 1, which is the no action
36 alternative, and the rationale provided was that requiring
37 dealers to make offload notification will not solve the problem
38 and it will simply cause frustrations and delay operations at
39 dealers.

40
41 We also received some other IFQ-related comments, and I will
42 read those really quickly. The annual catch limit increases
43 should be distributed to commercial fishermen that own little or
44 no shares, rather than to established shareholders. The IFQ
45 system should be removed, because it has benefitted a few people
46 who own a majority of the shares and cause non-shareholders to
47 work for very little profit.

48

1 It is too expensive to buy into the IFQ program. The IFQ
2 program is an entitlement, and it gives a public resource to
3 private individuals for profit. Shareholders should not be
4 allowed to profit from IFQ shares as if it were a commodity to
5 trade. Shareholders should be required to be fishermen.

6
7 Some fish houses own shares and refuse to buy catch from small
8 fishermen who don't purchase allocation from them. If fishermen
9 do not catch their shares, those shares should be redistributed
10 each year.

11
12 The IFQ program has provided stability to the seafood markets.
13 Restriction on the use of shares and allocations would reduce
14 the efficiency of the program. The council should consider
15 creating a use-it-or-lose-it provision for shareholders that
16 redistribute shares to active fishermen.

17
18 Only reef fish permit holders should be allowed to have IFQ.
19 People should not be able to make money from programs without
20 fishing. To help with bycatch loss, NOAA should withhold a
21 portion of the red snapper allocation each year to lease to
22 vessels without red snapper IFQ shares. Limits should be placed
23 on how much and how often an account holder can lease this
24 allocation, which cannot be transferred once it's distributed.

25
26 Divide all shares equally among permit holders. People who have
27 bought permits after the IFQ program was implemented should have
28 known what they needed in order to fish for IFQ species.
29 Finally, a purchased fishing quota program should be created,
30 where vessels establish what they can harvest for a year and pay
31 the federal government. Quota then can be sold within the year,
32 and unused quota would be returned and distributed to new
33 entrants.

34
35 Finally, we received just a couple other comments, that regional
36 management should be reconsidered for private recreational
37 anglers, and that every new rule implemented makes the fishing
38 process more complicated. That concludes my report of the
39 comments that we heard for Reef Fish 36A.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. Is there discussion?
42 Seeing none, Dr. Lasseter.

43
44 **REVIEW OF AMENDMENT**

45
46 **DR. LASSETER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We will return to the
47 document, which is located at Tab B, Number 4(a), and Action 1
48 begins on page 14. Action 1 addresses a commercial-permitted

1 reef fish vessel hail-in requirement, essentially extending the
2 hail-in requirement that currently only applies to vessels
3 landings IFQ species to additional vessels. Again, only vessels
4 that already have the reef fish permit.

5
6 Currently, your Alternative 1 is this hail-in requirement
7 applies only to those landing the IFQ species. They must notify
8 NMFS at least three hours, but no more than twenty-four hours,
9 prior to landing.

10
11 Your current preferred alternative is Number 2, and this would
12 extend the requirement to those landing any of the other reef
13 fish species, and so all existing requirements for hail-in
14 remain in place, but vessels with the reef fish permit that are
15 going to land reef fish species that are not managed under the
16 IFQ programs would now be required to hail-in as well.

17
18 Then Alternative 3 extends it further, where vessels with that
19 reef fish permit, as long as that permit is on their boat, they
20 would be required to hail-in when landing any federally-managed
21 species. Again, your current preferred is Alternative 2,
22 extending it just to any reef fish species, and I will turn it
23 over to see if there is any discussion.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Any discussion? Seeing no discussion, carry
26 on, Dr. Lasseter.

27
28 **DR. LASSETER:** Okay. We will move on to Action 2, which begins
29 on page 22, and Action 2 consists of two sub-actions. Together,
30 these address what to do with non-activated IFQ shareholder
31 accounts. These are accounts not just that people maybe haven't
32 used in a little while, but these are accounts that have never
33 been accessed in the current system. They modified the system
34 under the grouper/tilefish program, when that was put in place,
35 to accommodate both programs.

36
37 These are shares that have never been accessed. The holder of
38 the account has never logged into that system. The first action
39 addresses returning those shares, and then the second sub-action
40 is going to address how they're going to be redistributed.

41
42 Action 2.1 here is returning non-activated IFQ shares to NMFS.
43 Of course, our Alternative 1 would be our no action, and these
44 shares would just continue to remain in these non-activated
45 accounts and continue to go unused.

46
47 Your current preferred alternatives are both 2 and 3.
48 Alternative 2 addresses the red snapper shares, and Alternative

1 3 addresses the grouper/tilefish shares. Otherwise, they are
2 identical alternatives. For both of these preferred
3 alternatives, for accounts with these shares in either program
4 that have never been activated in the current system, the shares
5 will be returned to NMFS.

6
7 Then you have two options, and, again, they're the same options
8 for both of these alternatives, and your current preferred is
9 the Option a, and so 2a and 3a, which is that the shares would
10 be returned to NMFS on the effective date of the final rule
11 implementing this amendment.

12
13 The Option b, 2b and 3b, would allow an additional year
14 following implementation of this amendment before returning
15 those shares to NMFS, and so I will pause there and see if there
16 any questions on this discussion.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Any discussion? Seeing none, Dr. Lasseter.

19
20 **DR. LASSETER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Moving over, let's just
21 take a look at the top of page 24, before I go into 2.2. I just
22 want to point out the table here at the top of page 24. You
23 have seen this before. It is accurate as of when the IFQ
24 database was accessed, in the middle of December of 2016.

25
26 You can see approximately the amount of equivalent pounds given
27 for the 2016 quota, the volume basically, of the shares that
28 we're talking about in these non-activated accounts, and the
29 volume has decreased, and continues to decrease, over time.
30 We're looking at a total of the equivalent of 13,600 pounds
31 across all of the grouper/tilefish share categories, and under
32 15,000 pounds for the red snapper program, given the 2016
33 quotas.

34
35 Going to the next page, page 25, this is the Action 2.2, the
36 method of redistributing the shares that I just described the
37 volume of which in the previous table, and this is how much is
38 held in these non-activated accounts.

39
40 Again, our Alternative 1 is always taking no action, and this
41 would not redistribute the shares in either one of the programs
42 that were returned to NMFS. The next alternative, Alternative
43 2, is your preferred. Preferred Alternative 2 would
44 redistribute the shares from each share category equally among
45 all shareholders of that share category.

46
47 Alternative 3 is similar, but, instead of distributing it
48 equally amongst all the shareholders, it would distribute the

1 shares from each share category in proportion to the existing
2 shareholdings of each shareholder of each share category.

3
4 Then, finally, Alternative 4 would redistribute the shares
5 equally from each share category, but to those allocation-only
6 account holders. They must have a commercial reef fish permit
7 and landings from 2015 in that share category and then also that
8 they could not be related to other accounts with shares, and so
9 there were several qualifiers there.

10
11 Then I will note that there are tables following these
12 alternatives, again which you have seen in the previous draft,
13 which address how these would be roughly distributed. We did
14 get a question during the webinar, and so I will just call
15 attention this, that because the alternatives, and in the
16 previous action, specify that this will occur at the date of
17 implementation, the accounts --

18
19 The system for the share transfers will be shut down at that
20 time and the calculations -- The IFQ staff will make the
21 calculations at that time, and so there could be changes, up
22 until that time, in terms of people addressing their non-
23 activated accounts and transferring out those shares and
24 whatnot, and so those numbers would actually be finalized not
25 until that time, and so I just wanted to point that out, and I
26 will turn it over and see if there is any discussion.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any discussion? Martha.

29
30 **MS. GUYAS:** Just a question, Ava. If we went towards
31 Alternative 4, which is the one that would distribute to these
32 folks that only have allocation-only accounts, would that be --
33 I guess when would we determine -- I guess, what would be the
34 control date, so to speak, for when they have those accounts?
35 Is the day that the rule takes effect, or is it the control date
36 that is in the rule? What do we have?

37
38 **DR. LASSETER:** Actually, the way everything is written at the
39 moment, it's what would be in place at the time that that
40 occurs, and so it would be the accounts that are in place, but
41 they would have to have had landings from 2015, and so those
42 other qualifiers would have to be in place.

43
44 That one would be substantially more complicated to calculate,
45 and, for the most part, to determine the accounts that are not
46 related to other accounts. That is the tricky part in
47 identifying that, and then also the Table 2.2.2.4, at the top of
48 page 26, shows you the equivalent pounds, based on the 2016

1 quota, for the number of accounts, again, from the middle of
2 December. We have to keep that in mind, that that can still
3 change.

4
5 From the number of accounts, more or less, at that time, for red
6 snapper, that would be ninety-two pounds, given the 2016 quota,
7 per account, and so it is less than the other alternatives, but
8 it is a different method of the redistribution.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Mr.
11 Walker.

12
13 **MR. DAVID WALKER:** Ava, I was just going to mention that it was
14 my understanding, of these 16,000, there is one account that has
15 something like 8,000 pounds in it, and so this could even reduce
16 by 50 percent by the time something happens.

17
18 **DR. LASSETER:** That is possible. I don't remember there being
19 one 8,000. I would have to ask Jessica. I seem to remember
20 4,000, but I'm not sure why, to date, that that account still
21 remains non-activated. It is my understanding that a lot of
22 other participants in the program have been tracking these
23 account holders down, and so would that account be closed by
24 then or would it not, but that is a good point. The volume here
25 could be substantially reduced it even further, or it could
26 remain more or less the same.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Ms. Levy.

29
30 **MS. LEVY:** Just to point out, under the preferred alternative,
31 where you are redistributing equally to the shareholders, but
32 just keep in mind, and this is the way it's written in the
33 codified text, that all of this going back to current
34 shareholders is subject to the cap. If anyone is at the cap or
35 close to the cap, then they might not get the full amount. You
36 would have to put that back into the pot and do a new
37 calculation.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further discussion? Seeing no
40 further discussion, Dr. Lasseter.

41
42 **DR. LASSETER:** Thank you. Moving on to Action 3, it begins on
43 page 29, and Action 3 addressed retaining annual allocation
44 before a quota reduction. Again, our Alternative 1 is no
45 action, 100 percent of the red snapper and grouper/tilefish
46 annual allocation would continue to be distributed to IFQ
47 shareholders on January 1 of each year.

48

1 Now, previously, we have had an episode where this was
2 anticipated, and the council did complete a framework action,
3 and so this can be completed through that process. This action
4 goes ahead and provides the Regional Administrator the
5 authority, so that you would not have to go through that
6 process, the framework action process, in the event that this
7 provision was needed.

8
9 Your preferred alternative is Number 2. That is to provide the
10 Regional Administrator the authority to withhold the amount of
11 red snapper or grouper/tilefish annual allocation before
12 distribution at the beginning of a year in which a commercial
13 quota reduction is expected to occur, but, basically, the
14 rulemaking was not finalized prior to the beginning of the year.

15
16 There is an added part for the options here. Withheld red
17 snapper and grouper/tilefish annual allocation will be
18 distributed to the shareholders if the effective date of the
19 final rule implementing the quota reduction has not occurred by
20 -- Your preferred option is Option a, June 1, and there is an
21 Option b, which would be August 1.

22
23 You do have a preferred option, but, regardless if an option is
24 selected, the text does add that the Regional Administrator does
25 retain the authority to distribute the withheld quota if it
26 becomes known that that is not going to be implemented at a time
27 earlier in the year as well, and so I will pause there for
28 discussion.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further discussion? Ms.
31 Bosarge.

32
33 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** If there is no discussion on that one, I was
34 going to back up and ask a question on the last one, if that's
35 okay with you, Mr. Chairman.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Absolutely.

38
39 **MS. BOSARGE:** On that Action 2.2, Method of Redistributing
40 Shares from Non-Activated Accounts, and this may be for Emily.
41 I'm not sure, but I remember we added that Alternative 4, but I
42 don't remember the discussion surrounding why we decided not to
43 go with that. Was there some feedback, some public comment or
44 something like that, that was driving us towards that
45 Alternative 3 or was it a --

46
47 **DR. LASSETER:** I will be speaking for Dr. Crabtree, but I
48 believe he had raised the issue, a few times, about how small

1 the quantity of quota really was, if I'm recalling correctly,
2 and that it would be quite complicated to calculate these
3 related accounts, and I think we could possibly ask Dr. Stephen
4 also to comment on the related accounts. That's going to be a
5 little tricky for us to address, also, once we get into 36B.

6

7 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.

8

9 **DR. CRABTREE:** It is a relatively small amount of fish, and it
10 is more complicated to do it, but, if you want to do it, I think
11 we can do it, and so it's up to you how you want to handle it,
12 but it is more complicated.

13

14 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Ms.
15 Bosarge.

16

17 **MS. BOSARGE:** Well, I'm not sure, and I know I have to make a
18 decision, since we're taking final action here, but I am not
19 sure which way I want to go, but it does seem to address some of
20 the issues that we've been talking about, that, yes, we'll get
21 into further when we get into our next IFQ review amendment, but
22 it's my understanding, Ava, that essentially this would provide
23 some ownership of a share to a fisherman that has been out
24 fishing and landing these IFQ species, but does not currently
25 own any shares. He has just been either leasing allocation or
26 it's been transferred to him or her, whatever the case may be,
27 but they are out there actively fishing it, and is that right?

28

29 **DR. LASSETER:** That is correct, yes.

30

31 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Martha.

32

33 **MS. GUYAS:** I'm with you, Leann. This one has been on my mind a
34 little bit as well. I think we've probably been contacted by
35 some of the same people that have been -- Some of these people
36 do lease. They don't own shares, and, looking at the table,
37 it's not a whole lot that they would get, but it's a little bit
38 more than under Alternative 2, and it could be a little bit of
39 relief. I mean, it's ninety-two pounds of red snapper,
40 potentially. That's not going to make their year, probably, but
41 I don't know. It could be helpful. I am kind of with you, kind
42 of waffling between the two.

43

44 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.

45

46 **DR. CRABTREE:** Ava, am I reading this right? Table 2.2.2.4
47 indicates there are 161 red snapper accounts that would meet the
48 criteria in Alternative 4?

1
2 **DR. LASSETER:** As determined, yes, and we may want to ask
3 Jessica to speak a little more to this, because there is a kind
4 of qualifying paragraph in here that discusses how those
5 allocation-only accounts are determined and how -- The tricky
6 part is identifying which ones are not related to other
7 accounts, and so that number could change, if she does a further
8 analysis and finds that --
9
10 **DR. CRABTREE:** I get it's tricky, but that's our best guess.
11
12 **DR. LASSETER:** That is correct.
13
14 **DR. CRABTREE:** Each of those accounts then would get ninety-two
15 pounds' worth of shares. What is the approximate going price
16 for a share right now? Do you know, or, David, do you know, or
17 Jessica?
18
19 **DR. LASSETER:** I see Jessica coming up.
20
21 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Stephen.
22
23 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** The price for red snapper shares I think
24 is somewhere around fifty-dollars, give or take. It tends to go
25 per pound. I haven't calculated the 2016 values yet.
26
27 **DR. CRABTREE:** Okay. When I look at --
28
29 **DR. STEPHEN:** David might have a better estimate.
30
31 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Captain Walker.
32
33 **MR. WALKER:** I have never heard more than forty, somewhere in
34 the thirty-six to forty-dollar range.
35
36 **DR. CRABTREE:** Am I reading this right, Jessica, that each of
37 these accounts would get 0.001516 shares?
38
39 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes.
40
41 **DR. CRABTREE:** Even if we say it's fifty-dollars, we're talking
42 that they would get something on the order of -- I mean, it's
43 not much. Am I reading this right, or am I missing it?
44
45 **DR. STEPHEN:** You take that share times the equivalent there
46 that you see of the ninety-two pounds, and so it would be
47 ninety-two pounds times fifty, if you're looking for a value.
48

1 **DR. CRABTREE:** Okay. So the way to estimate that is --
2
3 **DR. STEPHEN:** You take that times the quota.
4
5 **DR. CRABTREE:** I am trying to get some idea of the value of what
6 we would be giving here.
7
8 **DR. LASSETER:** May I interrupt for just a moment? The Chapter 4
9 in the economic effects analysis has that spelled out, and I
10 believe there's a table there. Perhaps, in the document, we
11 could scroll down and take a look there. It would be Section
12 4.2.2.3. It's on page 100. I believe Dr. Diagne has provided a
13 table in there that does provide the values, the economic
14 values, comparing each of the alternatives. It's page 102, the
15 top of page 102.
16
17 **DR. CRABTREE:** If I am reading this right, for a red snapper
18 account holder, we would be giving them an amount of shares with
19 a value that is somewhere in the neighborhood of \$3,000.
20
21 **DR. LASSETER:** That is correct. That is how that reads, based
22 on the inputs that he put in as far as what he found was the
23 cost per share.
24
25 **DR. CRABTREE:** So, even though we say it's not much, it's not an
26 inconsequential value.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Walker.
29
30 **MR. WALKER:** I've got just here what this year -- With
31 allocation, you're looking at right around thirty-seven.
32 Without allocation, probably thirty-four. That's what has been
33 kind of the going rate this year.
34
35 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Ms.
36 Bosarge.
37
38 **MS. BOSARGE:** Ava, one more clarification. This is done like on
39 a species-by-species basis, right? In other words, if there is
40 a fisherman that has been leasing and landing red snapper IFQ,
41 but he owns no share of that fishery, he initially though may
42 have had some share in one of the grouper IFQ species, and he
43 will still get that ninety-two pounds in the red snapper,
44 because this is species-by-species, because I remember we had
45 that discussion when we added this, because we wanted to make
46 sure it was species-by-species, because then it can solve a
47 multitude of problems, maybe new entrants or maybe bycatch, and
48 do you see what I'm saying?

1
2 For some guys that are grouper fishermen, if they end up getting
3 some snapper, if they've been leasing snapper for bycatch, then,
4 if they're given this small share -- Obviously it's not much,
5 but it's something. Am I interpreting that right?
6
7 **DR. LASSETER:** You are, yes. Now, it does specify that the
8 allocation-only account holder does not have shares in that
9 share category and is not related to other accounts with shares,
10 but it does not specify that they do not have shares in another
11 category. I see a question.
12
13 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.
14
15 **DR. CRABTREE:** It sounds like it has some good things, but what
16 bothers me about it -- So, if you have someone who has slowly
17 tried to buy some shares, and say he owns a thousand-dollars'
18 worth of shares, he won't get anything, because he already has a
19 small amount of shares.
20
21 Then someone who doesn't have any shares would all of a sudden
22 have \$3,000 worth of shares, and that would be the case, and
23 that is kind of bothersome to me, because it seems like it's
24 penalizing someone who has just gotten in. Now, maybe there is
25 no one who owns less than \$3,000 worth of shares, but I suspect,
26 Ava, you're saying there are folks like that.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Walker.
29
30 **MR. WALKER:** Just a question. I know you can move allocation
31 around, but I wasn't aware that you could move shares into
32 allocation accounts, and I believe there is going to be some
33 public testimony for some suggestions for these possible new
34 entrants, replacement entrants too, and so I'm kind of looking
35 forward to some testimony.
36
37 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Anson.
38
39 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Going back to the comment that Dr. Crabtree
40 just made about the new shareholder account holders, the people
41 who had just bought some new shares, you're able to determine
42 that, Jessica, as to who has shares relative to the initial
43 distribution, share distribution, versus those that have
44 purchased or acquired shares? You're able to determine that and
45 the date when they acquired them? Is that correct?
46
47 **DR. STEPHEN:** From January 1, 2010, when we started the new
48 system, we track every share transfer, and we can determine what

1 account got what shares at what point in time.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion?
4 Seeing no further discussion, Dr. Lasseter.

5
6 **DR. LASSETER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I am assuming that
7 we didn't have further discussion on the Action 3 as well, in
8 which case we will move on to Action 4, which begins on page 31.
9 This action would create a requirement for a dealer notification
10 for when the offloading of IFQ species will begin.

11
12 Currently, it is the vessel's requirement to hail-in notifying
13 when they are going to land, but that doesn't necessarily mean
14 that offloading will begin upon landing, and this would create a
15 new requirement that would put it on the dealer to notify NMFS
16 as to when offloading would begin.

17
18 Your current preferred alternative is Alternative 1. That is to
19 not take action on this at this time. IFQ dealers would not be
20 required to provide notification to NMFS specifying when the
21 offloading would begin.

22
23 Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 are very similar. They differ
24 in the minimum amount of time before offloading. Alternative 2
25 would require IFQ dealers to notify NMFS when a vessel will
26 offload IFQ species, and the notification must be made at least
27 one hour, and no more than twenty-four hours, before offloading.
28 Alternative 3 would require the notification to be made at least
29 three hours, and no more than twenty-four hours, before
30 offloading begins.

31
32 Per your last discussion, you had mentioned -- You had the
33 preferred alternative as Number 1. You did discuss moving it to
34 Considered but Rejected, but you did want to receive some public
35 comment on this action, and so I will turn it over there for
36 discussion.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there committee discussion?
39 Seeing none, Dr. Lasseter.

40
41 **DR. LASSETER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is the last action
42 in this document. We have provided you the public hearing
43 summaries, and the codified text is provided in your briefing
44 book as well for your review, and I am going to turn it over to
45 Mara for a moment.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Levy.
48

1 **MS. LEVY:** Thank you. I just wanted to mention one thing that
2 NMFS is looking at in terms of implementing this amendment. It
3 has two very different parts to it, right? It has the hail-in
4 requirement for reef fish permit holders, and then it has this
5 share account issue.

6
7 The notification piece of it is going to require a bit more time
8 for NMFS to implement, because they have to figure out under
9 what system the reef fish permit holders are going to do this.
10 We have the IFQ system, but it's not clear whether that system
11 can handle all the reef fish permit holders, and so there are
12 some things on the administrative side for NMFS to work out
13 about implementing that piece of it.

14
15 The share piece of it can be implemented more quickly, because
16 there is no process that has to be set up to do it, and so one
17 thing to consider is, or that NMFS is considering, is doing two
18 separate rulemakings to implement the thing that can be done
19 more quickly first and then implement the hail-in requirement
20 second, but I really think maybe -- I think it would be nice to
21 have the council say or consider whether that's something that
22 you're okay with.

23
24 Meaning, they can implement it all at once, but it will just
25 take longer to implement the whole thing together, and so are
26 you okay with the two-step process that would implement the one
27 piece more quickly while we work out how to implement the second
28 piece?

29
30 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Dr. Crabtree.

31
32 **DR. CRABTREE:** That makes sense to me. If we're going to
33 redistribute the inactive accounts, I don't think we would want
34 to hold that up waiting on something that is not directly
35 related to our ability to do that, and so it seems to me the
36 two-step process would be okay.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further discussion? Okay. It
39 doesn't seem that anyone has any problems with that, and so that
40 will be our intent. Dr. Lasseter, that concludes everything for
41 you?

42
43 **DR. LASSETER:** It does.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** So I guess we will have to forward the
46 documents to Full Council for action and recommend the council
47 deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate would be the
48 next step, and am I correct? Okay. That being said, we will be

1 looking for a motion to do so.

2

3 **MR. SANCHEZ:** So moved.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Sanchez will make that motion, and I'm
6 sure they have a draft motion to deem the codified text as
7 necessary and appropriate, and we will put that up on the board.
8 I think the wording should be to recommend that the council -- I
9 think that captures it.

10

11 **Mr. Sanchez's motion is to recommend the council to approve Reef**
12 **Fish Amendment 36A and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of**
13 **Commerce for review and implementation, and deem the codified**
14 **text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial**
15 **license to make the necessary changes in the document. The**
16 **Council Chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the**
17 **codified text as necessary and appropriate. Is there a second**
18 **for this motion? It's seconded by Mr. Walker. Is there any**
19 **opposition to the motion? Seeing no opposition, the motion**
20 **carries.**

21

22 With that, we will move on to our next item, which will be Final
23 Action on Amendment 46, Gray Triggerfish Rebuilding Plan, and
24 that will be the Tab B-5 area. Dr. Simmons.

25

26 **FINAL ACTION - AMENDMENT 46- GRAY TRIGGERFISH REBUILDING PLAN**

27

28 **DR. SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is it okay if Emily goes
29 through the public hearing and webinar comments first, before we
30 go through the amendment?

31

32 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Absolutely.

33

34 **SUMMARY OF PUBLIC HEARING AND WRITTEN COMMENTS**

35

36 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you. I will go through our in-person
37 public hearing meeting summaries first, and then we'll move on
38 to the summaries that we heard of the written comments.

39

40 Starting in Spanish Fort, Alabama, we had nine members of the
41 public attend that meeting, and eight of them submitted
42 comments. Sort of the general comments that we heard at that
43 meeting were that a better assessment needed to be conducted,
44 because it is not reflecting what is being seen on the water.
45 The constant reduction in recreational opportunities is a
46 problem, and the stock is recovering and anglers are seeing more
47 fish and larger fish on the water than is being reflected in the
48 assessments.

1
2 Now, moving to the action-specific comments that we heard in
3 Spanish Fort, for Action 1, there was support for the preferred
4 alternative, which would create a nine-year rebuilding timeline,
5 and there was also support for Alternative 5, which would create
6 a ten-year rebuilding timeline.

7
8 Action 3.1, there was support for the Preferred Alternative 4.
9 The season should be closed in January and February and then
10 again in June and July. There was also support for Alternative
11 3, which would allow for a fall fishing season. Then there was
12 support for no action, to retain the current closed season of
13 June and July to protect the spawning aggregations.

14
15 Moving to Action 3.2, there was support for the no action
16 alternative, because reducing the bag limit would reduce angler
17 satisfaction, and there was also support for Preferred
18 Alternative 2, which would reduce the bag limit to one fish per
19 person.

20
21 Moving to Action 3.3, there was support expressed for Preferred
22 Alternative 2, which would give us a fifteen-inch minimum size
23 limit for gray triggerfish. Then, finally, on to Action 4, and,
24 in Spanish Fort, we heard support for increasing the commercial
25 trip limit. The other comments that we heard in Spanish Fort
26 mentioned that the cobia stock is declining and that management
27 is needed to be considered.

28
29 We also went to Corpus Christi, Texas, where nobody attended
30 that meeting. The next meeting we hosted was in Destin,
31 Florida, and we had twenty-three members of the public attend
32 that meeting. Nineteen of those members spoke.

33
34 The general comments that we heard were that the information in
35 the stock assessment was old and that it was conducted when
36 there was a twelve-inch size limit and a ten-fish bag limit for
37 triggerfish, and so the idea was that that assessment was
38 probably, if it was based on harvest, was not reflecting what
39 was really happening on the water.

40
41 The council needs to take the fishing community into account
42 when setting a rebuilding plan. The stock has recovered in
43 abundance, size, and range. A mandatory emergency stock
44 assessment should take place if a stock is closed for two
45 consecutive years. Allowing triggerfish to be so abundant must
46 be detrimental to other species. There are no grouper, because
47 of the abundance of trigger and red snapper.

48

1 Recreational fishermen have continuously been pushed aside. The
2 stock assessment should be conducted regionally, since stocks
3 are not evenly distributed throughout the Gulf. The 2017 season
4 should be reopened. Recreational fishermen are not
5 disenfranchised. There are plenty of fishing opportunities in
6 state waters.

7
8 Recreational data collection focuses on vessels with the largest
9 catch, which leads to an overestimation. The survey should be
10 more randomized, and Florida should implement a tag program for
11 triggerfish.

12
13 We didn't receive any Action 1 or 2 specific comments in Destin.
14 However, for Action 3.1, we did hear support for the Preferred
15 Alternative 2, which would close the season in January and
16 February and again in June and July. We also heard support for
17 a fall fishing season, but then there was also concern expressed
18 that if we waited to open triggerfish in the fall that there
19 would be nothing else open to fish for.

20
21 Moving to Action 3.2, in Destin, we heard support for no action,
22 keep the two-fish bag limit, and we also heard support for the
23 preferred alternative to reduce the bag limit to one fish.
24 Moving to 3.3, there was support for no action, because
25 increasing the size limit would slow harvest. There are plenty
26 of fish. Additionally, increasing the size limit would make
27 anglers catch their annual catch limit quicker, and it will also
28 shift pressure to larger fish.

29
30 Finally, on Action 4, in Destin, we heard support for the
31 Alternative 4, which would increase the trip limit to sixteen
32 fish commercially. We also heard that the stock is so healthy
33 that it could support a 1,000-pound commercial trip limit.

34
35 We then went to Galveston, where we had four members of the
36 public attend. Three of those people spoke. We heard general
37 support for the council's preferred alternatives. However,
38 regarding the size limit increase for the recreational fishery,
39 there was fear that it would lead to the quota being harvested
40 quicker.

41
42 We also hosted a webinar. We had one member of the public
43 attend that webinar. He said that there were plenty of ten to
44 twelve-inch triggerfish, and it makes it difficult to catch
45 snapper. He mentioned that increasing the size limit would
46 require more fish to be thrown back. However, he personally
47 preferred to keep larger fish. We also heard support for a one-
48 fish bag limit, if it were to lengthen the season, and there was

1 also concerned expressed with the time lag between data
2 collection and management decisions.

3
4 Moving on to the written comments that we received, forty-three
5 members of the public submitted comment online or via email. I
6 will go through the action-specific comments first. For Action
7 1, we heard support for Preferred Alternative 4, and that would
8 establish a nine-year rebuilding timeline.

9
10 For Action 2, which establishes annual catch limits and annual
11 catch targets, we heard support for Alternative 3, Option b.
12 The annual catch limit should be increased to a level that aims
13 to rebuild the stock in nine years. We also heard support for
14 the Preferred Alternative 1, no action.

15
16 For Alternative 3.1, which looks at modifying the recreational
17 fixed closed season, we heard support for Preferred Alternative
18 4, which would create a closed season in January and February
19 and then again in June and July.

20
21 Moving on to Action 3.2, which looks at modifying the
22 recreational bag limit, we heard that a bag limit reduction is
23 acceptable only if it lengthens the season. We also heard
24 support for Preferred Alternative 2, to reduce the bag limit to
25 one fish per angler.

26
27 Moving to Action 3.3, which looks at modifying the recreational
28 minimum size limit, we heard that reducing the minimum size
29 limit to twelve inches or to consider a twelve to fifteen-inch
30 slot limit. We also heard support for the Preferred Alternative
31 2 to increase the minimum size limit to fifteen inches.

32
33 Finally, moving to Action 4, which looks at modifying the
34 commercial trip limit, we heard that the commercial bag limit
35 should not be increased if the stock is overfished, and we also
36 heard support for Preferred Alternative 2, which would increase
37 the commercial trip limit to sixteen fish.

38
39 We heard some other triggerfish-related comments that were not
40 action-specific in our written comment. One of the sort of
41 overarching themes that we heard is that triggerfish are not
42 overfished and that they're everywhere in vast numbers, and some
43 of the supporting arguments that we heard to that point were
44 that fisherman are catching them while trolling, fishermen can't
45 get past them to catch anything else.

46
47 A few years ago, the population dipped, but now they are very
48 healthy. Triggerfish off the Florida Panhandle are so prevalent

1 that they are a pest. They are on every artificial reef from
2 twenty feet to 100 feet deep. There are plenty of just legal-
3 sized triggerfish. A majority are between sixteen and twenty
4 inches. There are so many triggerfish that they are hungry and
5 eating plastic baits.

6
7 Triggerfish will come to the surface in swarms and attack every
8 bait like a piranha. People are catching more big triggerfish
9 now than they ever have in their lives. There are so many
10 triggerfish eating everything that the bait industry must be
11 thriving. Fish are so abundant that five people can catch their
12 limit in two hours.

13
14 We also heard that if the triggerfish stock is overfished that
15 it should be shut down completely until it recovers for
16 commercial and recreational harvest and that the overabundance
17 of red snapper is causing the triggerfish shortage.

18
19 We also collected a number of other comments that were not
20 triggerfish specific in our written comment for this amendment,
21 and I will go through those really quickly. We heard that NOAA
22 should improve their data collection and stock assessment
23 process. What's being seen on the water is not reflective of
24 stock assessment results.

25
26 The NOAA data is in conflict with the state data and does not
27 make sense, and the commercial fishery data keeps the fishery
28 open, while the recreational fishery indicates overharvest.
29 Data providers are incompetent and corrupt, and they carry out a
30 radical agenda, and that stock assessment scientists should
31 listen to the fishermen.

32
33 We also heard that National Marine Fisheries Service needs to
34 improve their season projections to produce them in a more
35 timely manner. Federal fisheries management has no credibility.
36 The federal legal structure around fisheries management is
37 ridiculous. There shouldn't be a size limit on Spanish
38 mackerel, because they have a high discard mortality.

39
40 Discarding abundant red snapper outside of the season is
41 incredibly wasteful. Reef fish regulations should be regional.
42 Overregulation causes negative economic impacts for hard-working
43 Americans, and hatchery programs should replenish stocks.

44
45 More seasons should be open at a time, so trips can target
46 multiple species, and, finally, recreational anglers should have
47 the same right to fish as commercial fishermen do, and that
48 concludes my report on the comments that we heard during

1 triggerfish public hearings.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you, Emily. Any discussion? Seeing
4 none, Dr. Simmons.

5
6 **REVIEW OF AMENDMENT**

7
8 **DR. SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have prepared a final
9 draft of the gray triggerfish rebuilding plan. That is Tab B,
10 Number 5(a). What I would like to do is start on page 11. I
11 will just go through and remind the council what your preferred
12 alternatives are for Action 1. It establishes a rebuilding time
13 period, and your current preferred alternative is the nine-year
14 rebuilding period, or by the end of 2025. This was within the
15 SSC recommendations for the rebuilding time for gray
16 triggerfish, and so I will stop here and see if there is any
17 questions or comments.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any questions or comments? I
20 don't see any, Dr. Simmons.

21
22 **DR. SIMMONS:** Okay. Moving on, let's go to page 13, Action 2.
23 This establishes the annual catch limits and annual catch
24 targets for each sector, and the council has decided to select
25 Preferred Alternative 1, no action, to retain the current sector
26 ACLs and ACTs that were developed in Amendment 37 and were put
27 in effect since 2012, and you can see those numbers there in the
28 table below for the commercial and recreational sector.

29
30 Recall the council decided to maintain these current catch
31 levels because the stock assessment and SSC determined that the
32 stock was not making adequate progress towards rebuilding, and
33 so they decided to stay with the Preferred Alternative 1
34 regarding the catch limits.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any discussion? Ms. Guyas.

37
38 **MS. GUYAS:** Just a question for Carrie. A lot of times, when
39 the preferred alternative is Alternative 1, you guys like it
40 when we send that action to Considered but Rejected. Is that
41 appropriate for this one, since it's the ACLs and ACTs? If
42 we're going down this road and it makes it easier, I will make
43 the motion, but --

44
45 **MS. LEVY:** For this particular one, I suggest leaving it in the
46 document, because it goes towards what the rebuilding time would
47 be, and it kind of goes with Action 1, even though we separated
48 them out.

1
2 **DR. SIMMONS:** I think it would also just clarify that the SSC
3 made these rebuilding time period recommendations and the
4 corresponding ABCs, where the council chose to go with this
5 catch level and not make changes.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Dr.
8 Simmons.

9
10 **DR. SIMMONS:** Thank you. We will move on to Action 3, which is
11 a suite of actions regarding the recreational management
12 measures. We have three sub-actions. Action 3.1 would modify
13 the recreational fixed closed season. The council selected
14 Preferred Alternative 4, which would include two additional
15 months in the closed season. You may recall that the council
16 closed triggerfish, in Amendment 37, in June through July,
17 during the spawning season. Right now, you have also selected
18 to close the season, the recreational season, January 1 through
19 the end of February.

20
21 I will go ahead and go through all of these. Action 3.2 would
22 modify the recreational bag limit. The council has currently
23 selected to reduce the recreational bag limit to one gray
24 triggerfish per angler per day within the twenty reef fish
25 aggregate bag limit.

26
27 Then Action 3.3 deals with modifying the recreational minimum
28 size limit, and the council's current preferred alternative is
29 Alternative 2, to increase the recreational minimum size limit
30 for gray triggerfish to fifteen inches fork length.

31
32 If we use that suite of alternatives and we think about the
33 council's preferred alternative in Action 2, there is some
34 tables, Table 2.3.6, and that's on page 27, I believe, and you
35 can see here that that suite of alternatives is projected to
36 land a little over 200,000 pounds of triggerfish, and so that is
37 within the council's preferred Action 2, Alternative 1 quota for
38 the recreational sector, and that quota, again, was the 217,100
39 pounds whole weight. Again, that's on Table 2.3.6. I will stop
40 there and see if there is any questions.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any discussion on Action 3?
43 Seeing no discussion, Dr. Simmons.

44
45 **DR. SIMMONS:** We will go to Action 4, which is modify the
46 commercial trip limit. You may recall the council decided not
47 to change the commercial fixed closed season. It's still
48 currently the June 1 through July 31 closed season, and so I'm

1 on page 28.

2
3 The council's current preferred alternative is Preferred
4 Alternative 4, to increase the commercial trip limit for gray
5 triggerfish to sixteen fish per trip. The council -- We have
6 discussed this at several meetings, that the commercial sector
7 wasn't landing their current ACT, and so, in recent times, it's
8 been below the ACT, and the Reef Fish AP suggested this is
9 probably because the trip limit is too low.

10
11 I would note that the 2016 landings, I think they're still
12 preliminary for the commercial sector as well, but they were
13 much closer to the current ACT. They were only 4 percent less,
14 based on the current twelve-fish trip limit, and so the 2016
15 landings were a little bit higher, but still under the current
16 ACT. I will stop there and see if there's any questions.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Mr.
19 Anson.

20
21 **MR. ANSON:** Carrie, there is payback provisions for each sector,
22 correct, in triggerfish? Yes? Thank you.

23
24 **DR. SIMMONS:** Yes, the accountability measures, there is a
25 payback provision, and there is also an in-season accountability
26 measure, where if the Regional Office staff projects, even with
27 an in-season closure, that that ACT will be reached, they will
28 close the fishery. If it goes over, there is a payback
29 provision the following year.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? I
32 have a question. Dr. Simmons, did I understand you correctly to
33 say that, under the current twelve fish, they're only 4 percent
34 under their ACT for last year, on preliminary landings?

35
36 **DR. SIMMONS:** That's correct, for 2016.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** I was just making sure that I heard you
39 correctly. Any further discussion? Okay. Seeing no further
40 discussion, Dr. Simmons.

41
42 **DR. SIMMONS:** That's all I have. I was just going to say, in
43 previous years, there is some information about that on page 28.
44 In 2014, they were 30 percent under. Then, in 2015, they were
45 22 percent below the ACT, and so it just seems like the 2016 was
46 closer to the catch target for the commercial sector. That's
47 all I have. If you want to take a look at the proposed rule,
48 it's in the briefing book materials, and if you have any

1 questions about that.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Ms. Guyas.

4

5 **MS. GUYAS:** On Action 4, it's good to know that we're pretty
6 close on the commercial ACL last year. I guess it's kind of a
7 question that we need to think about over the next couple of
8 days, of do we want to keep the commercial open as long as
9 possible, so that there is bycatch allowance for most of the
10 year, or are we okay with having a potential early closure? I
11 don't know. I'm sure there will be public testimony to that
12 effect, and I see David has got his hand up.

13

14 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Captain Walker.

15

16 **MR. WALKER:** My understanding, from discussion with David Krebs,
17 was he would just as soon see it close early, late in the year,
18 so the markets -- It's more consistent. In the summertime, we
19 want access to the triggerfish for the menu.

20

21 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Anson.

22

23 **MR. ANSON:** David, this might be a question for you. In the
24 snapper fishery, the commercial fishery, they kind of tend
25 toward the smaller-sized fish, for portion control and such, and
26 does that carry over into triggerfish as well? Do they look for
27 a certain sized fish? On the face of it, the bigger fish
28 potentially bring more money, and so, as the fishery improves,
29 there will be greater chances of those people catching a larger-
30 sized fish for part of their limit, and so the fishery could
31 shut down quicker. I think that's what Mara was getting to and
32 Johnny was, I think, starting to allude to as well.

33

34 **MR. WALKER:** There is actually, I think, some folks that wanted
35 to have a 200-pound limit and open during the seasonal type,
36 when folks were down on the coast and wanted to enjoy
37 triggerfish and so forth, and so a fish is -- That's one thing
38 that I had mentioned too, was that I was worried about high-
39 grading. Some of that could have been going on, or still be
40 going on, but everybody seems to be in support of sixteen
41 triggerfish right now, and so I'm just going to stick with that,
42 but I think it's probably going to bring a closure, but it will
43 be later in the year.

44

45 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion?
46 Okay. The codified text is in the briefing book, and this one
47 is going for final action, and so we will need to put our motion
48 up to forward it to the council for final action.

1
2 **MR. SANCHEZ:** So moved.
3

4 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Sanchez is quick on the motions this
5 morning. We will get the motion up on the board. As soon as we
6 get done with this, we will probably go into about a fifteen-
7 minute break, which we're pretty much on schedule so far, which
8 is a good thing.
9

10 **MS. BOSARGE:** While they're getting that on the board, Carrie,
11 in the document, I was looking, and this is not going to affect
12 this motion. This is about outreach and education. I am just
13 trying to be effective with our time here.
14

15 It was talking about how, in the recreational fishery, the last
16 time that we made some changes, we did some outreach and
17 education to make sure that they knew about the size limits and
18 things like that, because there had been a large amount of the
19 landings that were undersized, and so they felt like that there
20 was some outreach and education, and that that outreach did --
21 It says the percent of gray triggerfish harvested less than
22 fourteen inches fork length decreased from 31 percent in 2011
23 and 2012 to 23 percent in 2014 and 2015.
24

25 As we are implementing these size changes again, that's still 23
26 percent undersized fish of the overall landings, and that seems
27 kind of significant to me. Should we maybe try and make sure
28 that we do whatever we can on our side to have some more
29 outreach and education as we go forward with this?
30

31 **DR. SIMMONS:** Yes, I think that's a good point. I think the big
32 push with that was -- I think you may remember we went from a
33 twelve-inch total length to like a fourteen-inch fork length,
34 and I think that was confusing for a while for folks, and that
35 was a big change, to measure by fork length, and so I think that
36 was why there was more of a push at that time to do more
37 outreach, but I can get together with Ms. Muehlstein and we can
38 work on something.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. Is there further
41 discussion? **Mr. Sanchez has motion up on the board to recommend**
42 **to the council to approve Reef Fish Amendment 46 and that it be**
43 **forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and**
44 **implementation, and deem the codified text as necessary and**
45 **appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the**
46 **necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair is given**
47 **the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as**
48 **necessary and appropriate.** Is there a second for this motion?

1 It's seconded by Mr. Walker. **Any opposition to the motion on**
2 **the floor before you? Seeing none, the motion carries.** We will
3 take a break and resume at 10:30.

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

6
7 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** The next action item will be Final Action on
8 Framework Mutton Snapper ACL. With that, we will go to Dr.
9 Froeschke.

10
11 **FINAL ACTION - FRAMEWORK ACTION - MUTTON SNAPPER ACL AND**
12 **MANAGEMENT MEASURES AND GAG COMMERCIAL SIZE LIMIT**

13
14 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** Good morning, and thank you. Before we get
15 started on the document, we do have some public comments, and so
16 I think Emily is going to go through those right now, if that's
17 okay.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Absolutely. Thank you, Emily.

20
21 **SUMMARY OF COMMENTS**

22
23 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you. Since this a framework action, we
24 did what we typically do, which is a produce a video and then
25 also promote that we were taking comment online for this action.
26 We had fifteen members of the public submit comment on this
27 framework action, and I will go through action-by-action and
28 review what we heard.

29
30 Action 1, which considers establishing a Gulf of Mexico
31 apportioned mutton snapper annual catch limit, we heard support
32 for Alternative 1, no action. In Action 2, which looks at
33 modifying the Gulf mutton snapper recreational bag limit, we
34 heard support for the no action alternative, because most trips
35 never harvest more than two to four mutton snapper. Reducing
36 the bag limit won't help the people who have a banner day and
37 should be rewarded just because they've had a really good
38 fishing day.

39
40 We heard support for Alternative 2d, which would establish a
41 five-fish bag limit. We heard that mutton snapper should be
42 removed from the aggregate bag limit in the northern Gulf,
43 because they're a rare harvest there.

44
45 We also heard that another alternative should be added which
46 separates the snapper aggregate into two separate categories.
47 Category 1 should include mutton, cubera, queen, blackfin, and
48 wenchman snapper, and Category 2 should include gray,

1 yellowtail, and silk snapper.

2
3 Moving to Action 3, which considers modifying the mutton snapper
4 minimum size limit in the Gulf, we heard support for the no
5 action alternative, with the rationale provided that larger fish
6 should be protected, and protecting spawning aggregations would
7 yield a better result than changing the size limit. We also
8 heard support for Alternative 3, which would establish an
9 eighteen-inch minimum size limit for mutton snapper.

10
11 Then, finally, moving to Action 4, which considers modifying the
12 commercial gag minimum size limit, we heard support for the
13 preferred alternative, which would increase the commercial
14 minimum size limit to twenty-four inches.

15
16 We also heard one other comment that was not related to the
17 amendment, that the council should close the Western Dry Rocks,
18 along with Riley's Hump. It is a tragedy that the economics of
19 Key West, based on commercial and for-hire fishing, outweigh the
20 science that is suggested to protect these breeding areas. That
21 concludes my report on the comments that we heard for the
22 framework action for modifying mutton snapper and gag
23 management.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any discussion? Seeing none, Dr.
26 Froeschke.

27
28 **REVIEW OF AMENDMENT**

29
30 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Good morning. Just to kind of refresh our
31 memory on this document, there are four actions. We have
32 discussed it at three or four meetings, or maybe more than that,
33 and so we have this scheduled for final action on the agenda.
34 However, we don't have any preferred alternatives selected, and
35 so, if we want to do that, we would like to get some preferreds
36 selected in this.

37
38 I will just start on Action 1. That is on page 12 of the
39 document. This would establish annual catch limits for the Gulf
40 of Mexico apportionment of the mutton snapper. If you recall,
41 there was a stock assessment in 2015. It determined that the
42 stock was not overfished, nor undergoing overfishing, but it did
43 recommend some reductions in ABC and OFL, to ensure that's the
44 case going forward.

45
46 There are two alternatives, and I will try to explain these,
47 just so you're understanding them, in terms of most fish to
48 least fish. Alternative 2 would apply the apportionments, and

1 so the Gulf's apportionment of the stock is 18 percent, and that
2 is the same for either Alternative 2 or 3.

3
4 Option 2a, and there is a table here on page 12, if you want to
5 look at that, and it would apply the ACL/ACT control rule. What
6 we have in Option 2a is there is the Gulf ABC and ACL, and so 2a
7 would set the management target at that value.

8
9 For example, in 2018, it would be 134,424 pounds. This Option
10 2a would remove the Gulf ACT column, that column on the far
11 right, from the management. Right now, it's in there, but we
12 don't currently use it. Option 2b would be to retain that ACT
13 in there, but any accountability measures would not be triggered
14 unless the ACL was exceeded.

15
16 Alternative 3 would set the ACL -- It would apply the ACL/ACT
17 buffer between the ABC and the ACL, and so, like Option 2a,
18 there would not be an ACT. However, the difference is that, if
19 you look at the columns, the Gulf ACL in Alternative 3 is
20 equivalent to the Gulf ACT in Option 2b. The difference is
21 that, for example, in 2018, if you hit or exceeded the 118,000
22 pounds, under Alternative 2b, Option 2b, no accountability
23 measures would be triggered. However, they would be at that
24 level under Alternative 3.

25
26 In terms of allowable fish that can be harvested, Options 2a and
27 2b are equivalent. However, in 2a, you would remove the Gulf
28 ACT from the management, which isn't currently being used.
29 Alternative 3 would reduce the ACL slightly, as compared to
30 Alternative 2, and so I will stop there for questions.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any discussion? Ms. Guyas.

33
34 **MS. GUYAS:** Not a question, but I will throw out a motion. **I**
35 **move that, for Action 1, we select Alternative 2, Option 2a, as**
36 **the preferred alternative.** I will explain once I have a second.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** We have a motion going on the board, and it
39 was seconded by Mr. Sanchez. We will make sure that we get the
40 motion correct, and then Ms. Guyas will give more rationale.

41
42 **MS. GUYAS:** We do need to move away from Alternative 1, and that
43 was what the public comment supported, but we do have an
44 assessment that indicates that we need to change our catch level
45 recommendations, and so Alternative 2 would do that. It would
46 retain the ACL equals ABC, based on this suite of alternatives
47 here, and then also remove the ACT. Since we have an ACT and
48 it's not doing anything, since it has no purpose, I don't see

1 why we should hang onto it. This kind of keeps going with the
2 direction that we've been going with the ABC and the ACL, but it
3 adjusts the limits based on the new science that we have.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion?
6 **Seeing no further discussion, is there any opposition to the**
7 **motion on the floor before you? Seeing no opposition, the**
8 **motion carries.** Dr. Froeschke.

9
10 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Thanks. Let's move to Action 2, which considers
11 modifying the Gulf mutton snapper recreational bag limit. A
12 couple of things to think about. Mutton snapper is within the
13 ten-snapper aggregate. There is a Table 2.2.1, with nine
14 species in there, and one thing to think about is that mutton
15 snapper recreational landings, in the Gulf proper, are extremely
16 low.

17
18 In terms of estimating, for example, how much the catch would be
19 reduced from the recreational sector in the Gulf, you can't do
20 it, because it's virtually nil. The potential things that could
21 be gained from changing, one is the scientific literature
22 suggests there is potential to overharvest, or they're more
23 vulnerable to harvest, when they form these spawning
24 aggregations.

25
26 Right now, you could harvest up to ten fish. You could harvest
27 the whole aggregate bag of mutton snapper if you were on an
28 aggregate, and so reducing that to either three or five, which
29 is the options in Alternative 2, could address that in some way.

30
31 The other potential benefit from doing this is moving towards
32 compatibility with Florida and the South Atlantic's regulations.
33 Florida is the five snapper within the ten aggregate bag limit,
34 and so, in the Keys, where these fish are, that could simplify
35 the enforcement and the angler experience, because they know
36 what rules they are following. Alternative 2, Option 2a, is
37 three fish per person per day, or 2b is five fish per person per
38 day.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there discussion? Mr. Sanchez.

41
42 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. **I would like to make a**
43 **motion that we make Alternative 2, Option 2b, the preferred for**
44 **Action 2.**

45
46 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** We're going to get the motion on the board.
47 It was seconded by Ms. Guyas. The motion looks correct, and it
48 was seconded. Any further discussion? Mr. Swindell.

1
2 **MR. ED SWINDELL:** John, can you give me the reason why the five
3 fish per day is better than the three fish? I really don't
4 understand.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Sanchez.

7
8 **MR. SANCHEZ:** We're just trying to be consistent with what we're
9 doing in south Florida. As you know, depending on which side of
10 U.S. 1 you're fishing on, you can be in multiple jurisdictions,
11 and so we're trying to keep it the way it's going on the south
12 side, in the South Atlantic, and the state. That would be the
13 rationale.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Guyas.

16
17 **MS. GUYAS:** To follow up on that, consistency is a huge request
18 for that area, where this is a fishery. It is extremely
19 confusing when we have different regulations across these
20 jurisdictions, because you can be potentially under four
21 different sets of regulations, depending on what you do, in a
22 single day.

23
24 Another thing we heard at the FWC workshops on this issue, and
25 we had extensive meetings on this. The South Atlantic did as
26 well, and we did hear from a lot of people that wanted to see
27 some kind of reduction. They felt that ten fish is just too
28 many fish recreationally. There was concern about pressure
29 during the spawning months, when these fish are aggregating, and
30 so five fish is kind of where we all landed in a compromise on
31 that, and so moving forward with this would be very helpful,
32 especially down in south Florida and the Keys.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Sanchez.

35
36 **MR. SANCHEZ:** A lot of folks have told me they're tired of
37 having to bring their Philadelphia lawyer with them on the boat
38 to be able to fish in south Florida, and so this would simplify
39 it.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** All right. I'm not going to follow that one
42 up. Any further discussion? **Seeing no further discussion, is**
43 **there any opposition to the motion on the floor before you?**
44 **Seeing no opposition, the motion carries.** Dr. Froeschke.

45
46 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Moving on to Action 3, Action 3 would modify the
47 mutton snapper minimum size limit, and this would apply to both
48 the commercial and the recreational sectors. The current size

1 limit is sixteen inches total length. Alternative 2 would
2 increase this to eighteen inches total length, and Alternative 3
3 would increase it to twenty. Florida recently increased their
4 minimum size limit to eighteen inches.

5
6 There is a chart on Figure 2.3.1, which sort of lays it out in
7 terms of the age and growth, and so obviously, as you increase
8 the size, they are older before they enter the fishery, which
9 could allow more of them to spawn, increase the spawning
10 potential of the stock. It also can increase the average size
11 of the fish, which sometimes backfires on us in unanticipated
12 ways in other species, but that's where we're at. Overall, it
13 seems like the differences are fairly minor. Long-term, they
14 probably would even out.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there discussion? Mr. Boyd.

17
18 **MR. DOUG BOYD:** John, a question for you. What is the primary
19 range of the mutton snapper?

20
21 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Most folks catch them on the south side, in the
22 South Atlantic. They go all the way west to the Tortugas, and
23 they go on up through Florida. Then they diminish in quantity
24 as you go north and north and north, but the heavy concentration
25 is in the Keys. As you go up the Gulf, I don't hear a lot of
26 people -- I mean, there may be some incidental catches, but the
27 directed, directed fishery, it's kind of like a Florida Keys and
28 Miami and up north a little bit north of there fishery type of
29 thing, directed.

30
31 **MR. BOYD:** All right. Thanks.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Ms.
34 Guyas.

35
36 **MS. GUYAS:** I will make a motion that, for Action 3, the
37 preferred alternative be Alternative 2.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. We have a motion going up on the
40 board. Is there a second for this motion? It's seconded by Mr.
41 Sanchez. While they're getting the motion up on the board, it's
42 been seconded. Ms. Guyas, would you like to offer a little
43 rationale?

44
45 **MS. GUYAS:** Again, consistency is very helpful and important
46 here. On the commercial side, we reached out to the longliners
47 about this issue, whether it would be an issue for them, and the
48 comments we got were that it wouldn't be a big issue. The

1 analysis in the document seems to confirm that.

2
3 On the recreational side, changing the minimum size limit was
4 really important on the South Atlantic side for achieving their
5 management goals. It probably wouldn't be as big of an issue
6 over here, because recreational harvest is very, very small from
7 the Gulf, but, again, consistency here would really go a long
8 way towards simplifying management of the species.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further discussion? We have a
11 motion on the board, and it has been seconded. Is there any
12 opposition to the motion on the floor before you? **Seeing no**
13 **opposition, the motion carries.** Dr. Froeschke.

14
15 **DR. FROESCHKE:** There is one more action, switching gears here,
16 and this would modify the commercial gag minimum size limit.
17 Again, here, the objective in the purpose and need is achieving
18 consistency in regulations, and so the commercial minimum size
19 limit is twenty-two inches. The recreational is twenty-four,
20 and they're also twenty-four inches on the South Atlantic.

21
22 This could simplify this, in terms of biological impacts. We
23 manage typically on the SPR, and so the 24 would increase the
24 SPR biological reproductive potential of the stock, and so there
25 could be some minor biological benefits there.

26
27 On the other hand, the tradeoff is additional discards, and we
28 have heard some concern in the past about that, and so there are
29 two alternatives, Alternative 1 being the no action, staying at
30 twenty-two inches, or Alternative 2, which is twenty-four
31 inches. Those are really the only things that would address the
32 purpose and need of achieving consistency, and so that's why
33 there are only two alternatives.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. Is there discussion? Mr.
36 Walker.

37
38 **MR. WALKER:** John, you said there were benefits and
39 consequences, and so which one do you think would be better?

40
41 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, in terms of, if you look at Table 2.5.1,
42 there is some analysis in here, both on the yield per recruit,
43 which indicates that there might be some small advantage at the
44 twenty-two-inch size. However, we typically don't manage based
45 on yield per recruit, because it has a number of assumptions
46 that are unlikely to be met, in reality. We tend to manage on
47 SPR, which indicates that there is a considerable increase in
48 SPR, spawning potential, for the stock at twenty-four as

1 compared to twenty-two.
2
3 **MR. WALKER:** I just mentioned that because I've heard mixed
4 opinions from the commercial. Some like twenty-two, and some
5 like twenty-four, but I like consistency, too.
6
7 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Ms. Guyas.
8
9 **MS. GUYAS:** I saw Chris had his hand up, but I will make a
10 motion and we'll see where it goes. How about that? **I move**
11 **that, in Action 4, we select Alternative 2 as the preferred**
12 **alternative.** I can give my rationale if we get a second.
13
14 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. We have the motion going up on the
15 board, and it was seconded by Mr. Sanchez. We have a motion,
16 and it's been seconded. Is there discussion about the motion?
17
18 **MS. GUYAS:** I would say most of the comments that I think I've
19 gotten from Florida people about this issue have been supportive
20 of twenty-four, on the commercial side, for a couple of reasons.
21 One, it does make the size limit consistent between the Gulf and
22 the South Atlantic, which is helpful. It makes it consistent
23 between recreational and commercial. There is a benefit,
24 potentially, with SPR, which is good. I feel like there was
25 something else that I was going to say, but I can't remember
26 what it is right now, and so I will stop there.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Chris.
29
30 **MR. CHRIS CONKLIN:** Ms. Guyas actually summed up what I was
31 going to say.
32
33 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. All right. Any further
34 discussion? Mr. Swindell.
35
36 **MR. SWINDELL:** Do we have a large amount or a small amount of
37 discards by going to a twenty-four-inch?
38
39 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Guyas.
40
41 **MS. GUYAS:** I think it's in the document, but I think most of
42 the fish that are being harvested commercially are twenty-four
43 inches are larger. Is that right, John?
44
45 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Yes. Greater than 95 percent, I believe they
46 are, and so discards doesn't seem to be a big issue.
47
48 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion?

1 **Seeing no further discussion, is there any opposition to the**
2 **motion on the floor before you? Seeing none, the motion**
3 **carries. Dr. Froeschke.**

4
5 **DR. FROESCHKE:** That's what I've got for mutton snapper.
6 Thanks.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay, and so the codified text is in your
9 briefing book, under Tab B, Number 6. We will need to have a
10 motion to forward it to the Full Council.

11
12 **MR. SANCHEZ:** So moved.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Sanchez is on that motion this morning.
15 Ms. Levy.

16
17 **MS. LEVY:** Just to point out that you have codified text, but,
18 since you didn't have any preferred alternatives, it was sort of
19 a placeholder, and so it had the sections that would need to be
20 changed, and I'm assuming that we would have revised codified
21 text for you to look at with the preferreds in there by Full
22 Council.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. So noted. Mr. Sanchez.

25
26 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I promise to make some motions later that probably
27 won't fare so well.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. We have a motion by Mr. Sanchez. Do we
30 have a second for this motion? Seconded by Mr. Anson. Thank
31 you. The motion reads to recommend to the council to approve
32 Framework Modifications to Mutton ACL and Management Measures
33 and Gag Commercial Size Limit and that it be forwarded to the
34 council -- That it be forwarded to the council for final action
35 -- We have been reading the rest of it in there, but I don't
36 know where I got sidetracked on it. I was trying to compare my
37 notes from the last couple of final actions, but -- Okay. We
38 have a motion on the board, and I think we're pretty clear on
39 what the intent is. That it be forwarded to the council for
40 final action and that --

41
42 We will have to make some adjustments to the codified text, as
43 Ms. Levy noted, and then I guess, at that point, we will send it
44 to the Secretary for implementation. We have a motion. Are you
45 okay with it, Ms. Levy, or do we need to add that part in there?

46
47 **MS. LEVY:** If you don't put the codified text piece in there
48 now, then you're going to have to have the council approve this

1 motion or do a substitute that has it in it. I would just add
2 it all, with the knowledge that you're going to see updated
3 codified text.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Recommend that the council approve
6 Framework Action Mutton Snapper ACL and Management Measures and
7 Gag Commercial Size Limit and that it be forwarded to the
8 Council for final action and sent to the Secretary of Commerce
9 for review and implementation, and deem the codified text as
10 necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to
11 make the necessary changes in the document. The Council Chair
12 is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text
13 as necessary and appropriate. We have a motion, and it's been
14 seconded. **Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing no**
15 **opposition, the motion carries.** Dr. Froeschke, does this
16 complete everything for that item?

17
18 **DR. FROESCHKE:** It does, yes.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. With that, we will shift gears to
21 our next action item, which will be Tab B, Number 7, Options
22 Paper, Update Assessment and Framework Action to Adjust Greater
23 Amberjack ACL. We have a review of the assessment by Dr.
24 Barbieri.

25
26 **OPTIONS PAPER - UPDATE ASSESSMENT AND FRAMEWORK ACTION TO ADJUST**
27 **GREATER AMBERJACK ACL**
28 **REVIEW OF UPDATE ASSESSMENT AND ABC RECOMMENDATIONS**

29
30 **DR. LUIZ BARBIERI:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Here is a summary
31 presentation of the greater amberjack stock assessment update.
32 This is an update of SEDAR 33 that was the SEDAR assessment that
33 dealt with greater amberjack and gag grouper. This update here
34 includes data through 2015, with actually 2016 preliminary data
35 included there as well.

36
37 I want to point out that this presentation is really a very
38 brief summary of the assessment. This was a full-blown update
39 assessment that included a number of very, very detailed
40 analysis, and Dr. Nancie Cummings from the Science Center
41 conducted the update assessment.

42
43 What I am going to present here is really a very abbreviated
44 summary and then present to you what the recommendations came
45 out, in terms of catch advice, from the SSC as a result of the
46 assessment and then try and discuss some of the factors that may
47 have contributed to changes in the stock status and the outlook
48 with greater amberjack populations in the Gulf as a result of

1 this assessment relative to the benchmark that was conducted a
2 few years back.

3
4 Here is just a review of the final outcome that came out of
5 SEDAR 33, the benchmark assessment. I think it was conducted
6 three or four years ago, and the status there turned out to be
7 still not rebuilt, and so the stock is still overfished, and
8 unfortunately also still undergoing overfishing.

9
10 Needless to say, one of those outcomes that we don't like to
11 see, but that was the result of that assessment, and so those
12 data series go through 2011, I believe, and this assessment now
13 updates all the data series through 2015 and is inclusive of
14 2016, as far as the preliminary data is concerned.

15
16 I am going to go very briefly, and please feel free to interrupt
17 and ask questions, if you allow it, Mr. Chairman, if you have
18 specific questions. I am going to go very, very briefly over
19 some of the main data inputs. In these graphs, you are going to
20 see that you have, in orange or red, is the update assessment
21 results. In blue -- Actually, in this case, I think it's the
22 opposite. This one is SEDAR 33 is in red, or orange, and the
23 blue is the update.

24
25 Right there, you have a time series that shows the landings, the
26 commercial landings. They're basically identical. The time
27 series, going all the way back, was revised, applying the new
28 methodologies that have been identified by the SEDAR best
29 practices workshop and report. They turned out to be very, very
30 similar, with a few exceptions, as you can see there on the
31 board.

32
33 Here, the charter and private angler landings, we had more
34 changes in these data inputs than with the other ones, the
35 commercial ones, and, first of all, let me refresh your memory
36 that for SEDAR 33 that the assessment was conducted with a
37 combined charter and private rec as one combined fleet, and so
38 this is a combination of both, and you can see there that there
39 were some differences between this assessment and the SEDAR 33,
40 in that, basically, for the entire time series, the team applied
41 the best practices, the SEDAR best practices, for how to treat
42 the data and how to generate those estimates and that this is
43 then considered, in that sense, an improvement from the last
44 assessment, but that those improvements cause some differences
45 in how the data showed up, and so, for data pre-1980, the
46 application of the data best practices methodologies actually
47 caused a little change there in the historical perspective of
48 how the fleet landed, how much the fleet landed, and then going

1 beyond.

2

3 There is a stratification issue there has to do with application
4 of the conversion factors between APAIS from -- The MRFSS/MRIP
5 before and after the APAIS calibration, and APAIS, by the way,
6 is the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, and so that is the
7 MRIP survey that's done at the dockside, that estimates catch
8 per unit of effort. This calibration between those estimation
9 methods for the assessment caused some changes there that you
10 can see on the board.

11

12 It's kind of like the same story for headboats, with the
13 exception that the change is much more pronounced for the way
14 that the data, the headboat data, was treated in SEDAR 33 and by
15 following this SEDAR best practices methodologies for the
16 update, you end up with a distribution of landings there that is
17 much, much lower than was used in SEDAR 33, and the assessment
18 team recommended that SEDAR best practices actually revisit that
19 decision of how the headboat fleet catches are being handled in
20 that historic period, because there might be issues there that
21 still need to be dealt with.

22

23 I am trying not to get too much into the weeds here, but
24 obviously we want to look at the trends in the indices of
25 abundance. In this case, my eyes are not what they used to be,
26 and I think SEDAR 33 is red and the update is blue.

27

28 For the commercial sector, the hand-line and the longline -- By
29 the way, the hand-line is responsible for the vast majority --
30 About 90 percent or a little more of the commercial landings are
31 actually coming out of the hand-line, and only a small portion
32 from the commercial longline, but, one or the other, the
33 introduction of the IFQ program into the Gulf has actually
34 impacted, to some extent, the targeting of greater amberjack,
35 and the catchabilities in those time series had to be looked at
36 more carefully.

37

38 You are going to see there a break on the two upper graphs in
39 the data that goes up to what I believe is 2011. Then, from
40 that point forward, it's separate, and so those two series had
41 to be handled -- Those inputs, the data series going into the
42 assessment, had to be handled as two separate series, because
43 they are not necessarily comparable in the way that they were
44 informing abundance of greater amberjack as a result of this
45 index.

46

47 Then in the bottom, there are not really that many changes
48 regarding the recreational, which includes, of course, for-hire

1 as well as the headboat, but I want to call your attention to
2 the fact that, from SEDAR 33, which had already shown a fairly
3 flat abundance trend, meaning no significant increase, nothing
4 major showing any major problems, but no upward trend to say
5 that abundance had been increasing.

6
7 When the data series was expanded to include the most recent
8 data in this update, you see that that trend is pretty much flat
9 as well. We're going to refer back to this later on, as we
10 start discussing the outcomes of this assessment.

11
12 Kind of sort of the same thing for the fits to the surveys.
13 There are only two surveys that capture enough of the greater
14 amberjack abundance metrics to provide information, fishery-
15 independent information, on their abundance over time. This is
16 the ideal, kind of like the gold standard that we use, in terms
17 of tuning the model, because fishery-independent indices are not
18 dependent, of course, on how targeting and market forces and all
19 sorts of other issues, changes in selectivity and catchability
20 in the fleet, could be impacting the way that we interpret these
21 temporary changes in abundance.

22
23 The bottom line, the take-home message there, is that, overall,
24 it's highly variable. It's relatively noisy, but neither of
25 those surveys actually show any significant increase in
26 abundance either, and so they are really flat. Again, nothing
27 indicating increasing abundance.

28
29 Then, when you look at the recruitment, and so this is the age-
30 zero recruits, as estimated by the model, that provide the input
31 of young fish into the population, and it gives you an idea of
32 what the estimates are for what those recruitment trends would
33 be over time.

34
35 If you look at the graph on the left, you are going to see that
36 the update is in blue, and the SEDAR 33 benchmark is in orange,
37 or red, and you can see the difference there in the terminal
38 year. In SEDAR 33, there was an expectation of an input of
39 recruits that was much, much higher than what the SEDAR 33
40 estimated.

41
42 It's hard to explain why this is happening. There are
43 combinations of reasons that could be discussed, and the SSC
44 tried to discuss this, to explore this, as extensively as it
45 could in trying to explore the reasons, but the bottom line is
46 that those recruitment estimates turned out to be much lower
47 than originally expected when you looked at SEDAR 33.

48

1 Here is the bottom line, in terms of biomass status on the left.
2 That is a trajectory there over time, to 2016, of the biomass of
3 the stock. In blue is the update. In red, or orange, is SEDAR
4 33, and so you can see that, in terms of any progress that this
5 stock could or should have made in terms of increases in
6 biomass, that did not materialize, as far as this update is
7 concerned.

8
9 Then, on the right, you have a trajectory of a fishing mortality
10 relative to the reference point of the fishing mortality, the
11 maximum fishing mortality threshold, and you can see that the
12 exploitation status of the stock has also changed, with an
13 estimated increase in exploitation when compared to the previous
14 benchmark assessment.

15
16 Unfortunately, it's really not just good news, in the sense of
17 stayed we on track, but this update shows an even more negative
18 outlook than we had seen in SEDAR 33. Madam Chair was actually
19 in attendance to our meeting, and hopefully some of you had the
20 opportunity to listen is as well to the webinar.

21
22 The SSC had a lot of discussion. This took a big portion of a
23 day, or most of it, in terms of discussion, between the long
24 presentation with all the discussions, as well as the SSC trying
25 to understand all the reasoning, and there were questions
26 coming. For the presentation, there were different scenarios
27 evaluated, and so this was fully explored. Madam Chair, for
28 example, presented a few questions, and was presented with an
29 additional scenarios later that day that sort of explored some
30 of those things, but, unfortunately, none of those explorations
31 showed any improvement in the results from what you see here.

32
33 The SSC proceeded then with catch advice for greater amberjack,
34 and, basically, we looked at the overfishing limit, the OFL, and
35 the ABC yield streams as presented in the assessment. Given the
36 high uncertainty that we estimated associated with this
37 assessment, and the fact that we were really still expecting
38 some guidance from you regarding how we want to proceed, as far
39 as a rebuilding plan for greater amberjack, the SSC then
40 refrained from presenting a full, long time series of rebuilding
41 for greater amberjack and the yields that would lead you, show
42 you, when the stock might be likely to rebuild, and we decided
43 to present you just this three-year scenario for both OFL and
44 ABC, in the hopes that we can revisit this and perhaps do
45 something else, after we get more guidance from you regarding
46 how you want to handle this rebuilding plan for greater
47 amberjack.

48

1 Here, I have to thank the Science Center team, and especially
2 Nancie Cummings, for putting this together. They really
3 explored and discussed this internally, and this was very
4 beneficial at the SSC meeting, for the discussions that we had,
5 in trying to explore why the differences and why the more
6 negative outcome of this assessment.

7
8 Over there, you see the reasons that they brought up as the most
9 likely ones, the harvest overages that have happened, and so, in
10 terms of the overfishing limits, what could have been exceeded,
11 and I was discussing that we had a lot of uncertainty at the SSC
12 meeting about what those overages really were, what the official
13 numbers were versus what came out, and so I discussed this
14 briefly with Dr. Porch, and I don't know if you want to add
15 anything to this, Clay, if there is anything to add.

16
17 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Sure. Obviously the update assessment itself
18 was a little less optimistic, and the stock appears a little
19 less productive, but the big difference is that big recruitment
20 that had been estimated for the last year, in SEDAR 33, for the
21 last year -- You usually don't have a whole lot of data to
22 determine that, because most of the information we have on
23 recruitment strength comes from the age composition, but
24 amberjack don't enter the fishery until they're three, four, or
25 five years old, and so you really don't have much information on
26 the recruitment in the last year. Those are typically not
27 estimated well.

28
29 The other thing that happened is, if you looked at the OFLs that
30 came out of SEDAR 33, we actually exceeded that OFL in 2013, in
31 2014, and 2015, and so the combination of the fact that that
32 high recruitment didn't pan out and the fact that we caught more
33 fish, we landed more fish, than the OFLs from SEDAR 33,
34 contributed to make the stock kind of flat-line instead of
35 increase, like was projected during SEDAR 33. Consequently, now
36 we're behind the rebuilding schedule, and so, if you want to get
37 back on schedule, you have to take a bigger hit.

38
39 **DR. BARBIERI:** Thank you for that, Clay. Unless there are any
40 additional questions, Mr. Chairman, I think this completes my
41 presentation, and I will be glad to rewind to any of the
42 previous slides, if you have some questions that you want me to
43 explore.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. I have several, but I will hold them
46 until the end. Does anybody have any questions? Mr. Walker.

47
48 **MR. WALKER:** Thanks, Luiz. I had a question on your longline

1 fleet, the landings. I would think, from what I've seen, it
2 would have been more the longlining would have landed amberjack,
3 out around a hundred fathoms, versus the twenty-fathoms, or
4 maybe more, for the red grouper fishery, from what I've seen.
5 Did you have a breakdown of the longline catch in which fathom
6 of water?

7
8 **DR. BARBIERI:** To be perfectly honest with you, I don't really
9 know. I don't recall that in that level of detail, and I don't
10 know if you do, Clay.

11
12 **MR. WALKER:** I'm just going to make a comment. Most of them
13 that I've seen landed have been when longline gear was going
14 down in deep water, and the amberjack would hit the bait going
15 down, but I have not heard much of that from the grouper
16 industry.

17
18 **DR. BARBIERI:** I want to reemphasize, right, that the longline
19 landings here represent less than 10 percent of the total
20 landings, the commercial landings, for greater amberjack, one.
21 Two, remember that this is an update, and so there are some
22 constraints in terms of how you handle some of those data
23 inputs, and so this is, with the exceptions of the modifications
24 that were recommended by the SEDAR best practices, following the
25 same principles that had been applied for SEDAR 33.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Are there further questions?
28 Okay. My turn. Slide Number 10. It's about the second or
29 third one from the end. Help me understand. The graph on the
30 right has got a red squiggly line and a blue squiggly line. Why
31 don't they line up better? I mean, it seems like, from 1990 to
32 current, it's way off between the projection of SEDAR 33 and the
33 update. Can you shed some light on that, as to why?

34
35 **DR. BARBIERI:** There are several reasons for this, but let me
36 emphasize that I believe that main ones -- Then I will ask Clay
37 to jump in and add anything from his perspective as well.
38 Number one, remember that SEDAR 33 had data up to 2011. Here,
39 you have an expanded time series, and so there is additional
40 information that provided the model with additional inputs on
41 the condition of the stock.

42
43 The exploitation rate, when you think about it, it makes sense
44 that it would go up, because the recruitment was estimated to be
45 much lower, and so, if you have similar fishing mortality rates
46 over a population that is not as large, that's going to be a
47 higher exploitation than before, but that's one reason right
48 there for the second part of the time series.

1
2 In the first part, it's really the way that I believe some of
3 those data inputs for headboat and for the recreational,
4 following the SEDAR best practices recommendations, were
5 handled. Those caused really the exploitation back then to be
6 considered lower than it has been estimated by SEDAR 33.
7 Anything to add, Clay?

8
9 **DR. PORCH:** Not much. You're right. Basically, the assessment
10 estimates that the abundance of amberjack is a little lower than
11 it was estimated in SEDAR 33, but you're getting the same
12 catches, and so that means that the exploitation rate, the
13 fraction taken by fishing, must have been a little bit higher to
14 get the same catch with a lower abundance.

15
16 The other thing to keep in mind is, regarding the historical
17 period and the difference there, we actually ran a sensitivity
18 run, where we put the same catches as were used for SEDAR 33
19 historically and got virtually the same result for the bottom
20 line, and so that wouldn't have changed the advice that's been
21 given now if we had used the historical catches the way they had
22 been done before.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. I have one more comment, and not
25 necessarily a question. I spend a lot of time offshore
26 nowadays, because the bottom fishing thing just ain't working
27 out so well, and so, when you're way offshore and run across a
28 big barrel floating in the water -- You always run across them,
29 and you see a bunch of little fish. If you get looking at those
30 little fish, it's usually little baby triggerfish and little
31 baby jacks.

32
33 I don't ever see any snappers, and I don't ever see any
34 groupers, but both triggerfish and amberjack have similar stock
35 assessments and things going on. I think there is something
36 missed in that, somewhere, somehow. I don't know what the
37 answer is, but it's mighty coincidental that you get offshore,
38 around that sargassum grass or some type of debris floating,
39 that those are the two fish that you see predominantly offshore.

40
41 I just can't help but think that both these assessments aren't
42 the best in the world, and they seem to be connected somehow,
43 and I don't know what the answer is, but hopefully, but putting
44 it out there, it will provoke a little thought, and maybe
45 somebody can find something to move on with it. With that, Dr.
46 Crabtree.

47
48 **DR. BARBIERI:** May I just address that real quickly? Just to

1 say that those are good points, I think, Mr. Chairman, and those
2 are good suggestions to be explored. I would imagine that the
3 next step, whenever that is, in terms of assessing this stock
4 again, is to go for another benchmark assessment.
5

6 In that case, all sorts of data explorations would be possible,
7 and, by the way, there are data streams coming in right now, at
8 least in the northern and eastern Gulf, that -- There is a lot
9 of additional sampling that is associated with the post-oil
10 spill restoration funding. We are actually talking to some of
11 my colleagues in the other states, and we want to have a
12 workshop this summer to kind of exchange information and help
13 calibrate how we can coordinate provision of all of this
14 additional data to the process, so it starts getting included
15 into these stock assessments.
16

17 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. I saw a hand over there. Dr.
18 Crabtree.
19

20 **DR. CRABTREE:** Thanks, Dr. Barbieri. The shift in the fishing
21 patterns that coincides with the IFQ program, and I guess it's
22 with the grouper/tilefish IFQ program that that lines up with
23 more, and is there much discussion as to what caused that or how
24 that worked, or is that just a big unknown?
25

26 **DR. BARBIERI:** I would say that, in terms of any direct
27 objective indication, we didn't get there, but there was a lot
28 of discussion at the SSC meeting about this topic, because you
29 may remember that, at this last meeting, we had actually a
30 number of presentations from the Socioeconomic Panel and some
31 other folks that had been conducting studies focused on the
32 five-year evaluation of the grouper/tilefish IFQ program.
33

34 Some of those presentations, even though they are socioeconomic,
35 they are really, really helpful to the SSC in understanding how
36 implementation of the IFQ would be causing, in some cases, these
37 unintended consequences of shifts in targeting that would
38 increase, and, actually, the day before Nancie gave her
39 presentation on this assessment, one of the issues that came up
40 during discussion was relative to a perception that there would
41 be some shift towards amberjack, when you look at the patterns
42 there that are coming out of the IFQ program. No, we couldn't
43 really put our finger on it completely, but there is different
44 lines of evidence, basically, pointing to the fact that that was
45 a factor.
46

47 **DR. CRABTREE:** Is there enough ageing data to indicate whether
48 we're seeing a lot of truncation in the age distribution or not?

1
2 **DR. BARBIERI:** Unfortunately, no. Ageing amberjack, to begin
3 with, is more of an art than a science. It's difficult, but the
4 biological sampling for amberjack hasn't really produced a whole
5 lot of ages.

6
7 Now, remember that this model is capable of integrating length
8 information as well, and so, in terms of actually the
9 selectivity, it should be providing a more realistic picture of
10 what was going on there, but, in terms of having good
11 information, a good idea of the age composition of the
12 population, I don't think so.

13
14 **DR. CRABTREE:** I look at the abundance indices, and they seem to
15 only go back to about, at the most, 1986, and they're all pretty
16 flat, with the exception of the headboat index, which was higher
17 in the mid-1980s and then fell off, but not a lot, in the
18 indices, and so it seems like what is driving all of this is the
19 fishery was pretty steady.

20
21 The landings went way up in the early 1980s, and then they came
22 down, and they have stayed down ever since, and that really
23 seems to be driving the whole thing. We used to catch more of
24 them in the 1980s, and we're not catching as many now, and we
25 weren't catching as many even before we started closures and the
26 heavy regulations, it seems like.

27
28 **DR. BARBIERI:** But again, just to reemphasize the issue of
29 uncertainty here and data limitations. Stock assessments try to
30 use models to try and interpolate some of those data gaps that
31 may exist, but, in the case of amberjack, the gaps are very
32 large. In terms of us having an understanding of the biological
33 processes, think about this, because this fish is going to be
34 growing. It's going to be reaching sexual maturity and
35 spawning.

36
37 There are recruitment processes, and so, when you look at the
38 entire Gulf of Mexico basin and the way that this species is
39 distributed and the fact that it moves around quite a bit, it
40 really does -- It's not conducive of good survey information and
41 good biological sampling, unfortunately.

42
43 I am bringing this up just because, in a way, when we evaluate,
44 and this might be a valid discussion for the SSC to have, under
45 your guidance, is, when we evaluate what it would take to come
46 up with a good estimate, with a good assessment, for amberjack,
47 it might be a bigger lift than we realize or that we might have
48 for other stocks, because this is something that provides -- It

1 has a lot of challenges.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Clay.

4

5 **DR. PORCH:** I wanted to point out that you also see that big dip
6 in the MRFSS index as well, and so both the headboat and the
7 MRFSS, the only ones that go far enough back, show that big drop
8 from the 1980s, and we had this discussion back when we were
9 using production models and we weren't confident in the
10 projection results, but, on first principles, if you believe the
11 indices at all, you're showing something like a four or fivefold
12 reduction from the early period, which suggests that the stock
13 would be overfished, if you looked at nothing but the indices.

14

15 Just to comment on Johnny's Greene point, one other thing that
16 amberjack and gray triggerfish have in common is they started
17 getting hammered in the 1980s and 1990s. You see the huge spike
18 in landings at that time, and so, as things like red snapper
19 were down, people started targeting gray triggerfish and
20 amberjack, and a lot of people figured out that they eat pretty
21 well, and so the landings really spiked up then, and that would
22 explain why you're seeing so many stocks like this falling so
23 quickly.

24

25 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Ms. Bosarge.

26

27 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just going to say
28 that, as you have that workshop, I have heard now from fishermen
29 on the water, and from scientists, in totally separate
30 conversations, this mention of the sargassum and how that could
31 interplay with recruitment and other things in this fishery.

32

33 I hope we will explore that and understand that better and see
34 if there is some way to get a better grip on that. I don't know
35 that we can do anything about it, but understanding it is always
36 good, understanding that life history and having a better feel
37 for that fishery, but my bigger question is, on that graph right
38 there, the one on the left -- As we made some changes -- I mean,
39 that looks like one heck of a hill to climb, to get back to
40 where we were in the 1950s and 1960s, in that spawning output
41 graph.

42

43 I hope we can get there, but my question is how confident are we
44 in that data from 1950 and 1960 that is telling us that that's
45 where the spawning output was and that's where we need to try
46 and get back to?

47

48 **DR. BARBIERI:** Not very confident, and I will let you jump in

1 later, but not very confident is the short answer. Keep in mind
2 that the model can be configured and parameterized in a way that
3 different parts of the data series actually have different
4 weights, in terms of how much that information content from
5 different time periods actually influences the final outcome.

6
7 Usually, within the model, that is done by the coefficient of
8 variation, and so just the variability around those estimates,
9 and so those things do help, to some extent, account for those
10 things, one.

11
12 Two, and I really want to make this point, because serving on
13 the South Atlantic SSC as well and seeing some of the challenges
14 that we have been facing over there with some stocks, is we need
15 to be careful looking at those things also, because those
16 estimates of reference points actually reflect a stock that is
17 highly productive.

18
19 When you account for the magnitude of landings -- Not highly
20 productive compared to some other species, but it's really that,
21 when you start lowering those bars there to be met, those will
22 be reflected, directly or indirectly, in your catch advice going
23 into the future, because you basically say how much do you
24 expect.

25
26 Just to give you an example, and this is an issue that has been
27 going on in the South Atlantic with red snapper, we ended up
28 going from an MSY estimate of 2.5 million pounds to 1.5, and now
29 we're at 750,000 pounds. The moment that we eliminated, that we
30 removed from the model, the inputs that account for all of those
31 harvests in the early period, the productivity of the stock was
32 estimated -- The fish were not there if they are not harvested,
33 right?

34
35 Now, as we try to provide catch advice, the SSC is dealing with
36 ABCs that are really, really low, because we believed the
37 productivity of that stock was underestimated by the model, and
38 so it's just something to keep in mind, because this is
39 something that, throughout my career, I always hear about, that,
40 oh my gosh, we have to climb up to that point.

41
42 Keep in mind that the reference points are not necessarily at
43 that point. They're usually half of that, and MSY is usually
44 about 50 percent of virgin stock size, and so we don't have to
45 go back to those conditions. It's just reaching a level that is
46 considered sustainable. I don't know if you have anything to
47 add, Clay.

48

1 **DR. PORCH:** Thanks, Dr. Barbieri. Just to reiterate that we're
2 actually not trying to get back to the levels of the 1950s. The
3 reference point, that F 30 percent, would roughly correspond to
4 about a third of that, a little less than a third of that,
5 actually, and so you can imagine a horizontal line going across
6 -- Is that nine or something up there, or eight? It's about a
7 third of that that you would want to rebuild to.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Walker.

10
11 **MR. WALKER:** I was just going to echo what Clay had mentioned
12 earlier, that, in the later 1980s and 1990s, the abundance of
13 snapper was really low, and amberjack and triggerfish -- A lot
14 of fishermen, including myself, fished for amberjack, and we
15 fished from -- We would start fishing in Florida, and I would
16 fish all the way to Texas.

17
18 I was just going to say that a lot of those numbers -- Then you
19 had the size limits that came along. Then they got a little
20 harder to catch. Basically, we were just throwing back too many
21 fish to catch the thirty-six-inch fish. When the trip limits
22 came, people didn't target them quite as much.

23
24 On the sargassum, I have also noticed, as Johnny mentioned, the
25 amberjack and triggerfish and almaco jacks. There's a lot of
26 species, like banded rudderfish. There's just several different
27 species in that.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Anson.

30
31 **MR. ANSON:** Similar to what Johnny had talked about, I guess,
32 and what, Clay, you had brought up regarding the timeline of the
33 fishery and how it appears, because of the snapper, the low
34 abundance of snapper, that there might have been some effort
35 shifting, there are some other factors that could be going on
36 there too that we deal with in other fish, and that is the
37 technology has increased and the boats, the ability for folks to
38 get offshore to access these fish, particularly in the northern
39 Gulf and those areas' artificial habitats, the oil and gas rigs.

40
41 Those things are issues that muddy up the water, I guess, but,
42 in light of the little bit more complex life history that
43 amberjack have and these other factors and such, it's just more
44 to think about, I guess, as to how do you approach the data,
45 particularly since it is a little bit bordering on a data-poor
46 species, I guess, relative at least to red snapper.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Chris.

1
2 **MR. CONKLIN:** Thanks. Dr. Porch, in relation to Leann's
3 comments, I think, what target year are you guys trying to get
4 rebuilt back to? Is it somewhere around like the 1980 number is
5 what you're looking at?

6
7 **DR. PORCH:** I haven't thought about it in terms of a year range,
8 but it's probably something after the 1980s, but, basically,
9 it's around 30 percent of the unfished spawning biomass level,
10 and so you would have to interpret it on the graph, and that
11 looks like that would be somewhere around the middle of the
12 1980s, more or less.

13
14 **MR. CONKLIN:** Thanks. I just wanted to clarify that.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Mr. Boyd, Mr. Gregory, and then Dr.
17 Froeschke.

18
19 **MR. BOYD:** Dr. Barbieri, this is a dramatic drop over time. I
20 can't read the graph, but the mid-1950s, around that time, until
21 today. Are there any other factors that could be affecting this
22 stock other than fishing pressure?

23
24 **DR. BARBIERI:** Absolutely. The short answer is yes. There are
25 all sorts of ecosystem-level factors that have not been
26 accounted for in this assessment, of course not explicitly, like
27 climate change and a whole number of other biological and
28 ecological factors that influence fish populations, and we do
29 our best, in terms of sampling and trying to get as much
30 information as we can to understand what explains the dynamics.

31
32 The agency has actually been moving in that direction and being
33 more exploratory of integrating more of these non-fishing
34 ecological and biological factors, and environmental as well,
35 more explicitly into this ecosystem model.

36
37 There is a program called the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment
38 that we have at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center that has
39 been exploring a number of these options. I don't think we are
40 there, at the point that we can incorporate those into single-
41 species assessments for catch advice, but at least we have an
42 effort in place to help understand more what's going on.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Gregory.

45
46 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** If we could, could we go to Slide
47 Number 3? I think answers Chris's question. That one. The
48 horizontal line on the left is the line where, if we were above

1 that line, we would not be overfished. That line is about 1980.

2
3 Prior to 1980 or 1981, there wasn't much, if any, commercial
4 fishery for greater amberjack, and that's the year it spiked. I
5 don't know what happened. I don't know if it was the blackened
6 fish craze, but, prior to that, because of the worms and stuff
7 that are in amberjack, most people weren't eating it, I don't
8 think as a private angler or commercially, and I know, in the
9 Keys, it was a catch-and-release fishery, for the most part.

10
11 Our first regulations of a size limit for commercial, I think,
12 went in in 1989 or 1990, and, at that time, I had the impression
13 that amberjack was pretty much a virgin-type population, prior
14 to the commercial fishery really hitting it hard, and so it's
15 surprising to me that it was declining prior to then, and then
16 the commercial fishery, the incipient commercial fishery, just
17 started and drove it into an overfished condition, and it has
18 remained there.

19
20 I can't help but be kind of frustrated that it's those
21 extrapolated landings in the 1950s and 1960s, and I know -- I
22 talked about this at the SSC, and those are calibrated in the
23 best practices thing, but, every time you use those data,
24 whether it's the red snapper fishery in the Atlantic side or
25 here, you end up with the same story. I think, as long as we
26 use those extrapolated U.S. Fish and Wildlife sport fishing and
27 hunting survey data, we're going to be in this position.

28
29 This is just my anecdotal opinion, because I thought for sure
30 that we almost had a virgin fishery back prior to 1980, and this
31 says that we have to get back to 1980 levels, which would, in
32 essence, be equivalent to not having a commercial fishery at
33 all, which, to me, seems like a very, very difficult task to
34 accomplish.

35
36 **DR. BARBIERI:** If I may, Mr. Chairman, just to that point, and
37 not to overextend this discussion, but, unfortunately, time is
38 not working to our advantage here, because we don't have as long
39 of a time series of reliable data as they do in some other
40 places.

41
42 I was talking to a colleague in Scotland a couple of months ago,
43 and they have fairly accurate and reliable landings data, going
44 back to the late 1850s. That really gives us a degree of
45 confidence that you don't have to do a lot of those
46 extrapolations. Unfortunately for us, that is not the case.
47 Now, add to that the uncertainty associated with the species ID
48 that we have for the amberjack complex, and it's a lot of

1 uncertainty that, unfortunately, is very hard to account for.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Dr. Froeschke.

4

5 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I was just going to point out Slide 3 in the
6 presentation, but, just to follow that point through, on Slide
7 10, you were asking about that. If you take the number, the
8 spawning output number, in the terminal year and look at that
9 number in 1980 and divide it by my rough math, we would need
10 about a four or fivefold increase in spawning output now
11 relative to what was available in 1980.

12

13 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. Any further discussion?
14 Just to clarify my comment about the amberjack and triggerfish
15 being in the sargassum, I am not necessarily thinking that we
16 need to have somebody run out there and count the fish on the
17 grass line somewhere, although I would be glad to do it.

18

19 I think my point is that those fish go somewhere in that pelagic
20 zone, and I just feel like that needs to be explored more,
21 because you don't ever see a grouper that's that long swimming
22 down a grass line or anything. It's just a handful of jack
23 species and the triggerfish, and those fish are going somewhere,
24 and I don't know if it's being captured.

25

26 Hopefully, as we move forward, we can try to work toward that a
27 little bit. With that, is there any other comments for Dr.
28 Barbieri? Okay. Seeing none, we will pick back up with our
29 schedule.

30

31 **DR. BARBIERI:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

32

33 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Emily, I guess, will do the
34 comments next.

35

36

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

37

38 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We received a number
39 of comments after the recreational season closure for greater
40 amberjack was announced. We got sort of a flurry of public
41 comment that came in, and so we did something which is a little
42 bit non-traditional, and we decided to open up one of our
43 electronic comment forms to this issue.

44

45 I just wanted to make sure that we basically opened up a forum
46 where people could sort of express their thoughts about current
47 amberjack management, and so this is not specific to the options
48 paper that you guys are looking at. This is really just the

1 comments that we heard sort of as a result of the recreational
2 closure, and so I just wanted to clarify that.

3
4 We actually had thirty-five members of the public submit
5 comment, and most of the comments that were directed towards a
6 couple of things. There are more amberjack in the Gulf than the
7 science is reporting was the common theme that we continuously
8 heard, and some of the rationale that we heard was that it's
9 really hard to get a bait past the amberjacks, that they're so
10 abundant, that there is no way that the science is accurate, and
11 it must be a smokescreen used to cover lobbyist kickbacks.

12
13 Near Destin, Florida, the amberjack are just under thirty-four
14 inches and are plentiful, and so somebody had mentioned that all
15 of the amberjack that are right under the current size limit are
16 everywhere. The stock assessment data and techniques need to be
17 updated, and amberjack are more plentiful now than they have
18 ever been.

19
20 We also heard that the recreational data collection program must
21 be overestimating harvest. There is no way that the
22 recreational sector was a million pounds over last year's annual
23 catch limit. The data collection system needs to be improved.
24 It doesn't legitimately count the amount of fish that are being
25 harvested.

26
27 We also heard that the commercial and for-hire fishermen need
28 their amberjack quotas cut. We also heard that the commercial
29 fishing industry should continue to be allowed to provide fish
30 for the general public. Greater amberjack should be opened
31 year-round, and greater amberjack should be allocated 85 percent
32 recreational and 15 percent commercial.

33
34 We also got some other comments when we opened that comment form
35 that were not amberjack-specific, and those included that the
36 headboat landings should not be counted against the recreational
37 quota, that red snapper and triggerfish populations are healthy
38 in the Gulf, that the IFQ program has given a select few the
39 privilege to harvest at the expense of the public, that the
40 commercial sale and export of Gulf-harvested fish should be
41 eliminated, that commercial fishing should be eliminated
42 altogether, and that electronic logbooks would not work in the
43 private sector. Thank you.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further discussion? Okay.
46 Dr. Froeschke, do you have anything else?

47
48 **DR. FROESCHKE:** We have the options paper. Do you want to go

1 through that? I think Sue Gerhart is going to lead us through
2 that, if you want to start on that.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Ms. Gerhart.

5
6 **DISCUSSION OF OPTIONS PAPER**

7
8 **MS. SUSAN GERHART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In anticipation of
9 the results of this stock assessment, we did draft up an action
10 to address the rebuilding plan for greater amberjack. The
11 results of the stock assessment did show that we are not making
12 progress towards the rebuilding, which, at this point, the last
13 time the rebuilding plan was set was in 2015, and there was a
14 four-year rebuilding put in, and so it was expected to rebuild
15 by 2019. The alternatives, if we can get that document up on
16 the screen, I will go through those alternatives that we have
17 drafted.

18
19 If we go to Chapter 2, there is only one action, Action 1.
20 First of all, the allocation between recreational and commercial
21 is 73 percent recreational and 27 percent commercial.
22 Currently, we have ACLs, as well as ACTs, for both sectors. If
23 we scroll down just a little bit more, to the table, you see
24 that what we're currently working with was the 2015 projection
25 of ABC from the last stock assessment, previous to this current
26 update. These are the ACLs and ACTs for each of the sectors.

27
28 The ACTs were derived using the ACL/ACT control rule, and so we
29 had buffers for the commercial of 15 percent and the
30 recreational of 13 percent to create those ACTs, and so we do
31 manage towards that ACT, meaning that is when we determine to
32 close each of those sectors, is based on the ACT.

33
34 Alternative 2 that we've put in here is from the stock
35 assessment, and it is what was approved by the SSC last week.
36 As Dr. Barbieri discussed, there were three years that were
37 accepted, starting in 2018 through 2020, and these values were
38 also used to calculate the ACL. The ACL is equal to the -- The
39 overall ACL is equal to the ABC, and then the individual
40 recreational and commercial ACLs were based on the allocation
41 percentages.

42
43 The ACTs were derived using new buffers. These buffers were
44 derived, again, from the ACL/ACT control rule, and so, at this
45 point, using that control rule, the commercial buffer is 13
46 percent and the recreational is 17 percent, and so that's how
47 these ACTs were derived in this table for these three years. Of
48 course, as we've done in the past, if there is not a new stock

1 assessment before the end of those three years, the last value
2 would continue on.

3
4 We also included an option that does not use the ACT. In that
5 case, we would manage to the ACL itself, and so those are the
6 two options under each of these alternatives, whether to use
7 those buffers or not.

8
9 Scrolling down to Alternative 3, the council often asks for a
10 constant catch level, and, because the SSC did not set one of
11 those, either through the model or through using an averaging
12 process, the only option that's available to us, at this time at
13 least, is to use the lowest value, which is 2018, and have that
14 set as constant for all the years following. That is what those
15 are, and, again, we have options to use the buffers to create an
16 ACT or to eliminate the ACT and manage to the ACL.

17
18 Then, finally, Alternative 4 sets a zero ACL, no harvest. We
19 always include this to show the shortest rebuilding time, and so
20 the rebuilding time for this Alternative 4 would be to 2022.
21 For Alternative 3, which is the constant catch at the lowest
22 level, rebuilding would be by 2024. Then, if we use the yield
23 stream approved by the SSC, that would be rebuilt in 2027, and
24 so we are within that ten-year time limit for rebuilding that's
25 been set.

26
27 This is what we've drafted up for your consideration. If you
28 are interested in this or want to make any changes, we are
29 willing to do that, and then also we don't have any analysis,
30 just a little discussion in this document right now, but we
31 would go forward with that, if the council wishes to. I will
32 take any questions.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. Are there questions? Dr.
35 Froeschke.

36
37 **DR. FROESCHKE:** There is also Alternative 4, which would set the
38 ACL at zero, which is anticipated to rebuild the stock by 2022,
39 and so that's sort of the fastest that it could be done.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Ms.
42 Levy.

43
44 **MS. LEVY:** I would anticipate that the Fisheries Service would
45 send a letter, based on the latest stock assessment, about
46 rebuilding progress, because, the latest one, we were
47 anticipated to rebuild by 2019, and this stock assessment says
48 that's not going to happen, and so I anticipate an inadequate

1 progress letter, which is going to trigger that two-year time
2 period to implement a revised or new rebuilding plan.

3
4 These catch levels and the associated rebuilding timeframes go
5 with that, and, also, I think the thing to think about now, at
6 this stage, is whether you want this document to include changes
7 to any of the management measures, because, if you want to add
8 actions that look at seasons and bag limits and all of that
9 stuff, you could put that in this document as well, but I think
10 you just need to think about whether you want staff to do that.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Steven Atran.

13
14 **MR. STEVEN ATRAN:** I have a quick question for Mara. If we get
15 that letter of inadequate progress, if we're required to
16 implement a new rebuilding plan, can we do this through the
17 framework action, or would that require a plan amendment?

18
19 **MS. LEVY:** Our framework allows us to do frameworks to have
20 rebuilding plans or to revise rebuilding plans, and that's what
21 you would be doing here, and we did a framework last time, when
22 we revised the rebuilding plan.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.

25
26 **DR. CRABTREE:** There is some time-sensitiveness to this, because
27 we really need to get the catch levels re-specified before we
28 get very far into the 2018 fishing year, because, if we end up
29 running over in 2018, it's just going to make things all that
30 much more difficult.

31
32 I think, where we are on this is, if this is all you wanted to
33 do, we could probably vote it up in June, but there may be some
34 interest in some additional closed seasons and trying to time
35 when the fishing is going to occur and that kind of thing, in
36 which case we ought to give staff pretty detailed guidance as to
37 what else we want added in it, and then we can shoot for getting
38 that done by the August meeting and still be okay with it.

39
40 They are pretty steep reductions, but I guess the sort of good
41 news of this is that it's not as bad as this year is. If you
42 look at where we are this year, because of the overrun and the
43 payback, the recreational ACT this year is 335,714 pounds. If
44 you look at most of these scenarios in your document, for
45 example Alternative 2a, with the buffer, the ACT would be
46 716,000 pounds, and so almost twice what we're looking at this
47 year.

1 The expectation is that next year is going to be better than
2 this year was, but I think what we need to figure out is do we
3 want to look at some other seasonal closures, to try and time
4 when the fisheries open, and, if we do, add those in the
5 document and then try to vote this thing up in August and get it
6 in place as quickly as we can.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there discussion? Mr. Diaz.

9
10 **MR. DIAZ:** Just thinking about it, to me, I think seasons
11 definitely need to be in there. There was some criticism when
12 we went up on the size limit last time. I think probably it
13 would be -- I think it would be best if we looked at seasons,
14 bag limits, and size limits, if that doesn't throw our timing
15 off too bad.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Gerhart.

18
19 **MS. GERHART:** Just to point out that we're already at a one-fish
20 bag limit.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Bosarge.

23
24 **MS. BOSARGE:** I have a lot of comments, but, so to Dale's point,
25 Sue and Dr. Crabtree, if we do want to explore those, do we need
26 to split this up into two different documents and essentially
27 get this part down, so that we have those fishing levels, and
28 then explore those in something separate, as that may take a
29 little bit longer?

30
31 **MS. GERHART:** As Dr. Crabtree said, if we don't add anything
32 else, we could have this ready for final action in June, but it
33 would take until August. Taking final action in August gives us
34 a short period of time to do the rulemaking and implementation,
35 and so there may be a possibility of needing to do an interim
36 rule to start this in 2018, if that's the case, but we do have
37 that option, if it's necessary.

38
39 **MS. BOSARGE:** Okay. Then my other just comment is, in this
40 document, as we move forward with it, can we put some
41 percentages in there, where you have the -- In the Chapter 1
42 introduction, and you give us landings and you tell us what ACTs
43 and ACLs were, relatively, in those years, can we put some
44 percent after those? It's a whole lot easier for me, at a
45 glance, to tell, okay, how far did we overshoot our target and
46 this and that, which I know there is some paybacks in here, and
47 so you may have to put more than one column of percent in here
48 for us to get a good picture of it.

1
2 Then, as I asked for when we went through the gray triggerfish
3 rebuilding document, or as we are going through it, if we put
4 any graphs in there of landings and such, can we make sure those
5 go all the way back into the time period, so we can get a long-
6 term picture of how that stock has been operating? Thank you.
7 All the way back to the 1950s, please.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Dr.
10 Crabtree.

11
12 **DR. CRABTREE:** I guess, coming back, Dale, you mentioned size
13 limits. Are you looking at going further up on the size limit?
14 We changed it to, what, thirty-four that we're at now?

15
16 **MR. DIAZ:** I was more thinking going down. The criticism was
17 that we raised the size limit and that filled the ACL quicker,
18 and so I was thinking more along the lines of seeing some
19 options down, but, I mean, for a range, we might look at them up
20 and down.

21
22 **DR. CRABTREE:** I would be reluctant to draw any conclusion about
23 what the size limit did, in terms of us catching the quota up
24 earlier. It's just one year, and maybe they did land bigger
25 fish, but that's hard to reach a conclusion about that after
26 just one year of data.

27
28 With closed seasons, I mean, we could look at closing January
29 and February, something like that, or maybe even March, so the
30 fishery opens in April and May. I don't know how people would
31 feel about that, but it would be good to give staff -- Maybe we
32 do this after we hear public comment, but it would be good to
33 give staff as specific guidance as we can and not load up any
34 more in here than we really need to, so we can get this done and
35 out the door.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Levy.

38
39 **MS. LEVY:** Just, if you wanted to refer to this, for the closed
40 seasons, in the last framework, you had an action to modify the
41 recreational closed seasons and then didn't take any action, and
42 so there were alternatives in there. I don't know if they were
43 the same alternatives that you want to consider now, but it
44 might be a starting place to look at alternatives. Maybe at
45 Full Council you want to look at what you had in the prior
46 document.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Bosarge.

1
2 **MS. BOSARGE:** If we do go down the route of looking at size
3 limits, could we please have some information in there on sexual
4 maturity, relative to those size limits, especially on a stock
5 where it's been in an overfished condition for decades. I don't
6 think we want to start harvesting babies. I don't think that's
7 ever going to get us back to a rebuilt point.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Gerhart.

10
11 **MS. GERHART:** I just wanted to point out that we do have
12 different closed seasons for the commercial and recreational
13 sector, and so does the motion speak to both sectors, or are we
14 just looking at the recreational sector, or not the motion, but
15 the request from Mr. Diaz?

16
17 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** I would think probably commercial and
18 recreational would be prudent at this point. Mr. Walker.

19
20 **MR. WALKER:** I was just going to add that we just moved the
21 commercial grouper from twenty-two to twenty-four for
22 consistency, and maybe considering keeping consistency with the
23 size limit for commercial and recreational. It would help with
24 enforcement.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Froeschke.

27
28 **DR. FROESCHKE:** We also included size-at-maturity information in
29 the previous framework action too, and so we can certainly bring
30 that up, but we do have that information available. It's on the
31 website.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.

34
35 **DR. CRABTREE:** Just with regard to the commercial fishery, they
36 have not caught their entire quota yet, and so it will open back
37 up on June 1, but I suspect that we will announce the closure
38 date about that time too and that it will be a relatively short
39 reopening.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion?
42 That's kind of always been my intention, to have something open
43 year-round, to have some type of fish somewhere. It's always
44 kind of been a thing that I've always tried to adhere to, and
45 it's becoming increasingly more difficult.

46
47 Off the top of my head, I think I just need to sit down and look
48 at what is open and what's closed when and see if there is

1 whatever. I know that there's advantages to having fisheries
2 closed when they're spawning, from the biological side.
3 However, some of the political side doesn't like that very much,
4 and so these are things that we have to take into consideration.

5
6 With that, I will leave it up to the committee. Does anybody
7 have anything else they want to weigh in on? Okay. Any further
8 discussion before we leave the framework motion and break for
9 lunch?

10
11 **DR. CRABTREE:** Just to be clear where we are, and I guess we
12 will talk about this at Full Council, but, at least for right
13 now, the guidance to staff is to add options to revisit the size
14 limit and the closed seasons, and it's for both the commercial
15 and the recreational fisheries. Then, maybe when we come back
16 to this at Full Council, after folks have thought about it, and
17 staff can think about this some, we can refine that a little
18 better.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Yes, sir. I agree. I think that's exactly
21 the thing we need to do now, knowing that we may very well
22 change it when we get to Full Council, but I think having that
23 information before us would be very helpful. Anything else?
24 Ms. Bosarge, I will hand it back over to you, a full ten minutes
25 late.

26
27 **MS. BOSARGE:** That's all right. That's not bad, all things
28 considered. All right. We're going to break for lunch, and we
29 will return at our regularly-scheduled time, at 1:30, and so we
30 will see you then. Thank you.

31
32 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on April 4, 2017.)

33
34 - - -

35
36 April 4, 2017

37
38 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

39
40 - - -

41
42 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
43 Management Council reconvened at the Hyatt Regency Birmingham,
44 Birmingham, Alabama, Tuesday afternoon, April 4, 2017, and was
45 called to order by Chairman Johnny Greene.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** I would like to go ahead and pick up on our
48 agenda, as modified. With that, Mr. Sam Rauch will come and

1 give us a little discussion and some points of consideration.
2

3 **PRESENTATION BY SAM RAUCH**
4

5 **MR. SAM RAUCH:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am Sam Rauch, and I am
6 currently the Acting Director of the National Marine Fisheries
7 Service. That is a political position, and I am the senior
8 career person, and so, as soon as the President decides to
9 appoint a political person, I will go back to my normal job,
10 which is the Deputy Director, overseeing the work of all the
11 regions, including the Southeast Region, but also the Alaska
12 Region and the Greater Atlantic Region and others.
13

14 I am going to give you an update, in just a second, on the
15 Marine Recreational Information Program strategic planning
16 process, but I do want to take the opportunity to say a few
17 words about the federal and council relationship.
18

19 If you look at the statistics for success of our joint program,
20 in terms of managing the nation's recreational and commercial
21 fisheries, across the board nationally, they are extremely good.
22 We continue to set high records, near-record levels, of
23 landings, of revenue, of jobs in the commercial and recreational
24 fishing sectors, as the same time that we are ending overfishing
25 and rebuilding a record number of stocks.
26

27 This is due to the work of the councils. The Fisheries Service
28 helps, but mainly the work, all of that work, happens here,
29 where you make the tough decisions, engage the public, make sure
30 everybody is heard, partners between the federal government and
31 the state. It all happens here, and I know how hard it is for
32 all of you to prepare for, to engage, to make those hard
33 decisions, and we do appreciate it. We couldn't collectively do
34 what we do without the council system, and so I wanted to thank
35 you for that.
36

37 Specifically though, I did want to take the opportunity, while
38 I'm here, to talk about an important new initiative that we just
39 set up. Several years ago, in 2015, at the request of Congress,
40 the Government Accountability Office, and that's a congressional
41 body, conducted a review of the Marine Recreational Information
42 Program, MRIP.
43

44 That review resulted in one single recommendation, that NOAA
45 Fisheries complete a strategic plan for MRIP, and we agreed with
46 that. We subsequently, in 2016, began the process of thinking
47 about what that strategic plan would look like. We included
48 representatives from the councils, the commissions, our own

1 staff, and consultants. We developed the plan in 2016.
2
3 We would have released it last year, except for we knew the
4 National Academy of Science was about to complete its large,
5 overarching review of the MRIP program, and we wanted to make
6 sure that our draft document incorporated those recommendations,
7 whatever they were at the time, and so we've taken the
8 opportunity -- That came out in January, as I'm sure you're
9 aware. We have taken the opportunity to incorporate their
10 recommendations into our strategic plan.
11
12 That plan will be available later today. This is the first time
13 we're announcing it, here at this council meeting, but it will
14 be available later today. It's a draft. We want to take
15 comments from the councils and all the constituents, and it's
16 open for comment, before we finalize it.
17
18 It is a strategic plan. By the very nature of strategic plans,
19 they are high-level documents that lay out some broad,
20 overarching objectives that you can then go off of to more
21 specific and more regional issues.
22
23 There are six overarching goals, which you can read here. They
24 are to meet customer needs, provide quality products, inform key
25 stakeholders. This was, as many of you are aware, a key finding
26 of the National Academy study, is that the MRIP Program, the
27 Fisheries Service, has to do a better job of educating and
28 informing and listening to stakeholders and to determine what
29 their needs are and what value the MRIP Program is providing,
30 and so that's one of the key goals there.
31
32 Assure sound science, operate collaboratively with mainly our
33 state partners. The MRIP program is a collaboration between
34 state and federal data collectors. Then to meet the program
35 needs, and so not just the program needs, but the customer
36 needs, and those are two different things, and the customer
37 needs are number one.
38
39 These six goals, each goal has a series of strategies and
40 tactics, which you can read in the report, which will be
41 available online later today, and there are outcomes and
42 performance metrics for each.
43
44 There is the place where it is supposed to be. I checked this
45 morning, and it's not on there yet, but hopefully it will be on
46 there soon. It's countmyfish.noaa.gov. If any of you are
47 really interested, I have an annotated copy up here, the only
48 one in existence, but it will be up there, and we will be

1 accepting comments through June 30, if that works for the
2 councils. If not, we will figure out how to deal with it.

3
4 With that, Mr. Chair, I am happy to take questions on this or on
5 anything else, or if there's any general questions you have for
6 the Fisheries Service from Washington, D.C.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you, sir. Any discussion or questions
9 for Mr. Rauch? Mr. Anson has a question.

10
11 **MR. ANSON:** Sam, thanks for coming. It's kind of related to
12 this, but I was at a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service meeting last
13 week, and they're dealing with some issues, funding issues,
14 albeit internal to their Sportfish Restoration Program, and so
15 they are trying to determine the appropriate funding level that
16 might be needed, if you will, relative to their workload.

17
18 They're having PricewaterhouseCoopers Accounting Firm come in
19 and go to each of the regions and get information about staff
20 workloads and number of personnel they have available and those
21 types of things and then kind of relate that back to what their
22 job is, or their mission is, trying to report out back to
23 Congress and such.

24
25 I am just wondering if -- I got to thinking about the issue of
26 stock assessments, and we've had this issue before. It's been
27 brought up here at the council, and it's been brought up at
28 D.C., and if you could provide a little bit of maybe a status of
29 where that might be in and whether or not that might be
30 appropriate, is to maybe have an introspective look and have an
31 independent review team come in and kind of look at the workload
32 issues for each of the councils and the regions, relative to
33 their specific duties and mission, and seeing if that might be
34 helpful, to see, if there is a reprioritization of funds or
35 personnel, to help meet the needs and goals of the agency.

36
37 **MR. RAUCH:** We are in the process, and I believe this council
38 has been briefed, on a broad-based stock assessment improvement
39 plan. One of the things that they're trying to do is to assess
40 how you prioritize within a region which stock assessments come
41 up first, and obviously you share your stock assessment
42 resources with two other councils, and there is a need amongst
43 the three of you as to how to do that.

44
45 Embedded within that is the ability to compare across councils,
46 and, for the first time, to be able to look at the expenditures
47 between here and the west coast and the Northeast and Alaska and
48 those kinds of places and to actually compare apples-to-apples,

1 which we have not been able to do until recently, and we
2 presented a number of those findings recently, which discusses
3 how much we spend here in the Southeast versus how much we spend
4 elsewhere.

5
6 We have not -- Let me back up. Beyond that, we have not engaged
7 a third party to review that comparison or to provide us
8 guidance on that. We have, through the various Science Center
9 review processes, tried to put forth all of the surveys and
10 other kinds of things that go into that and to get some external
11 input into that.

12
13 We have not done a sort of staffing analysis, as you suggest.
14 We currently aren't planning to do one of those, but we are
15 still in discussions with all of our partners about how to deal
16 with the prioritization plan. Even within the region, it is
17 something new and different, and we will get that done first
18 before we look at cross-regional impacts.

19
20 I will say, under meet program needs, it is a -- One of the
21 things that they're trying to do here in the Marine Recreational
22 Program is to determine exactly the kind of funding that is
23 needed to make sure that that program can run and make sure it's
24 adequately resourced.

25
26 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. I just brought that to your attention
27 because another federal agency had -- Again, it's not the exact
28 same issue, but they were looking at an outside independent
29 source to kind of help them kind of navigate and come to some
30 resolution or maybe a conclusion that they could take forward.
31 Thank you.

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

34
35 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further questions or
36 discussions by the committee? I am not seeing any, Mr. Rauch.
37 Thank you very much for your presentation and your time.

38
39 **MR. RAUCH:** Thank you.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** With that, we will pick back up on our
42 schedule, which the next item will be Draft Amendment Number 47,
43 Modify Vermilion Snapper ACLs and MSY Proxy, Tab B, Number 8,
44 and Mr. Atran.

45
46 **DRAFT AMENDMENT 47 - MODIFY VERMILION SNAPPER ACLS AND MSY PROXY**

47
48 **MR. ATRAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This amendment has two

1 actions in it. One is to adopt a proxy for MSY, to help guide
2 the stock assessments, and the other is to set ACLs, annual
3 catch limits, over the next five years.

4
5 You looked at an earlier version of this document at the last
6 council meeting, and this is just fleshed out and hopefully
7 ready to go to public hearings, except for selection of
8 preferred alternatives, and so we would like you to select
9 preferred alternatives at this time. If you feel it's ready for
10 public hearings, recommend where to go, and we do have some
11 ideas about public hearings, but we will get to that when we get
12 to it.

13
14 As I said, there are just two actions in this document, and the
15 Action 1 is on page 19. That is Chapter 2, Section 2.1, if we
16 could go there. This is adopting a maximum sustainable yield
17 proxy. At the moment, officially, our FMP says that we don't
18 use a proxy and we use the actual model-generated estimate of
19 MSY and FMSY. The stock assessment scientists and the SSC
20 pretty much agree that they don't feel that they can get a
21 reliable MSY estimate, which is why they feel that they need to
22 use a proxy.

23
24 The proxy they have recommended, and the one that they used in
25 the stock assessment, is 30 percent SPR. Now, because that's
26 their recommendation, and that's the best scientific information
27 that we've got, we felt that we only needed two alternatives
28 here, either the no action, status quo, or adopt the F30 percent
29 SPR proxy for FMSY.

30
31 At the last council meeting, and in our IPT meetings that
32 followed, we were advised that we can probably do two
33 alternatives, but there are other types of proxies available,
34 and so we needed to beef up the discussion by discussing some of
35 those other types of proxies and why they're not being
36 considered in this document, and so mainly we beefed up the
37 discussion.

38
39 You can see we put it right at the front, MSY proxies other than
40 30 percent spawning potential ratio, and there is some
41 discussion about using Fmax, which is the fishing mortality that
42 yields the maximum yield per recruit. There is FCmax, which is
43 a modification of Fmax. Fmax uses a knife-edge selectivity. It
44 assumes that, when you reach the ideal size, all the fish get
45 caught, whereas Cmax is a conditional yield per recruit that
46 looks at the actual selectivities of the fisheries and tries to
47 give us a maximum yield per recruit for those fisheries. These
48 are both considered non-conservative estimates of MSY, which is

1 why they weren't used.
2
3 It's the same thing with the next one, which was F of 0.1. That
4 is actually, at this point, probably considered an antiquated
5 proxy for MSY. It is supposedly backed off a little bit from
6 MSY, but that's not always the case. Then some yield at some
7 other SPR, such as 20 percent SPR. Potentially, we could have
8 considered that, but we would be going against the
9 recommendation of the SSC if we did, and so we didn't include
10 that as an option.
11
12 At this point, we have two options, as I said. We have
13 Alternative 1, which is do not use a proxy, continue to specify
14 that the actual model-generated MSY and FMSY would be used, or
15 adopt the 30 percent SPR that was recommended by the SSC. Mr.
16 Chairman.
17
18 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. Is there discussion? Mr.
19 Banks.
20
21 **MR. PATRICK BANKS:** I was interested to know, from the staff's
22 perspective, of the other things that you guys analyzed, do you
23 feel like any of those have any merit above the F 30 percent
24 SPR?
25
26 **MR. ATRAN:** You are talking about these alternative proxies? I
27 don't know if Clay wants to add to this. To me, the only one
28 that might possibly have merit is perhaps going with something
29 like F 20 percent SPR. The SSC, they haven't had any official
30 discussions, but, in like one-on-one discussions with Luiz and
31 some others, they have suggested that possibly F 20 percent SPR
32 could be a minimum threshold that could be considered, but, as
33 we start to develop MSY proxies for all of our stocks, we will
34 get more into that, but we really haven't gotten into those
35 discussions just yet.
36
37 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. I didn't know -- Dr. Porch, do you
38 want to weigh in on the vermilion snapper?
39
40 **DR. PORCH:** Sure. There has also been some work that suggests
41 that the lower limit for any proxy that would at least have some
42 chance of being analogous to the MSY level would be the spawning
43 biomass associated with fishing at Fmax, and so that's like a
44 lower limit.
45
46 Whatever SPR level you set, if you chose to go that route,
47 should be above whatever the SPR corresponds to that Fmax, and
48 there was a presentation made to the SSC to that effect. I

1 don't know if that was reflected, Steven, in your options paper
2 here, but I think we need to -- If we want to go to an SPR level
3 that is lower than 30 percent, we should do those analyses and
4 make sure we don't go too low. 20 percent is kind of borderline
5 for something like vermilion snapper.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Mr. Atran.

8
9 **MR. ATRAN:** In the discussion, we do talk about it a little bit.
10 The Fmax, where we're now defining it, is an unrealistic
11 situation. As I said, it assumes that you've got knife-edge
12 selectivity, that you harvest a fish at exactly a certain size.

13
14 FCmax, which is a conditional mortality, and I think that's
15 really what Clay is talking about, if we wanted to consider it a
16 minimum level, the analysis that was done for vermilion snapper
17 suggested that that would correspond to an SPR of 12 percent,
18 which most folks feel is way too low to be a safe level.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Porch.

21
22 **DR. PORCH:** No, I actually did mean the idealistic Fmax, but
23 you're not trying to achieve that style of fishing, where you
24 pick an optimal age and fish that infinitely hard, because that
25 is impractical, but the spawning biomass that would support that
26 can be achieved with any number of combinations of fisheries,
27 and so that's the point, is the spawning biomass, or the SPR
28 level that is associated with that idealistic Fmax, is a lower
29 bound for an MSY proxy. You can look at that, and I don't
30 remember what that number came out to be in the presentation.

31
32 **MR. ATRAN:** Yes, I have them. It was developed for either that
33 selectivity at three-year-old fish or four-year-old fish, and,
34 depending upon which age you selected, it corresponded to an SPR
35 value of either 13 percent or 20 percent.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Mr. Banks, did that get at what
38 you were after? Okay. Thank you. Any further discussion? We
39 are needing to kind of pick some preferreds on these items.
40 Does anybody want to jump out there and weigh in on a preferred
41 at this point? I guess we're going to wait for public testimony
42 to help clear this up a little bit here on which one we need to
43 pick. Okay. I am not seeing any -- Mr. Atran.

44
45 **MR. ATRAN:** That brings us to Action 2, which is setting the
46 actual annual catch limit, and that is on page 24 of the
47 document. Instead of looking at the alternatives, if we could
48 scroll down and look at the table below it. This is the same

1 alternatives, but I think it's a little easier to read what they
2 are over here.

3
4 We have four alternatives here. Alternative 1, the no action,
5 would leave our ACL at its current level of 3.42 million pounds.
6 Now, even though we saw a reduction in the OFL, this is actually
7 still a viable alternative, because this is still a lower catch
8 level than any of the OFLs that we're going to see over the next
9 five years.

10
11 I mean, it gets very close in -- You can see the Alternative 2,
12 which is the annual estimates of ACL, we start at 3.21 million
13 pounds, and it drops down to 3.03 million pounds by 2021. Then,
14 once we get past 2021, there is two options as to which way you
15 would want to go.

16
17 Option a would just leave it at the 3.03 million pounds until we
18 get a new stock assessment and new projections, and Option b
19 would drop the ACL for 2022 and beyond at 2.98 million pounds.
20 That is about where the equilibrium level was calculated to be.
21 Now, having said that, there was an equilibrium level
22 calculated, but it's by running projections out something like
23 twenty years, or fifty years, and our SSC really doesn't have
24 much confidence when you get that far out on the projections.

25
26 The next time we get a stock assessment, it's liable to give us
27 a different equilibrium ACL, but the best science that we have
28 right now says that, under the current conditions, if
29 recruitment stays the same, if growth rates and fecundity rates
30 -- If all the rates stay the same, we would reach equilibrium at
31 the 2.98 million pounds, and so there's not a whole lot of
32 difference there. You can see 2.98 versus 3.03, and there's a
33 question of where you want to go until we get the next stock
34 assessment.

35
36 Alternative 3 is a constant catch for over the next five years,
37 and that is 3.11 million pounds. That is simply an average of
38 the five years under the constant F scenario. The SSC has
39 discussed different ways of trying to calculate a constant catch
40 ABC or an ACL, and they concluded that, given all of the
41 uncertainties about the data, simply averaging the yields for
42 the years in question will give just as valid a result as doing
43 some more complex methodology, and so 3.11 million pounds from
44 2017 through 2021.

45
46 The aggregate is going to yield the same amount of vermilion
47 snapper as the individual ACLs for each year, and then again, at
48 the end of the five-year period, you would have the option of

1 either Option a, continuing that 3.11 million pounds until the
2 next stock assessment, or Option b is dropping down to what is
3 currently estimated to be the equilibrium yield of 2.98 million
4 pounds.

5
6 Then, finally, Alternative 4 is a constant catch, and it would
7 just go directly to the 2.98 million pound equilibrium yield.
8 Then there would be no need to consider any changes until the
9 next stock assessment occurs.

10
11 Now, as I said, all of these are viable options. Over the last
12 three years, since 2013, it looks like the highest landings in
13 any one year was 2.9 million pounds, and so, at least, if you go
14 back three years, we have never exceeded any of these ACLs. If
15 you go back further, yes, there have been some years where we
16 have caught four million pounds or over, but, in the recent
17 years, we haven't caught that kind of a catch, and so, in the
18 immediate future at least, it looks like all of these would be
19 above what we would expect the catch to be.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there discussion? We're on
22 Action 2. We're, again, looking for some preferreds to move
23 forward with this. All right. Everybody must have had a good
24 lunch. Mr. Atran.

25
26 **MR. ATRAN:** Let me be clear then, as least as far as the
27 committee is concerned. You are willing to go to public
28 hearings with no preferred alternatives on either action? Is
29 that correct?

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

32
33 **MR. DIAZ:** Based on what Mr. Atran just said, I would make a
34 motion that, in Action 2, the preferred alternative be
35 **Alternative 3.**

36
37 **DR. CRABTREE:** Second.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. We have a motion and a second. It will
40 be just a second to get it on the board here, for Alternative 3.
41 We have a motion. It was seconded by Dr. Crabtree. Is there
42 any discussion? Ms. Levy.

43
44 **MS. LEVY:** So, as it's currently written right now, there are
45 two options for what happens after 2021, whether it's going to
46 remain at the 3.11 or drop down to the 2.98, and I think you
47 have a couple of options here.

48

1 With both actions, if you wanted to not have the options, you
2 could do that. They are relatively close together, and you
3 could just stick with whatever the catch level was from 2021
4 out, or you need to pick an option I guess is what I am saying.
5 What's going to happen after 2021?
6

7 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there discussion? Dr. Simmons.
8

9 **DR. SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just going to
10 suggest, if we wanted to simplify the document, you could just
11 keep it at those levels that are in Alternative 2, 3, or 4 and
12 not drop it down or change it with any of those options, which
13 is what we typically do for most of our assessments, but, if you
14 wanted to specify that, if we didn't have another assessment or
15 new information, that you wanted to reduce it or change it,
16 instead of holding it at that level, then you could select an
17 Option a or b.
18

19 To me, right now, it complicates it for not much of a
20 difference, but, if you feel it's necessary, we could leave it
21 in the document. The SSC made the recommendation, I think, for
22 2017 to 2021, and so, if you stayed within those limits, I don't
23 know that you need to change those and add those options in
24 there, but whatever the council prefers. It's just a suggestion
25 if we wanted to simplify the document.
26

27 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you, Dr. Crabtree.
28

29 **DR. CRABTREE:** I would just take the two Option b out and have
30 it at a and remain there. It doesn't seem, to me, that it's
31 enough fish that it merits having an extra option in it. If
32 Dale is okay with that, how do we do that, Carrie? We already
33 have a motion on the floor.
34

35 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Atran.
36

37 **MR. ATRAN:** My suggestion would be to go ahead and vote on this
38 motion and then make a separate motion to remove those options.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further discussion about the
41 motion? **Seeing no further discussion, is there any opposition**
42 **to the motion on the floor before you? Seeing no opposition,**
43 **the motion carries.** Dr. Crabtree.
44

45 **DR. CRABTREE:** I would move that, for Action 2, Alternatives 2
46 and 3, we remove the two Sub-Options a and b, and that the quota
47 then for Alternative 2 would remain at 3.03 and the quota for
48 Alternative 3 would remain at 3.11. That was a long-winded

1 motion, I guess, wasn't it?
2
3 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Especially for after lunch. Okay.
4 Essentially, Action 2, remove the --
5
6 **DR. CRABTREE:** Remove the Option a and Option b. Then the quota
7 just remains in place after 2021.
8
9 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Let's take just a second and clean it up and
10 make sure that it's correct, as written.
11
12 **DR. SIMMONS:** Is that correct now?
13
14 **DR. CRABTREE:** I think so, and then have the ACLs remain in
15 place after 2021.
16
17 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** They're getting the motion up on the board.
18 Was there a second for the motion? I think everybody kind of
19 understands what we're doing here. It's seconded by Mr. Diaz.
20 Just a minute here, and we'll clear the board up. I think the
21 second part of the motion was that the ACLs would remain the
22 same after 2021, and is that correct?
23
24 **DR. CRABTREE:** I think that's clear enough the way it's written.
25 I think that's inherent in it.
26
27 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Super. Okay. We have a motion, and it was
28 seconded. Any further discussion? **Seeing no further**
29 **discussion, is there any opposition to the motion on the floor**
30 **before you? Seeing no opposition, the motion carries.**
31
32 We have one other action in this document, and did you want to
33 send it on without a preferred, or did we want to reconsider
34 that? Dr. Crabtree.
35
36 **DR. CRABTREE:** I would like to reconsider it. **I would like to**
37 **go back to Action 1 and move that we make, under Action 1,**
38 **Alternative 2 our preferred.**
39
40 **MR. DIAZ:** Second.
41
42 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. We have a motion on the board in
43 Action 1 to make Alternative 2 the preferred, and it was
44 seconded. Any further discussion? Mr. Atran.
45
46 **MR. ATRAN:** Since it isn't up on here, just so everyone knows,
47 this would make the proxy F 30 percent SPR, the official proxy
48 for vermilion snapper.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. We have a motion on the board in Action
3 1 to make Alternative 2 the preferred, and Alternative 2 is
4 spelled out. The proxy for vermilion snapper MSY is the yield
5 when fishing at F 30 percent SPR. It was seconded. Is there
6 any further discussion about the motion on the board? Seeing no
7 further discussion, is there any opposition to the motion on the
8 floor? Mr. Walker.
9
10 **MR. WALKER:** I would like to make a substitute motion to fish at
11 F 26 percent SPR, to make it the preferred.
12
13 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** So you're wanting to add another alternative?
14
15 **MR. WALKER:** That is correct.
16
17 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. We were picking a preferred, and we
18 have a substitute motion for a new Alternative 3 for F 26 SPR.
19 Is that correct?
20
21 **MR. WALKER:** That's correct.
22
23 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. We have a substitute motion on the
24 board. Is there a second for this motion?
25
26 **MR. ANSON:** I will second it.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Seconded by Mr. Anson. Is there discussion?
29 Mr. Walker.
30
31 **MR. WALKER:** I brought this up at the last meeting, that we
32 would like to look at the 26. I mean, 26 is higher than 20, and
33 it's lower than 30, but it's more consistent with red snapper.
34 I think, if you look at vermilion, vermilion is a fishery that
35 changes from one year to the other. It runs through cycles, and
36 maybe we're on the bad cycle now, but I'm trying to keep a
37 positive outlook on it, and I would like to give both sectors
38 and everyone an opportunity to catch as many fish as they can
39 for optimum yield.
40
41 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Any further discussion? Mr. Atran.
42
43 **MR. ATRAN:** If this passes, or even if we just put it in the
44 document as an additional alternative, I think we're going to
45 have to go back to the Science Center and ask for some analysis,
46 because we don't have any analysis on F 26 percent SPR, and that
47 might delay when we can take final action.
48

1 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Levy.
2
3 **MS. LEVY:** Thank you. I don't have any comment with respect to
4 adding it as an alternative, but it seems a little premature to
5 be making it a preferred when there is nothing in the document
6 that talks about it or how it relates to the other proxies that
7 are discussed that are said to not be reasonable alternatives.
8 I guess my suggestion would be, if you want to add it as an
9 alternative, okay, but maybe hold off on the preferred then.
10
11 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** I didn't think he was making it a preferred.
12 I think he was just wanting to add an alternative. Is that
13 correct, Mr. Walker?
14
15 **MR. WALKER:** Let's just change it to read to just add a new
16 **Alternative 3.**
17
18 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Porch.
19
20 **DR. PORCH:** Just to point out that I don't think that we
21 actually need any new analyses. The analyses that we've done
22 show that basically the MSY proxy should be probably above 20
23 percent SPR, but exactly where, we don't know. The SSC
24 recommended 30 percent, but it's not completely clear there, and
25 so I don't know what additional analyses we would do to inform
26 that decision any better.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.
29
30 **DR. CRABTREE:** I guess, as a point of order, I don't really
31 think this is a substitute motion. The original motion was to
32 choose a preferred, and this seems to be a separate motion to
33 add a new alternative. You could actually pass both of the
34 motions, and so it seems to me that we should vote up the
35 original motion first and then David could make this motion
36 after that is dispensed with.
37
38 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** I agree. **I think I am going to rule this out**
39 **of order at this point, because we're trying to select a**
40 **preferred.** Then, if you would like to pick it back up, you can.
41 Ms. Levy, is that politically correct? Okay. Just making sure.
42 Roberts Rules correct or whatever. Okay.
43
44 Now we're going to back to the previous motion that we had,
45 which was to make Alternative 2 the preferred. There was some
46 discussion of supporting F 30 percent SPR. Would anyone else
47 like to weigh in on this motion? **Is there any opposition to**
48 **this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries to establish**

1 **Alternative 2 as the preferred.** Now, if someone would like to
2 add an alternative. Mr. Walker.
3
4 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, I would like to add an alternative for the
5 motion as it reads below.
6
7 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Mr. Walker, your motion from before
8 was, in Action 1, to add a new Alternative 3, and Alternative 3
9 would be the proxy for vermilion snapper MSY is the yield when
10 fishing at F 26 percent SPR. Is that correct?
11
12 **MR. WALKER:** That is correct.
13
14 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Is there a second for this?
15
16 **MR. ANSON:** Second.
17
18 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** It's seconded by Mr. Anson. Is there
19 discussion? I know we had a little bit about it. Is there
20 anything else that anybody would like to add? Mr. Anson.
21
22 **MR. ANSON:** I want to, I guess, address some of the comments
23 from Dr. Crabtree regarding, or it could have been Dr. Porch,
24 but regarding the SSC's comments relative to SPR 30. It's kind
25 of like déjà vu. We've had this situation with red snapper.
26 The SSC has said, council, it's your decision to establish SPRs,
27 and yet we have to go through the SSC to get approval.
28
29 Based on Clay's discussion that there wasn't really any specific
30 MSY proxy that was selected, other than 30, and an Fmax, which
31 kind of was equal to 20, that they had no other information to
32 look at, I guess, to make that determination.
33
34 I think that, if this motion goes through, then the analysis
35 specific to F 26 would be analyzed, and then we would actually
36 have some information for them to make a decision on, is the way
37 I am thinking about it.
38
39 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you, Mr. Anson. Any further discussion?
40 Mr. Walker.
41
42 **MR. WALKER:** Just to kind of echo a little bit of what I had
43 said earlier, and this is a lot of discussion I have had from
44 fishermen, retired fishermen, and they have always told me that
45 vermilion cycles have always been years where you have abundant
46 amounts and other years where they were real slim, but they just
47 always seem to repeat. I think Buster Niquet is in the
48 audience, and maybe we can get some testimony from him. He's

1 been around and fishing a long time, too.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you, Captain Walker. Any further
4 discussion? We have a motion on the floor. **Is there any**
5 **opposition to the motion on the board before you? Seeing no**
6 **opposition, the motion carries.**

7
8 I guess, Mr. Atran, that completes the document, other than
9 whether we're going to look at webinars or in-person meetings,
10 correct?

11
12 **MR. ATRAN:** That is correct. Would you like me to present the
13 staff recommendations?

14
15 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Yes, sir.

16
17 **MR. ATRAN:** Okay. As I mentioned earlier, the ACLs that we're
18 looking at are above what the recent landings have been, and so
19 we are anticipating that this will have little or no on-the-
20 water impact, and we usually get very low turnout if there is no
21 on-the-water impact.

22
23 Action 1, which is to set the MSY proxy, we're not going to get
24 a whole lot of input on that, except from some people who are
25 knowledgeable about it, but most people are not. We are not
26 expecting a large turnout wherever we go, and we were going to
27 suggest that perhaps we could do this with just a webinar public
28 hearing.

29
30 If you did want to have in-person public hearings, we went back
31 and we looked at two things. We looked at what the attendance
32 was when we did Amendment 23, which was the last vermilion
33 snapper amendment that we did, and I think that was about ten
34 years ago now, and we also looked at where the commercial
35 landings are highest.

36
37 Basically, it's mainly up in the northern Gulf, the Florida
38 Panhandle and Alabama area, and so, as far as where we got the
39 biggest turnout, we were looking at Orange Beach or Panama City,
40 or we also got a good turnout in Destin, which is one of the
41 leading ports for commercial landings of vermilion snapper. Our
42 suggestion would be no more than two in-person public hearings,
43 if you're going to do those, and that you selected from those
44 cities.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you, Mr. Atran. Committee, what would
47 you like to do, a webinar or a couple of in-person scoping
48 meetings? Ms. Guyas.

1
2 **MS. GUYAS:** I think I'm fine with a webinar for this one, unless
3 anybody else --

4
5 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Anson.

6
7 **MR. ANSON:** I think so too. As Steven pointed out, there's not
8 much contention with this fishery, and I don't think it would
9 have much impact, going forward, and so I would agree.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Does anybody have any objection to
12 that? Okay. Seeing none, we will just, by consensus, agree
13 that we will do it by webinar and so that. Mr. Atran, does that
14 wind up this item?

15
16 **MR. ATRAN:** Yes, that concludes this amendment. We will add
17 that alternative. We will need to revise some of the
18 discussion, and we will indicate the preferred alternatives, and
19 we will schedule a webinar as soon as we're ready.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you, Mr. Atran. Okay. With that, we
22 will move into our next item, which will be SEDAR 49, Stock
23 Assessment for Data-Limited Stocks. This will be Tab B-11(a)
24 and (b) and 12. Dr. Barbieri.

25
26 **STOCK ASSESSMENT FOR DATA-LIMITED STOCKS**

27
28 **DR. BARBIERI:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will, again, just
29 like for the greater amberjack assessment, recognize that this
30 is really just a very summarized, very brief, presentation of an
31 assessment, a stock assessment, process that was conducted by
32 the Science Center, and you see there, on that first slide, the
33 names of the main staff, analytical staff, at the Center who
34 handled this.

35
36 I know Dr. Porch and some other folks there have been closely
37 involved in this, and so it's a fairly large effort that seems
38 to be really helping us move forward in addressing some of these
39 assessment situations for which we don't have really all the
40 pieces of data that we may need to make progress.

41
42 Before going into results, I just want to bring to your
43 attention what this is intended to achieve. It's really nothing
44 that can provide you with an actual MSY estimate or reference
45 points that have that same meaning, but it's really looking into
46 fisheries management reference points that are based on
47 comparing where you are relative to some period that was
48 considered to be sustainable or looking at the status of the

1 stock in terms of increases in abundance due to indices and
2 trying to evaluate where you are along those points.

3
4 They really represent a way for the Center to now help the SSCs
5 and the councils, of course, move beyond just the basic average
6 landings process that we have been using for data-poor stocks.
7 There are some stocks that we call data-limited that have a
8 little more information on the biology, some indices, some
9 additional information other than just landings, and these
10 methods take advantage of that additional information to help us
11 move beyond just the average landings, and hopefully allow us to
12 make better use of the fisheries yield out there.

13
14 The SSC sees this, and as the science recommends, in terms of
15 being potentially an interim policy setup that would be
16 eventually upgraded to something more data-rich when that
17 situation arises, and so this is just to situate you where this
18 fits relative to a full quantitative, model-based stock
19 assessment and just a basic average landings, Tiers 3a and 3b in
20 your ABC control rule.

21
22 This presentation will be primarily focused on lane snapper, the
23 results of lane snapper. I am going to explain briefly the
24 process that this SEDAR 49 went through to basically explore
25 some of these other species that are also data-limited and see
26 the feasibility of them to be evaluated, assessed, through this
27 process.

28
29 There is a tool that was developed by a group of stock
30 assessment scientists, working very closely with our Science
31 Center in Miami, called the Data-Limited Tool Application, DLM
32 Tool, and that's the version right there.

33
34 The process involves three steps. One is you actually look at
35 the data available, and you see which types of data fit properly
36 to provide the necessary metrics, and you identify then the
37 feasibility of using different methods for different species.

38
39 Then you go to Step Number 2, where you conduct a management
40 strategy evaluation, which is basically a simulation-type
41 process, that samples, re-samples, all the inputs into the
42 assessment and recreates that situation multiple times to
43 generate then some idea of distributions of where the outcomes
44 would be.

45
46 Then, eventually, after you actually evaluate what works and
47 what doesn't, what data is appropriate and what isn't, you end
48 up to a point that you say, okay, if this is viable, then I can

1 apply the last step and generate catch recommendations.
2
3 The presentation is going to focus primarily on that first part
4 and then end with a little bit of an overview of where to go
5 from here regarding potential other species to be considered and
6 then the applicability of this method in the future.
7
8 Here is the list of species that you have identified for the
9 data-limited methods SEDAR 49 assessment process, and, in the
10 interest of time, and since this is after lunch and it's not
11 very exciting stuff, I am going to just skip most of the details
12 of the review workshop. I actually served as the Chair of the
13 Review Panel for this assessment, and there was a lot of
14 discussions about the data quality for some of these species and
15 the data availability, in some cases, and the appropriateness of
16 using some of these methodologies.
17
18 At the end, four species were kind of automatically eliminated,
19 because the data just did not pan out to be there to feed into
20 these procedures, and those four species then were identified as
21 species that could potentially continue, move forward, and have
22 the application followed through. Then, after that, it turns
23 out that, for a variety of reasons, that had to do again with
24 data limitation, the only species that could be completed, the
25 analysis could be completed all the way to the catch advice, was
26 lane snapper.
27
28 Here is just a very quick overview of the types of tables that
29 are put together through this process. There on the left, you
30 can have catch-based methods and index-based methods that are
31 metrics of catch per unit of effort from different surveys or
32 different fleets, and then look at length-based, to see is there
33 any information content on the size composition of the
34 population that you can then infer whether there is a level of
35 overexploitation of this population, if it's unsustainable, or
36 at a sustainable state.
37
38 All of this was done in light, and you can see the asterisk
39 there, of the ABC recommendations for these same species that
40 the SSC had already provided, and so what these new methods did
41 was try and improve on just the ABC, and that was mean landings
42 plus one standard deviation for that time period there, and
43 that's the reference period, 1999 through 2008, that you have
44 now as catch advice for those species, and ACLs have been based
45 on those. We tested all of these methods, and you can see there
46 the shaded rows and columns, the ones that panned out or not for
47 lane snapper.
48

1 Again, as I mentioned, we have Tier 3a in your ABC control rule,
2 and that control rule, Tier 3a, we are using average landings to
3 determine some proxy of potential sustainability. In that case,
4 for that tier, you really assume that those species are unlikely
5 to be undergoing overfishing. These are species that are not
6 too much at risk, given all the information that we have, to be
7 undergoing overfishing.

8
9 In that case, we assume that the target CPUE being used would
10 equal that mean CPUE and that the target length would be the
11 mean length existing, because the mean CPUE and the mean length
12 should be indicative of that MSY, and not really that we know
13 what that is, but at least some level of landings that is
14 considered sustainable. You can see some of the other species
15 that were there in the same tier and that were evaluated as
16 well, but did not make it.

17
18 Here is another table showing some of the metrics, the
19 performance metrics, for methods that were applied in terms of
20 different criteria. Data quality was one and long-term yield.
21 As you run those MSEs and you run those simulation procedures,
22 are you actually achieving, maximizing your chances, of having
23 long-term yield that is good, where it should be, or maximizing
24 the short-term yield, and so there is tradeoffs there that are
25 taken into account, and then other criteria as well.

26
27 With that, without going too much into detail, I can tell you
28 that I_{target} was set up, was chosen by the assessment panel, as
29 the method that would be used for lane snapper, given all this
30 criteria, the data availability and all of the results so far.

31
32 The DLM tool then, as you apply it, as you move into that catch
33 advice, the final phase of applying this method, you end up,
34 again, doing random draws of data inputs, and you create this
35 distribution, probably density function, that is a distribution
36 of space of all the possible outcomes that you expect for this
37 analysis.

38
39 There, you have the median value that the team felt would be the
40 most representative of where the catch advice would be, but it
41 gives us an idea of the spread of other potential outcomes that
42 are not as likely.

43
44 I am explaining this to then move on to this next one, where you
45 have all the four methods that were used for lane snapper, and
46 the green distribution, and I don't know if you have that in
47 front of you. From here, I can barely see the green curve
48 there, but that was the method chosen and that the SSC then

1 considered to proceed with catch advice.
2
3 Based on that, the SSC then decided, since you had this
4 distribution -- Let me put up this other one, so you can have an
5 idea, better, of what it looks like. You can use that median
6 value as your estimate of OFL, a proxy for OFL, your overfishing
7 limit, and then you can use a percentile of this distribution,
8 just like P* -- Like 30th percentile can give you an idea of the
9 ABC, and so it's using that same rationale that you use for the
10 P* methodology, but applying this in a context of a data-limited
11 species.
12
13 That is where we ended up, with an OFL at 364,100 pounds. Then
14 an ABC at the 30th percentile, and so OFL is consistent with the
15 way that we provide you, for the quantitative stock assessments,
16 OFL and ABC catch advice, and we used the 50th percentile for OFL
17 and the 30th percentile for ABC.
18
19 The SSC provided those as catch advice for lane snapper and also
20 added that this process, because it facilitates -- After you go
21 through this whole triage, those three steps that I mentioned,
22 and you have all this work done and you look at the biology and
23 all the different data available -- After you go through that
24 triage to update this, you can just plug in the new numbers and
25 sort of push the button, and it generates additional advice
26 going on. You don't have to go back and redo the whole thing.
27
28 The SSC is trying to recommend then that we use this then as a
29 way to sort of refresh the estimates that we are providing you
30 on a more regular basis than we do just for the completed data-
31 poor, where we gave you that average landings and that's it.
32 Until the SSC meets again and we go through that entire process,
33 we are not going to be able to give you updated catch advice for
34 those data-poor species.
35
36 Using this methodology, we can, ideally every year, but perhaps
37 every other year, the SSC felt no longer than every three years,
38 that this process should be rerun for lane snapper and allow
39 production of updated catch advice.
40
41 Going now into the data triage and the species that have been
42 identified by the team, by the Science Center -- There is a team
43 of folks working together. Since the SEDAR 49 review workshop,
44 there were lots of suggestions and comments made by the review
45 panel, and the team has really been working hard. I was very
46 pleased to see, at the end of this process, that they came to
47 the SSC meeting with a product that is really much improved and
48 capable of providing catch advice.

1
2 As part of this, they are also providing a list of species that
3 can be considered that they are recommending in terms of
4 continuing to use this same methodology to provide improved
5 catch advice for these other data-limited species. The SSC, by
6 the way, considered this the best scientific information
7 available, and they really approved of the methodologies.

8
9 For a place like where we are, in the Gulf of Mexico, the
10 Southeast U.S., having the ability to use these methods that are
11 more applicable to data-limited species is a big advantage,
12 because we have a lot of data limitations, and so this really
13 allows us to evolve from catch advice that's based solely on
14 average landings into something that is more inclusive of the
15 biology and some other information content that we might have
16 about those species, and I think this concludes my presentation,
17 Mr. Chairman, and I will be glad to address any questions that
18 you or the council might have.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you, Dr. Barbieri. Any questions or
21 discussion? Mr. Diaz.

22
23 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Dr. Barbieri. I appreciate you all's work
24 on this. The slide you've got up right now, I want to just make
25 sure that I fully understand. Basically, you all worked on
26 eight species, but only one of the eight we could get to the
27 point where we could get some catch advice on. I don't want us
28 to get in a situation where we take up a slot and do data-poor
29 and then we get where we only get information out of one-out-of-
30 seven again.

31
32 These have been vetted to the point where we think we could
33 carry them out all the way to the end and we could actually get
34 some advice from them if we go down that road, and is that
35 correct?

36
37 **DR. BARBIERI:** Sort of. It is correct that the team has already
38 vetted these species in terms of their feasibility to be used
39 for this analysis. Now, the multitude of data that has to come
40 into this process is always getting updates and corrections, and
41 so there is no guarantee that this would really produce
42 completely reasonable results that would lead us all the way to
43 the end.

44
45 I mean, it's really a suggestion that these species are species
46 that have additional data that potentially makes itself suitable
47 to provide catch advice based on these methodologies, additional
48 to just landings information. I don't know if Dr. Porch would

1 like to supplement that.

2
3 **DR. PORCH:** Sure. Thank you. Luiz is right that, on the
4 surface, I more or less agree with this list, but, when you
5 really get into the details, sometimes the warts come out. For
6 some of the things, like blackfin snapper, et cetera, I am not
7 absolutely certain what we will get out of that, in terms of
8 things like indices of abundance. That may end up falling into
9 a catch only, but it might work.

10
11 An example was yellowfin was on the list, but the problem with
12 yellowfin is that they're really hard to tell from scamp. Even
13 in our video surveys, the people who are reading the tapes say
14 that we just can't tell the difference unless they're right up
15 in the camera, and I saw that myself when I looked at some
16 videos, and we all thought it was a scamp. I was at Jim Cowan's
17 office, looking at some videos he did, and we zoomed in on it
18 and said, wait a minute, that's a yellowmouth, and that was a
19 high-resolution photo, and so they are hard, and it's even
20 harder to tell them apart at the docks when they've been faded
21 and have been on ice, and so a lot of people don't
22 differentiate.

23
24 Those kinds of things come out, but I think we can do this
25 process a lot faster than we did the first time around. A lot
26 of it was not only educating ourselves, but educating the people
27 who have to make decisions on it and how the process works and
28 vetting the MSE, et cetera.

29
30 I also want to point out that a couple of the species on there
31 are now slated for assessments. Gray snapper is a current
32 benchmark, and scamp, I believe, is our first research track
33 assessment.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Mr. Anson.

36
37 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Dr. Barbieri. Going back to your
38 previous slide or two, where you have the 355,000 pounds, did
39 you all look at where the landings steam had been here lately,
40 and how do those numbers compare to the recent landings?

41
42 **DR. BARBIERI:** Yes, we did, and these numbers are actually
43 fairly close to what we have in the books right now, and they're
44 a little lower than those, because now we have a different
45 methodology for generating that buffer than what we were using
46 before, but they are pretty much around the ballpark.

47
48 **MR. ANSON:** The ABCs and OFLs, these have kind of the

1 uncertainty accounted for, or how is the uncertainty accounted
2 for? Can it not be accounted for, because of the data streams
3 that you have available? I might have missed that.

4
5
6 **DR. BARBIERI:** No, uncertainty was accounted for by actually
7 running these types of resampling procedures and rerunning the
8 model with random-draw data inputs and generating with that
9 basically a probability distribution, similar to what we do for
10 the overfishing limit, the probability of distribution of OFL,
11 and, from there, we estimate where OFL is. Then we use a
12 percentile of that to determine where ABC is.

13
14 Now, having said that, obviously this process is not as
15 sophisticated as the ones that are used when you're looking into
16 fully-parameterized models, and so the data inputs and the
17 parameter estimates and everything else is much, much better
18 than what we have with this methodology. Usually these species
19 just don't have that much information. Our assessment of
20 uncertainty is not as complete, I would say.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Atran.

23
24 **MR. ATRAN:** I just wanted to clarify the OFL and the ABC that
25 came out of this methodology is actually slightly higher than
26 our current OFL and ABC that were done with the Tier 3a
27 methodology.

28
29 **DR. BARBIERI:** I'm sorry. I said a little lower, right?

30
31 **MR. ATRAN:** No, these new numbers are a little higher.

32
33 **DR. BARBIERI:** I know. I think I said a little lower, and so
34 thank you.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** All right. Now you lost me. Back up a
37 second. The numbers are higher or lower or where are we at
38 here?

39
40 **MR. ATRAN:** If you put the ABC screen back up, the OFL here is
41 364,000 pounds. Currently, we have 358,000 pounds, and so it
42 goes up a little bit, and the ABC here is 355,500. We currently
43 have 301,000 pounds, and so, in each case, these new numbers are
44 a little higher than the old ones.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. I just wanted to make sure
47 that I heard you correctly. All right. Any further questions?
48 Mr. Diaz.

1
2 **MR. DIAZ:** Dr. Barbieri, one more question. I am just curious.
3 Can you elaborate a little bit about red drum and I guess maybe
4 what's needed to get red drum to the point where we could do an
5 assessment on it? Thank you.
6

7 **DR. BARBIERI:** Well, I am not the expert there, but I can tell
8 you, and I will refer you to the man who has been doing, for the
9 last couple of decades, the red drum Gulf-wide assessment, but,
10 having worked on red drum in my previous life and then being
11 involved with the Gulf SSC for a while, I can tell you that the
12 main limitation that we have is not having enough -- First, we
13 don't have landings information that is inclusive of the entire
14 stock.
15

16 The landings information that we get right now are primarily
17 from the state waters. There has to be some estimation of dead
18 discards that come out of federal waters, but we don't have
19 landings coming from that area.
20

21 We also don't have, I believe, and correct me if I'm wrong,
22 Clay, but I don't think we have very good fishery-independent
23 indices of abundance that allow us to have an idea of what is
24 going on over there with this big, large spawning portion of the
25 stock.
26

27 I mean, most of the information that we have on red drum, and,
28 in Florida, that's exactly what we do. We have fishery-
29 dependent and fishery-independent, and we have some biology
30 studies going on, but most of those are focused on the inshore
31 and estuarine waters, and so you're really just capturing, by
32 and large, only a portion of the population. You don't have an
33 idea of what is going on over the entire breadth and scope of
34 where the stock is.
35

36 In this case, looking at landings time series of red snapper,
37 you can imagine that it was very complicated to come up with
38 something that would make sense, and the lack of more complete
39 information -- This came up during the review workshop. More
40 complete information on biological parameters associated with
41 that offshore stock. I can tell you that, from my perspective,
42 we need some better estimates of abundance and age composition
43 of these stocks at a broad scale over the Gulf.
44

45 Now, there are some studies, and Dr. Porch has been involved in
46 one that is being conducted out of our laboratory, in
47 collaboration with some other people, that is using genetic
48 tagging techniques to try and come up with some estimates of

1 population size or effective population size and then try to
2 extrapolate and get something that is more complete, but those
3 things are moving slowly, because the breadth of the problem --
4 Our study is primarily focused on the West Florida Shelf, and so
5 that's just one part. Until we integrate all these other pieces
6 of the Gulf of Mexico, it's going to be difficult, in a more
7 cohesive data over that entire range.

8
9 **DR. PORCH:** I guess that's my cue. First of all, I have to
10 correct Luiz. I haven't been doing assessments of red drum for
11 two decades. I did it two decades ago, but that was the most
12 recent full assessment, yes.

13
14 You're right that this question has come up before the council
15 on several occasions, and we've done some analyses, but what we
16 really need is a picture of the age composition for the offshore
17 stock to compare with the pictures of the age composition we got
18 back in the 1980s, so that can really see, relatively speaking,
19 how much the age composition has filled out towards those older
20 animals.

21
22 Then, if you plug that into an assessment, you have something to
23 work with. Right now, we have pictures of the age structure of
24 the stock, as you said, off of part of west Florida, and some
25 off of Alabama and a little part of the northern Gulf, whereas
26 what we had in the 1980s were those studies done by Chuck Wilson
27 and a number of other people, and NMFS, where we had broad
28 coverage over the whole northern Gulf of Mexico, and so that's
29 what we really need to actually update a full-scale, age-
30 structured assessment, Gulf-wide assessment.

31
32 Ideally, we would have that by multiple areas within the Gulf of
33 Mexico too, so we could kind of stratify the assessment. We
34 talked about, years ago, having essentially an assessment model
35 that has state-specific components for the juveniles, because
36 the young don't move that much from one bay to another, but
37 then, when they go offshore, they move quite a bit, and so those
38 sorts of things would be great to have. We haven't been able to
39 find funding to get those kinds of studies done on a Gulf-wide
40 basis for the offshore stock, but, if we did that, it wouldn't
41 be a hard matter to actually do a full-scale stock assessment.

42
43 I do want to point out though that the age composition data that
44 the SSC did see did show that older fish are more prevalent now
45 than they were back in the 1980s, and so there must have been
46 some recovery. We just can't quantify exactly how much, because
47 the data we have is only from those two relatively small areas.

1 **DR. BARBIERI:** I don't know if I am correct or not, but I think
2 that there is a study that Dr. Crabtree and colleagues completed
3 in the 1960s, the late 1960s, that should show some of that --
4 Is that correct, Dr. Crabtree?

5
6 **DR. CRABTREE:** I am having a hard time remembering that far
7 back. I don't think it was the 1960s, but we did do a red drum
8 study. Can I ask a question though, while we're talking red
9 drum, either Clay or Luiz, but they just did a red drum
10 assessment on the Atlantic coast, through SEDAR and ASMFC, and I
11 think one of your former employees was the lead assessment
12 scientist on it, and so they were able to do one, but, as far as
13 I know, they have all the same data limitations and issues that
14 we have in the Gulf. Were they able to pull it off, and were
15 they successful?

16
17 **DR. BARBIERI:** It depends on who you ask, I mean really. I can
18 tell you this was a two or three-year process that was basically
19 aborted two or three times during that process, because, again,
20 in the Atlantic, it has been much more difficult to have an idea
21 of what's going on offshore, because you don't have those
22 offshore, even the history going back of purse seines or
23 anything that would be looking at the offshore stock, and so
24 it's really complicated.

25
26 Then a lot of the inshore, the nearshore and inshore data that
27 the states have, have not been consistently collected, which is
28 also a problem with our Gulf states as well. I mean, all of us
29 are conducting our own monitoring programs to suit our needs,
30 but they are not necessarily comparable when you are trying to
31 integrate them all across, and so that was a major complication.

32
33 Eventually, eventually, they went back and got it completed, but
34 the uncertainty there is estimated to be really, really high,
35 and there are major concerns on considering that suitable for
36 management advice.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Porch.

39
40 **DR. PORCH:** To that point, we could go through the motions and
41 do an assessment. I'm not saying it's not possible to do it.
42 It just wouldn't be particularly meaningful if you don't have
43 the data for the recent era on the age composition of the
44 offshore stock.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Mr. Diaz.

47
48 **MR. DIAZ:** One more comment. I did read through the assessment,

1 and I saw something I had never seen before. It said there was
2 one study that did not support red drum being a single genetic
3 unit throughout the Gulf of Mexico. Do you know anything about
4 that?

5

6 **DR. BARBIERI:** You mean from the review report?

7

8 **MR. DIAZ:** It was in the data-poor paper that I read through.
9 It was on page 20.

10

11 **DR. BARBIERI:** That must be from the review report. Red drum do
12 have different -- I would say a meta-population structure. They
13 are not homogeneous throughout their range, in terms of
14 population structure. We don't really understand all of the
15 particulars there, but I can tell you that, working with the
16 molecular genetics at the lab and working with colleagues
17 throughout the Gulf, we get this impression that there are
18 pieces of the Gulf that have a more homogeneous genetics
19 structure than others.

20

21 For example, just to give you an example, but, in the State of
22 Florida, we are not allowed, through our hatchery program that
23 we release red drum, to collect red drum from west central
24 Florida and release them in the Panhandle, and vice versa,
25 because there is enough genetic distance, is what our
26 geneticists tell us, enough genetic distance there to make them
27 not necessarily compatible.

28

29 What I think their comment was, and it was a discussion at the
30 review workshop, but their comment was there is a lot more about
31 the population structure of red drum that we don't fully
32 understand.

33

34 Now, projects like Dr. Porch and others have been conducting
35 that are more based on tagging or some different methods that
36 are not necessarily stock assessments, to try and get some idea
37 of the magnitude of the population size might be more
38 productive, but a fisheries-independent -- Like Dr. Porch said,
39 a fisheries-independent sampling in federal waters that gives us
40 an idea of what the age composition is out there would be really
41 beneficial.

42

43 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. I had a couple of other
44 people on the list that were patiently waiting. Chris. Pass.
45 Mr. Anson.

46

47 **MR. ANSON:** To follow-up on a comment, Clay, that you had
48 regarding the sampling in federal waters, and Luiz had mentioned

1 it too, but I thought that Dr. Powers had received some funding,
2 Sean Powers had received some funding, and is that what you're
3 referring to for that sampling? I thought his was moved over
4 even into Louisiana as well. I thought he was trying to sample
5 some fish off of Central Louisiana. Is that not the case?
6

7 **DR. PORCH:** I believe that he did get some there too, and
8 Louisiana is the teeth of the fishery, but it still wasn't quite
9 the scale that we really need for a Gulf-wide assessment. Like
10 I said, you could go through the motions, but that would be the
11 first think that would come out in a review.
12

13 What I would like to see is that expanded substantially, and
14 keep in mind, as was already referred to, there seems to be some
15 genetic substructure, but they're not clean breaks, because they
16 utilize the bays all the way along the coast.
17

18 They kind of -- All these populations kind of overlap and
19 intermix, and so it's not clear exactly how fine we should break
20 it up, and so that's why I was suggesting what we really want to
21 do is make sure that we get good coverage of age composition at
22 least at something akin to a state level, Texas, Louisiana,
23 Florida, Alabama, something like that. Then we can decide how
24 we need to break up the data for the assessment, if we'll have a
25 three-stock model or something like that.
26

27 **DR. BARBIERI:** Just briefly to that point, Mr. Chairman, and I
28 see those issues as something that perhaps a more coordinated
29 effort, involving multiple investigators in different areas of
30 the Gulf that do something more inclusive.
31

32 You know that we are trying to organize that meeting this
33 summer, sometime this summer, that we integrate more of the
34 state partners and pull some of the academics as well, and of
35 course NMFS and others, to come and have a discussion of what
36 are the types of research programs that we need to implement in
37 the Gulf, what are the issues that come to the top as
38 priorities, and this could come as one, that we all coordinate
39 and we play together and get better results that are more
40 inclusive of the whole Gulf.
41

42 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further comments or
43 discussion? Okay.
44

45 **DR. BARBIERI:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
46

47 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you, Dr. Barbieri. We're going to take
48 about a ten-minute break, and then we will pick back up on the

1 Charter/For-Hire Management Discussion.

2
3 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

4
5 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** We are going to go to Agenda Item XI,
6 Charter/For-Hire Management Discussion, and Dr. Freeman.

7
8 **CHARTER/FOR-HIRE MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION**

9
10 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As a reminder, we had
11 two motions at the January council meeting, and so this
12 presentation will be an overview of the products that are
13 contained in Tab B, Number 9(a) and 9(b).

14
15 The first motion that this presentation touches on is listed on
16 this slide, where staff was to develop a white paper looking at
17 inclusion of red snapper, gag, gray triggerfish, greater
18 amberjack, and red grouper in the management program, in
19 particular looking at methods for determining the ACL,
20 mechanisms for trading different species to accommodate regional
21 differences, and, lastly, looking at how initial allocation of
22 shares would change through a cyclical redistribution.

23
24 The second motion requested that staff craft a stand-alone
25 action to address cyclical redistribution, specifically of red
26 snapper, and so, again, since this was looking at an action, and
27 the previous motion was looking at scenarios for cyclical
28 redistribution, we have merged the two again in this overview.

29
30 For the first part, looking at potential allocation, we have
31 drafted a couple of alternatives. Again, these are included in
32 the white paper, in the briefing book. Alternative 1 simply did
33 not allocate a portion of the recreational ACL to each component
34 of the recreational sector.

35
36 Alternative 2 took an average of the most recent five years of
37 data, which was 2011 through 2015. Alternative 3 was an average
38 of the longest time series, which was from 1981 to 2015, and we
39 had two options included in that alternative, the first being to
40 use all of those years and the second option being excluding
41 2010. Alternative 4 was a weighted timeframe, where 50 percent
42 came from the average of the most recent five years and 50
43 percent came from the average of our longest time series, and,
44 again, including the same two options, either using all of those
45 years or excluding 2010.

46
47 Again, the allocations, as a result of these alternatives, in
48 terms of poundage and percentages, are included in that white

1 paper, and we can certainly go to that in the discussion
2 afterwards.

3
4 In terms of looking at a cyclical catch share program, there is
5 three main components of this program, which include a scheduled
6 time table of cycles, the reclamation process of shares, and,
7 lastly, the redistribution process of those shares.

8
9 This table touches on the differences between a traditional
10 catch share program and a cyclical catch share program, in terms
11 of both the share distribution, which, under a traditional
12 program is a one-time event. With cyclical catch share, you do
13 have the initial distribution, and then there is the reclamation
14 and redistribution process. In terms of share ownership, again
15 they're assigned at the start of the program, and then any
16 changes to that are based on share transfers, if allowed in the
17 program.

18
19 Under a CCS program, they would, again, be assigned at the start
20 of the program, but a portion would be reclaimed and
21 redistributed at those predetermined cycles, and the
22 redistribution is based on landings.

23
24 The cyclical nature of this program associates the shares with
25 stakeholders actively participating in the fishery, again, to
26 sort of be a better representation, and it might be an
27 appropriate choice under a couple of situations. In particular,
28 if individual landing histories are unknown, initial share
29 distribution might not be a true representation of the fishery.
30 Number of latent permits unknown, and absentee ownership might
31 be a concern, and, lastly, reduction of barriers to new or
32 replacement fishermen is a program objective.

33
34 I mentioned that there is three components to the CCS program.
35 The first that we'll touch on is cycles, and so our cycles may
36 be for a set length of time, and they can also progressively
37 lengthen over time or progressively lengthen until a set length
38 is achieved, and that is what is contained in this table.

39
40 The first, where we had that set time table, again using as an
41 example that they're all one year cycles. Under the second,
42 with the progressive, that they continually become longer, from
43 one year to two, three, or four years, and, again, these are
44 just examples. The last is that we move from a one-year cycle
45 to a two-year cycle and then retain a three-year cycle length.
46 Those cycles can continue indefinitely or end after a certain
47 number of cycles have occurred.

48

1 In terms of the reclamation, there is two design components for
2 consideration. The first is the qualifications for accounts
3 from which shares would be reclaimed, and the second is the
4 proportion of shares to be reclaimed, and so the first, in terms
5 of the qualifications, there is two under consideration, the
6 first being latent, which simply would involve reclaiming shares
7 from shareholder accounts that did not report landings during
8 that cycle. The second, which would be a comprehensive
9 reclamation, would reclaim from all shareholders, regardless of
10 the landings.

11
12 In terms of the proportion of shares to be reclaimed, they can
13 either be fixed or progressive. Again, if we look at that
14 table, under the set proportion we have here as an example, each
15 of the cycles, 25 percent would be reclaimed from the
16 shareholder accounts. Under the progressive proportion, in this
17 particular example, we have that the proportion is decreased
18 over time.

19
20 In terms of the distribution, there is two options there as well
21 that can be explored, equal and proportional. With equal
22 redistribution, it takes a total amount of shares that have been
23 reclaimed from the shareholder accounts and redistributed
24 equally to all accounts that had landings and the second being
25 proportional distribution, which redistributes a greater
26 proportion of the shares to accounts that had greater landings
27 during that given cycle.

28
29 Here we've got a couple of potential alternatives, in terms of
30 the accounts that would be subject to reclamation. The first is
31 simply our traditional no action, where we would not reclaim
32 shares, and this particular slide is, again, referring to that
33 second tab, that stand-alone, which is why it's using red
34 snapper as an example.

35
36 Alternative 2 would reclaim shares from each shareholder account
37 that did not report landings of red snapper during the cycle.
38 Alternative 3 would reclaim shares from shareholder accounts
39 that report landings less than some given percentage of the
40 shares held by that shareholder account, and we've got a couple
41 of options under there as examples of 25 percent, 50 percent,
42 and 75 percent. Lastly, Alternative 4, where we would reclaim
43 shares from all shareholder accounts.

44
45 In terms of reclamation of shares, again, Alternative 1, we
46 would not reclaim shares from any accounts. Alternative 2 would
47 reclaim a set amount of shares each cycle from each shareholder
48 account. Again, we have just some examples here, Option 2a, 2b,

1 and 2c being 25 percent, 50 percent, and 75 percent of the
2 shares that would be reclaimed.

3
4 Alternative 3 would reclaim a decreasing amount of shares each
5 cycle from each shareholder account that would be subject to
6 reclamation, and, again, we just have some examples here.
7 Option 3a would go from 75 percent in the first cycle to 50
8 percent of the shares in cycle two being reclaimed. In cycle
9 three onward, reclaiming 25 percent. In 3b, it's starting at 90
10 percent and moving down to 60 and then, in cycle three onward,
11 going with 30 percent. Again, these are just examples. Those
12 percentages certainly could be changed.

13
14 In terms of the occurrence of the cycles, Alternative 1 does not
15 specify cycles for reclaiming shares of red snapper.
16 Alternative 2 says that the cycles for reclaiming shares would
17 occur every year. 2a is continuing them for some set number of
18 years. 2b is allowing those cycles to continue indefinitely.

19
20 Alternative 3 would have the cycles for reclaiming shares
21 occurring every two years for some number of years. 3a is
22 saying that they would continue, again, for X number of years,
23 and 3b being that they would continue indefinitely.

24
25 In terms of the redistribution of shares, Alternative 1, again,
26 would not specify a method for redistributing shares.
27 Alternative, as we defined earlier, would redistribute those
28 shares equally among accounts that had reported landings during
29 a cycle. Alternative 3 would redistribute shares proportional
30 to landings reported by accounts during that given cycle.

31
32 In terms of potential trading mechanisms that could be included
33 with a CCS program, we would evaluate requirements for
34 eligibility to transfer shares and allocation. Alternative 1
35 would not allow shares or allocation to be transferred.

36
37 Alternative 2 would include requirements such as having a Gulf
38 charter vessel/headboat permit for reef fish and endorsement, if
39 established, to receive transferred shares and/or allocation.
40 Again, as sub-options, they could either allow transfer of
41 shares and/or transfer of allocation. Alternative 3 would not
42 restrict transfer of shares or allocation, and it could only be
43 transferred to U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens.

44
45 That concludes, again, a brief overview of those two tab items.
46 I am more than happy to go into the white paper or stand-alone
47 actions, as requested, during the discussion.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any questions or discussion about
2 the presentation? Seeing no questions or discussion, do you
3 want to go through the white paper section-by-section, or was
4 the presentation good enough for you? Okay. Then I guess we
5 will move on down the line, unless someone wants to add or pick
6 up anything there. That pretty much takes care of the white
7 paper on changes to the charter/for-hire allocation-based
8 management. I guess the next thing would be the draft action.
9 Is that correct, or is that part of this?

10
11 **DR. FREEMAN:** Sorry. Could you repeat that?

12
13 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** The next item would be the draft action under
14 that?

15
16 **DR. FREEMAN:** The draft action was that stand-alone action, and
17 so that was contained in that overview, yes.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. I just want to make sure that I don't
20 skip anything here.

21
22 **DR. FREEMAN:** Absolutely.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** All right. I guess the next thing is the
25 background documents included for reference, the Amendment 41
26 analysis, the Excel spreadsheets, and does anybody want to move
27 into that? Okay. I don't see anybody jumping up and down or
28 waving their hands, and so I guess that will -- I guess we've
29 gone through what we're going to do with the charter/for-hire
30 management discussion, unless anyone wants to make a motion or
31 step up and move forward with that. Mr. Sanchez.

32
33 **MR. SANCHEZ:** First, I want to thank staff on the white paper.
34 That came as a result of the joint meeting of our APs, and I
35 think you did an excellent job of taking something that could
36 have been presented in a difficult manner in a rather
37 straightforward and easy-to-understand manner, and so excellent
38 job to everybody involved.

39
40 That said, I would like to make a motion and give staff that
41 same latitude. They have done such a good job to help me
42 wordsmith it, and, more importantly, try to put it together,
43 depending on how we support this. **The motion is to add an**
44 **action item that will add cyclical redistribution of red snapper**
45 **as an action item to Amendment 41.** If I can get a second, I
46 will explain the rationale.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. We have a motion that we're going to

1 get up on the board, and so you may need to repeat it for them,
2 John. Thank you. Mr. Sanchez, is that your motion? Is it
3 correct?

4

5 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, that appears to be fine.

6

7 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. So we have a motion on the board, and
8 it was seconded. Is there any further discussion? Mr. Sanchez.

9

10 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Just to let staff have the same latitude they did
11 in crafting this white paper, to include these cyclical
12 redistribution items, as they pertain to red snapper, for
13 inclusion into the amendment.

14

15 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. I think that's well noted. Any further
16 discussion? **Seeing no further discussion, is there any**
17 **opposition to the motion on the floor before you? Seeing no**
18 **opposition, the motion carries.** I will give everybody a minute
19 here. Anything else? Dr. Lucas.

20

21 **DR. LUCAS:** Matt, I was just looking back over your
22 presentation, and I did have one question for you. Under the
23 potential allocation, when you were evaluating the various
24 timeframes, was there any reason or rationale for not including
25 the timeframe that was originally included in the sector
26 separation amendment?

27

28 **DR. FREEMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Lucas. These, again, were simply
29 starting points and examples, and so we could certainly craft
30 new alternatives, as the council directs.

31

32 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Lucas.

33

34 **DR. LUCAS:** Do you need a motion to look at one of those, or
35 could we just make a suggestion that you at least include that
36 timeframe series?

37

38 **DR. FREEMAN:** A suggestion would be fine.

39

40 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. Is there further
41 discussion? Okay. Well, if there is no further discussion on
42 Amendment 41, we will move on. Ms. Levy.

43

44 **MS. LEVY:** Sorry, but just to that prior discussion, and maybe I
45 am missing it, the time series, did that go to the cyclical
46 redistribution, or did that go to the white paper and the extra
47 species that were in the white paper?

48

1 **DR. FREEMAN:** It doesn't directly affect the stand-alone action,
2 which is what we just had a motion directed towards. The time
3 series was more for the allocation of the additional species
4 that were included in the white paper.
5

6 **MS. LEVY:** Right, and so I guess I was just trying to clarify
7 whether the question was to add that to the white paper or --
8 It's just to make sure that staff understood what it is that you
9 were asking, Kelly.

10

11 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion?
12 Lieutenant Commander.
13

14 **LCDR LEO DANAHER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am just trying to
15 seek a little bit of clarity, looking down the road. If
16 something like this were to be implemented, then my
17 understanding, from your presentation, is that bag limits on
18 charter/for-hire wouldn't really exist anymore. It would become
19 like an IFQ kind of thing.
20

21 **DR. FREEMAN:** I am going to direct that question to NMFS staff
22 and let them respond.
23

24 **DR. STEPHEN:** The adaptive, or cyclic, approach is a catch share
25 style, but you could still do that with or without bag limits,
26 and I think that's in the original 41 and 42, is consideration
27 of using that, if you want to have a further limitation to it.
28

29 **LCDR DANAHER:** Okay. I understand, I think. Just from like an
30 enforcement perspective, the bag limits help us account for who
31 has a particular type of fish per individual, obviously, and
32 these charter/for-hire are not required to make landings, like
33 commercial vessels, and I think it just -- At this point, it's a
34 little bit murky for me to determine how I would figure out how
35 to enforce it.
36

37 **DR. STEPHEN:** With respect to that, if we do either of the types
38 of catch share programs considered in 41, the adaptive or the
39 PFQ or IFQ, they would all have components probably that would
40 be very similar to commercial, to allow enforcement of that, and
41 so, similar to the notification, you have to have enough
42 allocation onboard when you're landing to account for it. What
43 we did in the Headboat Collaborative, which we used the amount
44 of allocation onboard and then they self-imposed, to make sure
45 that they were at a one or a two-fish bag limit.
46

47 **LCDR DANAHER:** Understood. Thank you, Mr. Chair. No more
48 questions.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Dr. Freeman.
3
4 **DR. FREEMAN:** Again, just for clarification, Dr. Lucas, in terms
5 of the suggestion to look at the additional timeframes for the
6 white paper, is that something that the council would like
7 presented at the next meeting or how would you like for us to go
8 forward with that?
9
10 **DR. LUCAS:** That's fine.
11
12 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Anybody else? I don't see anybody
13 else, and so I guess that will wrap up this discussion. Dr.
14 Freeman, are you clear on everything? Have you got all the
15 information you need?
16
17 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. Thank you.
18
19 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. We will move on to the next item,
20 which will be the Response to Documentation Requested by the
21 Gulf Angler Fishing Group. This will be Tab B, Number 10, and
22 I'm not sure who will be the lead on this.
23
24 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** Dr. Porch, are you going to be
25 presenting this?
26
27 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Hang on. Kevin Anson has a question.
28
29 **MR. ANSON:** Was this sent out via email recently or when was it
30 sent?
31
32 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** It was during this meeting.
33
34 **DR. SIMMONS:** It's also on the website.
35
36 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** Everything we send to you from
37 Meetings during the council meeting will also be put on the
38 website, and, if you have the website open during the day, you
39 just need to refresh it every now and then to pick up the new
40 additions.
41
42 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Gregory.
43 Ms. Gerhart.
44
45 **SERO/SEFSC RESPONSE TO DOCUMENTATION REQUESTED BY GULF ANGLER**
46 **FISHING GROUP**
47
48 **MS. GERHART:** Thank you. We put this presentation together in

1 response to the request from the council at the last meeting to
2 evaluate the options that were put forward by the Gulf Angler
3 Focus Group. The primary objective of that report from the
4 Focus Group was to develop possible management options, and they
5 stressed that these were not recommendations, but they were
6 options that were come up with through that workgroup.

7
8 There were seven options. Option a was status quo, which, of
9 course, is where we're at right now. There's a sixteen-inch
10 minimum size limit, a two-fish bag limit. We have the separate
11 components of the recreational sector, with separate ACLs, start
12 the season on June 1, and then individual states having their
13 different state seasons.

14
15 There were four questions we were asked to address. The first
16 was is the option permissible under the Magnuson-Steven Act?
17 The second was will it affect the length of the private angler
18 season? What were the assumptions and caveats of each of these,
19 and will it achieve a forty-day season?

20
21 For each of these options, you will see those four questions
22 addressed. For status quo, obviously it is permissible under
23 MSA. It does not change anything, and so, therefore, the season
24 would not change. Obviously we talked about the season this
25 morning, and we used 2016 catches for 2017. We used historical
26 harvesting patterns as well as the state seasons that were given
27 to us, and we all realize that that does not achieve the forty-
28 day season.

29
30 Option B is to maximize the fishing days within the current
31 framework, and so making some of the changes that we've talked
32 about in the past, and so we have not done new analyses on any
33 of these, but we went back and looked at the analyses we had
34 done at previous times when we had looked at doing these sorts
35 of things.

36
37 We have looked at a one-fish bag limit. When we did that, it
38 was for the recreational sector as a whole and not just the
39 private sector, but we found at that time that it does not
40 double the length of the season, but it's about a 1.61 times
41 increase in the length of the season.

42
43 We have also looked at changing the size limit or instituting a
44 slot limit. Depending on which slots were chosen, we could
45 double the length of the season with that sort of thing.
46 Reduction in barotrauma was another option that they asked us to
47 look at.

48

1 Obviously this is related to release mortality, and, as Dr.
2 Stunz showed us, there is a lot of information about that
3 release mortality. It would reduce the number of fish that are
4 killed, but we would need to redo the stock assessment and
5 incorporate that new discard data into the stock assessment to
6 be able to analyze what kind of effect it would have on the
7 season.

8
9 We also have the idea of having compatible state and federal
10 regulations, and, when we have looked at this in the past, we
11 have found that it would nearly double the federal season length
12 if the states had the same season as the federal season was.

13
14 Getting to our four questions, this is obviously permissible
15 under the Magnuson-Steven Act. Any of these could increase the
16 season length, as discussed a little bit ago. Each analysis has
17 its own assumptions and caveats, and we do have those various
18 amendments available to talk about all of those, and, of course,
19 you could do a combination of any of those things. If you did,
20 perhaps, all of those different things, you may get to a forty-
21 day season, but we, of course, can't be certain about that.

22
23 Option C was the use of harvest tags, and this has also been
24 talked about quite a bit, although we have not done any strict
25 analysis. Using the 2016 ACT from last year, we would have
26 about 500,000, a little over 500,000 tags, using the ACT divided
27 by the average weight. Of course, the average weight of a fish
28 varies throughout the Gulf, and so this is just using an overall
29 Gulf average here.

30
31 Obviously, if there is a lower buffer associated with the ACT,
32 based on any reduced uncertainty that this kind of system would
33 bring about, there would be more tags available. We would have
34 to figure out a way to distribute the tags. It could be by a
35 lottery or auction. We would likely have to work with the
36 states to do this distribution, and there could be eligibility
37 requirements to get a tag, something like whether they have had
38 a fishing license in the past or something like that.

39
40 When we look at the Magnuson-Stevens Act, we do have to address
41 National Standard 4, which is fair and equitable, and that would
42 mean we would have to find a way to allow for equal
43 participation by non-Gulf residents, state residents. This
44 isn't something that can't be overcome, but it would be
45 something we would have to look into and address.

46
47 The assumptions and caveats that go with this is that these
48 harvest tags wouldn't result in any high-grading. The number of

1 fishermen receiving tags is dependent on the number of
2 applicants, and, the number of tags you choose to give to each
3 applicant, those things would have to be decided. It could lead
4 to a year-round season.

5
6 Option D that was presented was the depth or distance-based
7 management. In this case, there would be a certain depth within
8 which that fishing would be allowed, and perhaps outside of that
9 would not be. This would be difficult to analyze with the
10 current data that we have, but it would depend a lot on discard
11 mortality. Again, as you saw with Dr. Stunz's presentation,
12 both depth of capture and water temperature can make a big
13 difference on the mortality rates that we see.

14
15 This estimate here is not from his work, but it's from another
16 study, and it showed that a lethal depth, with 20 percent
17 mortality of discards, was around thirty meters, and 20 percent
18 discard mortality has been used in many other places as the
19 threshold for catch and release, when they have said that's a
20 beneficial thing to do.

21
22 To give you an idea of where that -- That's actually fifteen
23 fathoms. The thirty meters is fifteen fathoms. This is a
24 contour map showing you ten, twenty, and thirty fathoms, and so
25 obviously the fifteen fathom would be between the ten and
26 twenty, so you would get a sense of where that line might be, if
27 that was the depth restriction with this.

28
29 This is permissible under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. We could
30 increase the season length, but it's really too far to know what
31 kind of difference that would make. Again, this would probably
32 require a new stock assessment with this information put in
33 there.

34
35 The assumptions and caveats include that we would need more
36 study of the effort and discards, based on depth and distance,
37 and, again, there is work being done additionally, and so we
38 have to delve into that a little more, and also with the
39 barotrauma devices and how that changes discard mortality.

40
41 We need to account for regulatory discards in that deeper water,
42 where fishing wouldn't be allowed if this were to be
43 implemented, and also whether this boundary would apply just for
44 the private anglers or if it would be something that the council
45 would consider for the entire recreational component. Of
46 course, there is always concerns with compliance levels. In and
47 of itself, we don't feel that it would probably yield a forty-
48 day season, but, again, this could be paired with some other

1 option to get there.

2
3 Option E was to have a season that was for an aggregate reef
4 fish. This would be a season not just for red snapper, but
5 multiple species together, and that there would be allowable
6 catch of all those species combined.

7
8 This is permissible under Magnuson, if we approach it as a stock
9 complex that is put there, but, depending on which species are
10 in the group, you could either increase or decrease the season.
11 The biggest deal is that it's the most vulnerable stock within
12 that complex that's going to set what that season would be, and
13 so, depending on which species are included in there, you may
14 increase -- You may be better off, or you may end up reducing
15 your season for that more vulnerable species.

16
17 We probably have a lot of regional differences in what those
18 stock complexes would most likely be, and so that would need to
19 introduce a regional component to that, and we still need to
20 prevent overfishing and rebuild the stock, and so we could not
21 exceed the overfishing limit even by doing this sort of an
22 option. We probably could not get to a forty-day season,
23 because of the vulnerable species, and it could lead to shorter
24 seasons for other species that are put into that complex as
25 well.

26
27 Option F is a harvest rate or recruitment-based management.
28 This one is probably the most difficult to really get to at this
29 point. It's permissible under MSA, as long as we're not going
30 to exceed the ACL with the harvest. It could increase the
31 season length, but we would really have to do a lot more
32 analysis to figure out how much more that season would be
33 lengthened.

34
35 We would need additional commitment of resources in order to do
36 this. We don't really have the data to do this at this time,
37 and so we would have to expand the fishery-independent
38 monitoring, so that we could predict recruitment a little
39 better, if that was going to be what the catch rates were going
40 to be based on, and we would also need to have surveys of
41 fishing practices to improve our reliability of predicting
42 behavior of fishermen under these conditions.

43
44 Of course, this is only successful in lengthening the season if
45 there is increasing recruitment. If poor recruitment is found
46 in a year or over time, then it could actually decrease the
47 season length, and, again, we don't really know if we could get
48 a forty-day season out of that or not.

1
2 Finally, their last option was just to combine any of the above
3 options and put those together to try to get to a forty-day
4 season, and obviously there are some combinations that could get
5 there, but we don't know what those are. Obviously we could
6 increase the season in a lot of different ways, but the amount
7 of that increase is not really knowable, and the assumptions and
8 caveats are as stated earlier for each of those individuals.

9
10 This is a summary table that just sort of shows you those
11 questions, not the caveats themselves, but the other three
12 questions, and, for each of those options, really what our
13 thoughts were on how to answer those, with permissibility under
14 Magnuson, extending the season, and actually achieving a forty-
15 day season.

16
17 After that, I will take questions, and, again, this was a short,
18 in-between-two-council-meetings sort of overview of what data we
19 have, what we don't, what we know, and what we don't know.
20 Obviously, if you move forward on an amendment, we would have a
21 much more in-depth analysis with that, and so thank you.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Are there questions? Dr. Stunz.

24
25 **DR. STUNZ:** I've just got a quick comment, and thanks. That was
26 really informational. I think it was Option D, the one where we
27 were talking about doing some type of regional restriction on
28 fishing, the depth and distance-based, one of the things that
29 wasn't quite in there to analyze would be you are protecting the
30 subset of fish that are presumably deeper and larger fish, or I
31 guess it depends on where you put the restrictions, but
32 accounting for that excess reproduction that might be coming
33 from these relatively untouched stocks, I guess, and that would
34 depend on if the for-hire commercial fishery is hitting it as
35 well, and so I don't know, but the issue is that's -- I don't
36 know how we would really do that right now, but it's something
37 to consider, that you're sort of protecting a component of the
38 stock, which might increase recruitment and that sort of thing.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Mr. Anson.

41
42 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. Sue, on page 8, Option C, harvest tags,
43 you kind of talked about it a little bit, but the eligibility
44 requirements, under distribution methods, you have eligibility
45 based on past state fishing license sales, yet the MSA issues,
46 National Standard 4, allow for participation of non-Gulf state
47 residents, and so, kind of thinking ahead, hypothetically
48 thinking, if this were to go through, you would have maybe a

1 pool of fish that would be set aside for licensed anglers and
2 then a pool of fish for non-licensed anglers that might not be
3 living on the coast, or how would that work?
4

5 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** To that point, Dr. Crabtree?
6

7 **DR. CRABTREE:** I think, right now, all five Gulf states have
8 provisions that allow out-of-state anglers to get fishing
9 licenses, and I think what we were looking at is, for commercial
10 limited-entry programs, we have limited participation to past
11 permit holders. The statute clearly reads that we are to look
12 at historical and present participation. One way to look at
13 present participation would be do they have a fishing license
14 over some period in any of the Gulf states, because they would
15 had to have that to have landed a fish, and so I think those are
16 things you have to get at.
17

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

20 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Lucas.
21

22 **DR. LUCAS:** Sue, thank you for the presentation. That was
23 great. I had just a question, and you may have alluded to this,
24 but, on page 14, when you're doing the assumptions and caveats,
25 and you have "might also have a regional component", can you
26 explain what you're talking about, in terms of the regional
27 component?
28

29 **MS. GERHART:** I'm sorry, but I don't see numbers on here.
30

31 **DR. LUCAS:** Under Option G, the hybrid of various options.
32

33 **MS. GERHART:** Okay. There were a couple of different places
34 where I said things like stock complexes and sizes of fish and
35 things like that do differ regionally, and so we might want to
36 incorporate something like that in there, and then, of course,
37 there is always the options to do the type of regional
38 management that has been talked about in the past.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Walker.
41

42 **MR. WALKER:** I briefly spoke with Greg, and we didn't get a
43 chance to talk about this, but one thing I had was maybe if you
44 had some type of harvest tag and then, with your reef fish,
45 maybe the first ninety-foot, fifty fathoms or so, was a clear
46 type line, and then, after that, it was spliced into a red line,
47 so that if people were fishing in any depth that they could stay
48 -- I don't know how you would enforce it, but, possibly, if they

1 stopped there, the mortality rates would be lower. We never got
2 a chance to really talk about that, Greg. Could you weigh in a
3 little?

4
5 **DR. STUNZ:** We didn't get a chance to -- Sorry we didn't talk
6 about that further, and maybe we should, because I'm not totally
7 clear. Are you saying we would chat about that and then bring
8 that back to the group, or do you want me to comment on it now?

9
10 **MR. WALKER:** Well, we can talk about it more later, but I was
11 just thinking about the first ninety-foot of line that came off
12 the reel would be clear fishing line. Then the remaining line
13 on the spool would be red. As someone is letting their line out
14 and they get to red, they know to stop, and so that keeps them
15 in that depth. We can talk about it more and bring it back up
16 at Full Council.

17
18 **DR. STUNZ:** Yes, and we can talk about it more, what David was
19 referring to. That would be a viable option, but I guess it
20 would need to correspond to the bottom depth. Let's say you're
21 in 300 feet of water, but you let out ninety feet of line, but
22 the fish comes up from 250 feet. They're still going to get the
23 same -- To bite your ninety-foot line, you're still going to
24 have the same decompression issues you would coming from that
25 200 feet, even though you caught it at ninety feet. Do you see
26 what I mean? Anyway, we can talk about it further, but what
27 you're saying is just it would be a component of this depth or
28 regional-based type of approach that you could restrict fishing
29 to certain depths.

30
31 **MR. WALKER:** Right, even if it was sixty or seventy-five,
32 whatever decompression would give you the best yield.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Ms.
35 Bosarge.

36
37 **MS. BOSARGE:** I just wanted to say thank you, because it was my
38 request, and you did it very quickly, and, really, I like the
39 way you laid it out. It kind of gives us something to chew on.
40 I am not sure exactly where to go from here yet, but I am going
41 to try and think about it between now and Thursday, and so
42 thanks.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Gerhart.

45
46 **MS. GERHART:** I just want to give some credit. Peter Hood and
47 Lauren Waters on the staff helped put this together, and they
48 did a great job.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.
3
4 **DR. CRABTREE:** I guess we have this Ad Hoc Private Recreational
5 Advisory Panel, and they're scheduled to meet, I believe, in
6 May, right? I guess this would be one of the things that we
7 would put in front of them, give this presentation to them at
8 that point, and get their recommendations back for the June
9 council meeting. Is that kind of what we're thinking?
10
11 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Guyas.
12
13 **MS. GUYAS:** I think that's okay with me, but I was going to ask,
14 what are the dates of that meeting, if they've been set?
15
16 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Anson.
17
18 **MR. ANSON:** It's a day-and-a-half meeting, I guess, then, or
19 thereabouts? Is that -- It's two full days? Okay. I would
20 just be concerned that they have to come out from that first
21 meeting with specific recommendations. That would be my
22 concern, is that that would be their task or charge.
23
24 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Froeschke.
25
26 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Emily and I are working with the facilitators to
27 try and develop a flow, and what we're trying to do is to give
28 them enough background information, both on the council process
29 and the information that we know and things that we've thought
30 about, to facilitate the discussions and sort of brief them on
31 things that they're aware of, with the idea that we don't expect
32 them to solve all the problems in two days. We're trying to be
33 reasonable and invest some time in the group, knowing that
34 likely they will be convened at least more than one time.
35
36 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.
37
38 **DR. CRABTREE:** Do we know yet where the meeting will be held?
39
40 **DR. FROESCHKE:** New Orleans.
41
42 **DR. CRABTREE:** New Orleans?
43
44 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** Yes, and we probably know the hotel
45 already, but I don't recall it offhand. John, do you?
46
47 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I can look it up very quickly.
48

1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** It's on our website. It's probably
2 the Hyatt Centric. Carrie.

3
4 **DR. SIMMONS:** It's the Doubletree on Canal.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion or any
7 more questions? Patrick.

8
9 **MR. BANKS:** I'm sorry, but I can't help myself. Somebody said
10 should we put this in front of that group, and everybody better
11 say yes, because we've waited a year, and you all forced me to
12 wait on this for a year, and so, if that group doesn't consider
13 this, then shame on all of us. Another thing that should be put
14 in front of that group is Amendment 39, please.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. Any further discussion or
17 comments or questions? Ms. Bosarge.

18
19 **MS. BOSARGE:** This presentation, should we also send this to the
20 SSC at all, to get any feedback from them at their next meeting
21 on -- The private group wanted to start, I assume, by getting
22 close to a forty-day season, and that's not their ideal
23 situation, but can the SSC weigh in on that at all, more than
24 what we just have here? Would it do us any good?

25
26 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** At this point, I don't think so,
27 because this is a very qualitative kind of rundown of what is
28 thought. As we hone in on some of these, yes, we're going to
29 have to have quantitative analyses, and then that would go
30 before the SSC.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Any further questions? Okay.
33 Seeing no further questions, I guess that will wrap up that part
34 of the schedule. We will move on to the next agenda item, which
35 will be the Standing and Reef Fish SSC Summary for Items Not
36 Discussed Elsewhere on the Agenda, Tab B, Number 11(a), and Dr.
37 Barbieri.

38
39 **STANDING AND SPECIAL REEF FISH SSC SUMMARY (FOR ITEMS NOT**
40 **DISCUSSED ELSEWHERE ON AGENDA)**

41
42 **DR. BARBIERI:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will actually go
43 over, very, very briefly -- If we could have the agenda posted
44 up there, Bernie, the Reef Fish agenda that shows Item XIII,
45 just so you get to see Items a, b, and c under this agenda topic
46 that deals with some general discussion of issues that were not
47 specific to any particular topic or species.

1 The SSC received a presentation from National Marine Fisheries
2 Service Headquarters describing the process that they are going
3 through in terms of the improvement of the stock assessment
4 process at a national level. They are in the very early stages
5 of development there, but we see some opportunities there to
6 start seeing some research-type assessments and effort that
7 could lead to more integration of those ecological, biological,
8 or environmental parameters that we were talking about this
9 morning.

10
11 I do not remember who asked the question, but folks were asking
12 questions, and somebody was asking whether there are other
13 issues that could explain these fluctuations in abundance of
14 greater amberjack, and I remember that we had the same
15 discussion when I came and presented on gray triggerfish a
16 couple or three years ago.

17
18 The process, they just gave us an overview, and the SSC provided
19 some input, and we will stay connected to that. There will be a
20 National SSC meeting that is going to take place next January in
21 California where some more of that discussion is bound to take
22 place, and so we'll keep informed on that.

23
24 Also, nationally, as part of this stock assessment improvement
25 process, the agency has been working with Science Centers
26 throughout the nation in identifying processes to prioritize
27 stock assessments within each one of the council areas,
28 geographic areas managed by the council, and I know this is very
29 dear to your hearts, because we are always trying to deal with
30 the issue of how to prioritize stocks for assessment and set up
31 a more realistic timeline for some of the assessments that we
32 need the most.

33
34 Dr. Shannon Calay from the Science Center, who works closely
35 with Dr. Porch, presented a summary of this process that is
36 being applied. The presentation was specific to the South
37 Atlantic, but, as an example of all the criteria that are used
38 there to basically identify what are the parameters, what are
39 the qualitative parameters, what are the information inputs,
40 what are the criteria that are used or can be used to better
41 quantify, I guess, all the factors that go into prioritizing
42 stock assessments.

43
44 At the end of this presentation, she presented a spreadsheet
45 that basically showed, after you integrate all those numbers and
46 all of those criteria -- It's very qualitative, but you can
47 apply different weights to different factors, and so, at the
48 end, she came up with a list, which turned out to be pretty much

1 like the list that exists right now, by and large, and so the
2 committee had a lot of questions about the process, thinking
3 what would be the value, if we basically ended up in the same
4 place, in terms of the stocks that are coming up on the list.

5
6 There are good discussion points there, back and forth, and,
7 basically, I think that the consensus of the committee was that
8 this provides sort of like a roadmap and better documentation of
9 those criteria and that it can help us evaluate, really, as we
10 weigh differently different criteria there and which ones will
11 lead to prioritizing to put some species or some stock or some
12 factor in that priority list to rise above.

13
14 We are going to continue to engage with that process in our
15 region. I mean, this is a continuing process, and we will
16 update you as the SSC gets more information on this topic.

17
18 Another issue discussed, as Mr. Atran presented a little
19 overview of the consideration of an additional option for MSST
20 that would be 85 percent of BMSY. You have an amendment that
21 looks into defining some of these biological reference points,
22 and MSST is one of them. There is different ways to get there.
23 There are different options.

24
25 Apparently, when this was discussed with you at the last
26 meeting, a question came up on whether 85 percent of BMSY would
27 be scientifically defensible as an option or whether the
28 committee would have any concerns with that metric being used,
29 that scalar of 0.85 of BMSY as a factor.

30
31 The committee really didn't have any concerns on that. It felt
32 that basically where you define MSST relative to BMSY is really
33 a matter of how conservative or not you want to be in managing
34 stocks and how much you want to leave that buffer between BMSY
35 and MSST, and so we felt that this was really more of a
36 management issue for you to decide, and, from us, really there
37 wasn't any scientific concerns with that metric, that option,
38 being included.

39
40 Then, lastly, we had also a presentation by a number of
41 socioeconomists on different aspects related to the five-year
42 review of the grouper/tilefish IFQ, and, for me, and I'm a
43 biologist by training, that was super interesting, because it's
44 something that we haven't really had the opportunity to really
45 evaluate in as much detail, with actual research results like
46 this, and so it was very informative, and it opened up a lot of
47 good discussions and gave us sort of like a window more into how
48 to start integrating, more explicitly, some of these

1 socioeconomic components into our assessment framework, other
2 than the management framework. Mr. Atran, unless I am
3 forgetting something here, drawing from memory, I would say that
4 we are pretty much there.

5
6 **MR. ATRAN:** I think that's it, except for the mundane stuff like
7 scheduling the next meeting.

8
9 **DR. BARBIERI:** We scheduled our next meeting to be in mid-May,
10 right? Yes, and, by the way, and I hope, Mr. Chairman, that I'm
11 not out of order here, but I really would like to express, on
12 behalf of the committee, our appreciation for a council member
13 coming over, and I expressed this to Madam Chair separately, but
14 we have had this council liaison come over, sometimes more than
15 one council member, and we really appreciate having you there at
16 the meeting to help address questions and to give your
17 perspective of the discussion points to the committee.

18
19 We kind of feel loved and appreciated, and so it's really, in
20 terms of providing you some feedback on how the committee reacts
21 to your attendance at those meetings, and the response from the
22 committee has been very positive, and so thank you for that.
23 That completes my report, Mr. Chairman, and I will be glad to
24 address any questions, if there are any.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you, Dr. Barbieri. Any questions? I
27 don't see any, Dr. Barbieri. Thank you.

28
29 **DR. BARBIERI:** Thank you sir.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. That pretty well completes the agenda
32 that we have, unless Ms. Levy is -- Ms. Levy.

33
34 **OTHER BUSINESS**

35
36 **MS. LEVY:** Thank you. I wanted to raise one thing, and you
37 don't have to decide anything now, but to think about it for
38 Full Council, and it has to do with the Amendment 44, which is
39 dealing with the MSST, which is what we were just talking about.

40
41 It has been stated in there, but it just -- For some reason, it
42 didn't really dawn on me. We originally had the MSST action in
43 a document that also addressed MSY and OY for all of the reef
44 fish species, and the reason we were doing that is because there
45 are a number of species that don't have any of these status
46 determination criteria and OY and things like that that are
47 specified, and we need to do that.

48

1 Then, at some point, it got decided that the MSST action wanted
2 to go faster, because the SSC was looking at things related to
3 MSY, and we took it out. Now we have this stand-alone document
4 that is just addressing MSST, and the concern comes from the
5 fact that I think there may be a problem approving an amendment
6 that sets one status determination criteria for all of the
7 stocks that don't have any of it without setting the other ones,
8 because the Act requires that we have an MSY and OY and things
9 like that.

10
11 It would be difficult to move forward with an amendment that is
12 just specifying MSST and still saying that these other stocks
13 don't have these other required elements and then approving that
14 amendment, and I did talk briefly with Roy and SERO staff about
15 it, and there are a couple of options.

16
17 One thing you could do is have Amendment 44 just address the
18 MSST issue with respect to those stocks that already have all of
19 their status determination criteria, and so you would be looking
20 at refining or amending the MSST for those stocks, and then have
21 another amendment that I would suggest move quickly behind it
22 that addresses MSST, MSY, and OY for all of those species that
23 don't have it yet.

24
25 The other option, which would, in some ways, could be
26 preferable, would just be to put the MSST, MSY, and OY actions
27 all back together again in the same document and move forward
28 with one amendment that specifies all of these things. I think
29 the issue with the way it was before, like I said, was that the
30 SSC wanted to look at various things with respect to MSY that
31 were going to take some time to do.

32
33 One option there is to look at MSY or MSY proxies that you could
34 put into place that would still be based on something and
35 supportable, but we could get them on the books and we could
36 have the proxies. The SSC could still go through whatever it
37 wants to do with looking at MSY overall, and you could always
38 come back and amend those, if we get new information or new
39 advice from the SSC with respect to MSY.

40
41 I know I'm kind of throwing this on you at the last minute, but
42 the reason I'm doing it now is because I think public hearings
43 are supposed to happen for the MSST document between now and
44 June, and I just wanted to put that out there now, to think
45 about that. We can talk about it again on Thursday or, if folks
46 have questions, you can ask me.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Ms. Bosarge.

1
2 **MS. BOSARGE:** Somebody remind me. When we had it back in the
3 larger document, with the MSY and OY, how far along in that
4 process were we? I mean, were we very early on in the stages?
5 Then the second part of that question is, I guess, for Dr.
6 Barbieri. How far along is the SSC on the different things that
7 they were going to take a look at?

8
9 If we're not very far down that path, maybe it would just be
10 better to finish up what we have, but only for stocks that
11 already have the MSY and OY and MSST criteria, and then go back
12 to the other one.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Atran.

15
16 **MR. ATRAN:** I guess what we're talking about is whether to
17 reconstruct what was originally the status determination
18 criteria amendment. As Mara said, it's been split up over the
19 past year or two, and we can certainly do that.

20
21 I have the file literally sitting on my desk back in my office,
22 but the SSC had discussed working on MSY proxies, and we also
23 discussed working on the revisions to the ABC control rule, and
24 those are both very involved projects. There has been some new
25 information in the past couple of years that would affect where
26 we want to set the MSY proxies.

27
28 They had decided, previously, and I will let Luiz chime in if he
29 wants, that probably they could tackle one of those two
30 projects, but not both of them at the same time, and so, at the
31 moment, we are looking at the ABC control rule, but this is a
32 matter of prioritization. If you want us to spend more time
33 working on the status determination criteria, we might have to
34 set aside the revisions to the ABC control rule for a little
35 while, in order to focus on that.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.

38
39 **DR. CRABTREE:** One thing to bear in mind is that the only stocks
40 we can really calculate a minimum stock size threshold for are
41 the ones that we have assessments for. They're the ones we have
42 all this information already on the books for. For a lot of
43 these data-poor stocks, where we don't necessarily have
44 anything, there is really not any way to calculate one minus M
45 times BMSY, and so there is not much gain by any of that, and so
46 just bear that in mind.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Anson.

1
2 **MR. ANSON:** Refresh my memory, Mara. Other than just that we've
3 had public hearings scheduled coming up here in the near future
4 for MSST, is there some sort of timeline or data certain that we
5 have to get these approved for meeting some sort of something in
6 the Act or some other policy?

7
8 **MS. LEVY:** Well, I mean, I would say, right now, technically,
9 the Reef Fish FMP does not meet the requirements of the Act
10 overall, because it doesn't specify these OY, MSY, and MSSTs for
11 all of the reef fish species, but it's been that way for a long
12 time. This goes back to the disapproval of the SFA Amendment in
13 the 1990s.

14
15 The council has been taking this path of specifying these things
16 for the stocks that get assessed, I think because of the reason
17 Roy said, because that's where it really matters, when you have
18 an assessed stock and you can actually figure out what those
19 values are, but we need to do it.

20
21 We need to have some sort of proxy or something in there for all
22 of the reef fish stocks, and so I am just saying, if we're going
23 to keep it separate and deal with MSST, or changes to that for
24 those where we already have these values, and we want to deal
25 with the other ones in another amendment, that we stop sort of
26 putting off that other amendment and that we get it going and we
27 figure out what status determination criteria we're going to set
28 for those and we just do it, so that we're good to go on all of
29 the species.

30
31 **MR. ANSON:** I guess I'm just a little worried that this will
32 change the trajectory of the review of the proxy MSY discussions
33 that the SSC was going to have and whether or not that we just,
34 for administrative purposes, go with this new route, as you are
35 proposing, and that then kind of takes the pressure off, or the
36 desire or the need to go down and look at the MSY proxies. That
37 would be my concern, and so I don't know if Dr. Barbieri can
38 speak to that and what his thoughts are and the SSC and their
39 timeline for trying to address these.

40
41 **MS. LEVY:** I certainly don't want to like create an issue where
42 something gets put off because we're doing something to address
43 the Magnuson Act requirements, but then I guess my request would
44 be to get that MSY issue before the SSC and make it more of a
45 priority, because I think what has happened is other things come
46 up. Then we keep delaying the MSY issue, and that we just move
47 that forward or have some movement in that direction.

1 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Barbieri.

2
3 **DR. BARBIERI:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, a few points. One
4 is the SSC is really badly prepared, I guess, or badly
5 structured to be developing a lot of these things from scratch.
6 Primarily, the way that the committee works, or the best way for
7 the committee to work, is to serve primarily as a review body.

8
9 Somebody has to get something started and structure it and put
10 it in front of us, and then we can provide modifications or
11 additional direction, and so starting something completely from
12 scratch is difficult for the committee.

13
14 Then, because there are differences of opinion on how to handle
15 also this MSY and MSY proxy discussion, this ended up, I think,
16 with folks on the committee feeling that it would be a more
17 complex discussion that would take more time than probably it
18 needs to.

19
20 One thing that I would say is that, if you give us that
21 direction, more explicitly, coming out of this meeting in your
22 report, as something that you feel should be prioritized, then
23 the committee has unequivocal direction that that should come to
24 the top of our list.

25
26 We were having discussions, maybe three or four months ago,
27 about how to be more integrative of not only biological
28 components of stock status determination criteria, but
29 socioeconomics and risk and uncertainty components and all of
30 this, and maybe we were blowing this a little bit out of
31 proportion, and so, if this is really to come into something
32 more condensed that just defines MSY and then identifies
33 criteria, objective criteria, to define what those proxies for
34 MSY would be, I think all we would need from you is that direct
35 guidance and we could proceed in that way.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Mr. Anson.

38
39 **MR. ANSON:** I think I understand what you're saying, Dr.
40 Barbieri, and I think that would be my approach, is that we kind
41 of make it clear that that's the direction of the SSC. Thinking
42 about going the other way is addressing some of those species
43 that, as Mara suggested, that we might have that information for
44 and just so that we can kind of fill in the blanks, so to speak.

45
46 Yet, if we don't have -- If we still have some that are out
47 there that need to be addressed, that we will have to come back
48 and address anyway, in my mind at least, that's how I'm thinking

1 that it will kind of go. I think it would be best to address
2 MSY and MSY proxies now that would cover all of the species that
3 we would need to and then address that in one single document.
4 That would be kind of how I see it, since there isn't a time
5 certain that we have to get all of this pushed through. That
6 would be my recommendation. There is other people, obviously,
7 at the table here, but that's how I see it.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Gregory.

10
11 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** We first spoke about this last
12 June, and we can clearly, through our staff and SERO staff and
13 the Science Center staff, get this process started for the SSC
14 to review. Whether we can do it for the May meeting, I don't
15 know, but we can certainly get started on it, and we haven't
16 been. It's been on the back burner.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Mr.
19 Swindell.

20
21 **MR. SWINDELL:** All day today, we've been talking about red
22 snapper, and I am still under the strong impression that we
23 ought to be looking at more data that we have. The Science
24 Center has said we've got data on red snapper that is east and
25 west of the river, and so that's kind of what they start their
26 whole program with, and we're struggling in Louisiana with the
27 red snapper that appears to be abundant offshore, and yet we're
28 going to get down to maybe zero days now.

29
30 I still think we ought to try to work, some way or another, to
31 get more regional management back on the table, because I just -
32 - This is just working me to death, trying to find a way to get
33 this stuff done, because I think it's wrong for us to have a
34 resource that we evidently -- I think the Science Center knows,
35 and it's been said several times in testimony here, in
36 discussions, that the resource starts east and west of the
37 river.

38
39 They put things together to determine what the total resource
40 is, and so what in the world is the resource abundance east and
41 west of the river? Why don't we work with it that way, some way
42 or another, to some extent, to help the recreational, if nothing
43 else but the recreational catch, east and west of the river? I
44 would like to be able to get at least the information back from
45 the Science Center as to just what the resource is. Thank you.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Mr. Gregory.

48

1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** Then I want to turn it over to Dr.
2 Porch, but we are going to have a standard stock assessment for
3 red snapper beginning at the end of this year, and so we will
4 probably get it mid-year, or sooner, of 2018.

5
6 A lot of the data, a lot of the analyses, are separated east and
7 west. My understanding is that it's the recruitment mechanisms
8 in the stock assessment model that put the two back together,
9 and they have been presented as a single stock, but we've also
10 presented information on the two different regions. Dr. Porch,
11 can you elaborate on what we can do in the next stock
12 assessment?

13
14 **DR. PORCH:** Even the stock assessments now are conducted east
15 and west of the river separately. They are treated as two
16 separate populations, and so the assessment advice could be
17 structured in a way that is separated east and west of the
18 Mississippi River. It's that the council and the Regional
19 Office have elected to manage it, at this point, as one unit,
20 but the assessment does break them down, and you can get advice
21 -- In fact, we have shown it before, the trends in the east and
22 west.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Banks.

25
26 **MR. BANKS:** I have a question for Dr. Barbieri. Is that
27 something that the SSC has looked at before and made any kind of
28 recommendation on, in terms of how to deal with that stock,
29 looking at it as two separate, I guess, meta-populations?

30
31 **DR. BARBIERI:** No, sir. Basically, biologically, and, Clay,
32 correct me if I'm wrong, but, looking at all the information
33 available, it is still, to some degree, equivocal whether those
34 two things are completely isolated. There is definitely a meta-
35 population structure there.

36
37 I have been reading all the latest and greatest papers that show
38 that there is no degree of connectivity between east and west.
39 I mean, some of the larval transport that Mandy Karnauskas has
40 done has shown really a lot of larval flow coming from the
41 western and northern Gulf into the West Florida Shelf and
42 actually spilling into the South Atlantic, to seed it.

43
44 Now, similar to what we discussed earlier with red drum, that
45 doesn't mean that there isn't some kind of more complex
46 population structure and some degree of independence of those.
47 I just don't think that we have that answer completely ready at
48 this point. What do you think, Clay?

1
2 **DR. PORCH:** The latest genetics have suggested that there may be
3 several intermixing, for lack of a better word, meta-
4 populations, and so you are right on that score. However, it's
5 a fairly clear break east and west of the Mississippi.

6
7 You might move that line a little bit, but there doesn't seem to
8 be a tremendous amount of mixing across the river, the outflow
9 area from the east and west, either of adults or -- There may be
10 some mixing, maybe, with larvae, but they do seem to be somewhat
11 self-replenishing, too. That's the same as Mandy's results.
12 They show that. There is never a completely clean break. Fish
13 don't recognize any particular boundaries we make, but that is
14 probably about as clean a break as we're going to get.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Walker.

17
18 **MR. WALKER:** I was just going to make the comment that I've done
19 a lot of fishing, right in the mouth of the Mississippi River,
20 Southwest Pass, and I was just kind of curious which side they
21 came from, when you're fishing right in the middle of that
22 river. You can fish right in the middle of the river or just a
23 little east of the river or a little west of the river, but the
24 fish -- It's hard for me to tell.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** To that point, Dr. Porch?

27
28 **DR. PORCH:** I was taking it as a question, but, yes, that's why
29 I am saying there is always some overlap. There is no perfect
30 line. There is not a wall out there that separates east and
31 west, and so there is certainly some overlap, and that's why
32 it's better described as kind of a series of meta-populations
33 that are overlapping, but, if you were going to put a break
34 somewhere, that seems to be the clearest one.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Dr. Crabtree.

37
38 **DR. CRABTREE:** We have talked about this. Amendment 39 had a
39 whole action on establishing regions for management, and two of
40 the alternatives in there were based on establishing an eastern
41 and a western Gulf region, and so we've looked at this and
42 talked about it, but we've just never made a decision.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Mr. Diaz.

45
46 **MR. DIAZ:** I was going to mention basically what Dr. Crabtree
47 just mentioned, and basically the two options were -- One option
48 would be where the line, I believe, was at the Mississippi

1 River, to the west, and the other option was the line to be at
2 the Mississippi/Alabama line and run straight offshore from
3 there.

4
5 I think the State of Mississippi, in the conversations I can
6 remember, we have always preferred that, if there was an option
7 for the State of Mississippi to go to the west, because of the
8 way that the boundary is between the State of Mississippi and
9 the State of Louisiana. It would be less confusing on, I
10 believe, everybody involved, if there was no great reason not to
11 do it.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.

14
15 **DR. CRABTREE:** There's a couple of ways you could go. If you
16 wanted to decide that you're going to manage the Gulf as two
17 stocks of red snapper, then you would have a lot of things you
18 would have to do. You would probably need separate rebuilding
19 plans. You would need to redefine all the allocations. You
20 would have to figure out what to do with the IFQ fishery.

21
22 If all you wanted to do was more like what was envisioned in
23 Amendment 39 though, is just divide the recreational fishery and
24 manage it differently east and west, then you just have
25 allocation decisions that you have to make.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Banks.

28
29 **MR. BANKS:** I don't think we need this in terms of a motion, but
30 I would like to stress that we should put Amendment 39 back on
31 the table for the next council meeting to be discussed. Is that
32 possible at this point? I know that it was called postponed
33 indefinitely, but I don't exactly know what it takes to un-
34 postpone something indefinitely.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Gregory.

37
38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** At this point, I think, given the
39 history, a motion to that effect would be best. Each council
40 meeting is a separate meeting, and so the council can address
41 any topic it wants at any meeting.

42
43 **MR. BANKS:** My only concern with that, Doug, is that we haven't
44 announced any kind of vote on something that has to do with 39
45 in this, and so I don't believe we can take action, in any case,
46 but I just want to try to make sure that we get it on the agenda
47 for the next meeting.

48

1 **DR. CRABTREE:** To that point?
2
3 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** To that point, Dr. Crabtree.
4
5 **DR. CRABTREE:** I mean, you can certainly make a motion to put it
6 on the agenda at the next meeting, because I'm not sure it's
7 ever going to get on the agenda unless we pass a motion to put
8 it on the agenda, and so there would be nothing preventing you
9 from entertaining a motion to put it back on the agenda. It's
10 up to you.
11
12 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Banks.
13
14 **MR. BANKS:** I think Madam Chairwoman decides the agenda, and so
15 I think she does it at the request of council members.
16
17 **MS. BOSARGE:** You sure give me a lot of credit.
18
19 **MR. BANKS:** I only say that because a former Chairman refused to
20 put this on the agenda for me before without a motion or
21 anything, and so I am just going on past experience.
22
23 **MS. BOSARGE:** Well, I think, in this case, since we did -- We
24 had a motion to postpone --
25
26 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** It was tabled indefinitely.
27
28 **MS. BOSARGE:** No, I don't think we tabled. I think we postponed
29 indefinitely, and we may need to look that up, because I need to
30 get that right. I think this is a good discussion, and I think
31 we've had some discussion about it before, but we probably do
32 need to put it in the form of a motion to put it back on the
33 agenda.
34
35 I personally don't have an issue with it, but I think -- Because
36 we don't need to spin our wheels either, and so let's get some
37 consensus around the -- Well, not consensus, but let's get a
38 majority, I guess, around this table to see if we can pass a
39 motion to that effect and see if we want to go down this road.
40 That is totally up to you all.
41
42 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Dr.
43 Frazer.
44
45 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** This amendment was before my time, thankfully,
46 but I guess I would like to ask somebody on the council why it
47 was postponed. Can you give me a little bit of a history
48 lesson, as brief as possible?

1
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** It was controversial.
3
4 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you.
5
6 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.
7
8 **DR. CRABTREE:** What it did is looked at trying to find a basis
9 to allow the states more direct control over managing the
10 recreational fishery. It had two main issues with it that we
11 were never able to resolve.
12
13 One, there was an action, the gist of which was should it just
14 be the private recs that we're moving management to the states
15 or should it include the federally-permitted charter boats, and
16 there were four, or maybe five, alternatives. I think, at two
17 consecutive meetings, every alternative had a motion to make it
18 the preferred, and every vote failed. We never could come to a
19 decision.
20
21 Then there was an action in there that would allocate the
22 recreational fishery among the states, and there was never
23 agreement among the states over the allocation, and I think, at
24 some point, folks just gave up. That's about the best I can
25 say, but those, I think we would all agree, were the major
26 issues that we were unable to resolve.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Emily.
29
30 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I just wanted to clarify, for Madam Chair,
31 that, in the January 2016 meeting, there was a motion to
32 postpone discussion on Amendment 39 indefinitely that passed by
33 a roll call vote of nine to eight.
34
35 **MR. BANKS:** That was 2015.
36
37 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** This says January of 2016.
38
39 **MR. BANKS:** I'm sorry. You're right. January of 2016. We're
40 in 2017. Sorry.
41
42 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, ma'am.
43
44 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Stunz.
45
46 **DR. STUNZ:** This would just be a suggestion, Patrick, having
47 been through that, when I was just joining this council. It was
48 not a fun ordeal, and I think, at least my opinion, kind of like

1 what Roy mentioned, was the crux of the matter, in my opinion,
2 was the states couldn't buy in, at the end of the day. Of
3 course, the people pretty much sitting around this table today -
4 - I don't know what discussions you guys have, as state
5 directors, but maybe that's a start.

6
7 If the same states are still not onboard with this, and we
8 rehash all this stuff again, and, at the end of the day, we're
9 right back where we are, maybe a little upfront work to see if
10 this is something that the states could get behind again,
11 because, at the end of the day, in my opinion, if the states
12 don't really support it, even if we pass it here, it's not going
13 to be successful, and so I am trying to avoid some of the pain
14 that we went through for those years.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Diaz.

17
18 **MR. DIAZ:** I think Greg is right, but I'm trying to think
19 through this. I really don't know which way I am going to vote,
20 but the world is changing, and the snapper fishery is changing.
21 Whether we like it or not, we're almost at regional management.
22 We just don't have an agreement on it.

23
24 Right now, the state seasons are eating up almost all of the
25 fish, and so we're almost there. If we look at it again, we're
26 almost there. If we don't look at it again, we're almost there,
27 and so that's what is the dilemma in front of this council right
28 now. Thank you.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Anson.

31
32 **MR. ANSON:** I am wondering if someone from staff can help me.
33 When we tabled or postponed it, did it include charter boats or
34 was it strictly a private boat --

35
36 **DR. LASSETER:** You had not picked a preferred.

37
38 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Donaldson.

41
42 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not on your
43 committee, but I agree with Greg, and Dale as well, that the
44 states need to come to some agreement before we move forward
45 with this. One of the things that came out of our general
46 session, recreational general session, last month was have the
47 commission start facilitating some discussions, and we are
48 getting together with the state directors in May to start those

1 discussions, and so hopefully that might move this issue a
2 little bit and prompt some of the decisions that need to be made
3 prior to the June meeting, and so just to let you all know.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Bosarge.

6
7 **MS. BOSARGE:** This is a question for Dave. I hesitated. I
8 wanted to ask you about that at some point earlier today, and so
9 the discussion -- Because it has been on my mind, as we move
10 more and more towards a private angler component, sub-component,
11 that is managed pretty much by the states. There is going to be
12 a quota that's going to be managed by those states, with or
13 without an amendment, and so that discussion that you're going
14 to have facilitated, what exactly does that discussion revolve
15 around?

16
17 Is it that central theme of, okay, we have this number, this
18 target, whether you look at it as the ACL or the ACT, whatever
19 you all pick as the number you're shooting for, but how are we
20 collectively going to make sure that that's about where we land
21 and not above? Is that the gist of the discussion or --

22
23 **MR. DONALDSON:** We are not at that point yet. We are just --
24 This is the very beginning. We are getting together and trying
25 to identify the issues, and it may get to that, but we're not at
26 that point yet. This is the first meeting. We are just
27 starting the process.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Okay. Thank you. Is there further
30 discussion? Mr. Swindell.

31
32 **MR. SWINDELL:** One of the things that I envision in regional
33 management is not state regional management. I would look at
34 regional from the stock resource perspective for the council to
35 manage. Everything tells me -- The Science Center tells me
36 there is two stocks, and why don't we look at it that way?
37 That's what I don't understand. If we've got more stock over to
38 the west part of the council jurisdiction than we do to the
39 east, then the council ought to make decisions to manage that
40 stock to benefit the people that are in those two regions.
41 Thank you.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Banks.

44
45 **MR. BANKS:** Just another question for staff. You said that we
46 hadn't chosen a preferred on sector separation, but, as I
47 understand it, the other point of contention was allocation, but
48 did we -- Did the council pass a preferred on allocation? Can

1 you remind us which one that was? I wasn't sure if you just had
2 which alternative it was.

3

4 **DR. LASSETER:** I apologize, but I would have to go and look it
5 up.

6

7 **MR. BANKS:** Okay. Thank you.

8

9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** There was what I would call a
10 preliminary allocation decision, to help move things forward,
11 but I don't think it was expected to be the final among the
12 states.

13

14 **MR. BANKS:** I am not exactly sure what that means, Doug. So
15 there was or was not a preferred chosen?

16

17 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** I don't know if it was called a
18 preferred. Ava?

19

20 **MR. BANKS:** I mean, if the council passed a preferred, then
21 we've got the allocation agreement, as passed by the council, at
22 least at one point. I mean, maybe not anymore, but at least at
23 one point.

24

25 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Dr. Lasseter.

26

27 **DR. LASSETER:** I was just going to comment that, yes, there was
28 a preferred selected before we had done public hearings, but
29 then there was additional discussion and many motions passed to
30 attempt to change it.

31

32 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Dr. Crabtree.

33

34 **DR. CRABTREE:** I am looking at the DEIS, and it was Preferred
35 Alternative 5, to apportion the recreational sector ACL among
36 the regions selected in Action 3, based on 50 percent of average
37 historical landings for the years 1986 to 2013 and 50 percent of
38 average historical landings for the years 2006 to 2013. We had
39 a preferred that excluded the landings in 2006 and the landings
40 in 2010, and those were the preferred.

41

42 There were eight different alternatives for allocating, and my
43 recollection is similar to Doug, that there were a number of
44 motions made to change it, but they all, I think, failed on tie
45 votes.

46

47 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion?
48 Okay. Mr. Swindell.

1
2 **MR. SWINDELL:** I started it, and so I apologize to you somewhat,
3 but I think it still needed to be brought up. I still would
4 like to ask the Science Center to bring at least back to us, at
5 the next meeting, information on the stock, on each side of the
6 Mississippi River or the dividing area, east and west, and let's
7 see if there's not something we can do. I would like for us to
8 have the opportunity to at least look at it. We haven't, I
9 don't think, individually looked at it since I've been on the
10 council, looked at the numbers in that fashion, and so that's
11 what I would like to have, please, sir.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Mr. Banks.

14
15 **MR. BANKS:** I am sorry, but one more question. If the ad hoc AP
16 meets in May and they come up with a recommendation for us to
17 pass regional management in Amendment 39, and if it's on the
18 agenda in June, could we pass it?

19
20 **MS. BOSARGE:** Could we pass it? What do you mean?

21
22 **MR. BANKS:** I'm sorry. Not necessarily pass it, but could we
23 vote on it if the recreational AP recommended regional
24 management in the form of Amendment 39, or in some form thereof,
25 and we had 39 on the agenda in June, could we take final action,
26 since it was in a posture that was -- At that point anyway?

27
28 **DR. CRABTREE:** I think the amendments would have to be updated,
29 because we put it aside a year-and-a-half ago, and so it at
30 least would have to be updated with the more recent landings and
31 those types of things, and I don't know how long or what that
32 would take, in terms of work for staff. We would have to look
33 at it and figure that out.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Mr. Anson.

36
37 **MR. ANSON:** Since it was told that it was a vote to postpone it,
38 would we not need a motion to bring it back up again for
39 discussion? Wouldn't that be the appropriate procedure?

40
41 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Ms. Bosarge.

42
43 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, I want a motion on it. If we're going to put
44 this on a future agenda, I want a motion on the board, and we're
45 going to vote on it, yes, because it's that controversial, and I
46 think we need to do that. I do have a question though.

47
48 Do you have to bring the whole amendment back? Because my whole

1 train of thought has been -- You know, I used to be kind of
2 passionate about the whole states going non-compliant and this
3 and that, but, the more I thought about it and have lived with
4 it, it's just a new normal, right?

5
6 It's their state waters, and they can do as they please in it.
7 The biggest issue, to me, is to make sure that we all succeed
8 together, right? If we have some component of a species, of a
9 fishery, red snapper, if we have some component of it that's
10 mainly being managed through the state system, that's fine, but
11 we have another component that is being managed through this
12 council, through the federal system.

13
14 It's in all of our best interest that both of those entities
15 succeed, and, by succeed, I mean the world that we live in,
16 where we have a quota that we have to stay under, in order to
17 try and rebuild that population and get it healthy again.

18
19 I do see some of the states -- Kind of even what Dave said.
20 He's going to get a facilitator and try and get that discussion
21 started, and, to me, I want you all to succeed, because, if you
22 don't succeed, none of us succeed, right?

23
24 That is why I am asking, is it possible to bring back a portion
25 of regional management? If you all don't want to bring the
26 whole thing back to the table, okay, but can we bring at least
27 the private angler portion, so that we're having that discussion
28 in both places, at Gulf States and here, and hopefully somehow
29 we can make sure that we all succeed?

30
31 If you feel like you can do it through Gulf States and you're
32 going to succeed, I have no issue with that. If you feel you
33 need a little impetus, a little push, we can bring that back
34 here, to help work through it on both sides, so we're forced to
35 have that discussion at both meetings, right? I just want to
36 make sure that we all succeed, and so I would like to have that
37 conversation and keep it moving forward and make sure that we do
38 continue to communicate and make progress.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion? Mr.
41 Banks.

42
43 **MR. BANKS:** I agree, Leann, and I am fine with just looking at
44 private recreational, which is how we tried to move forward
45 nearly a year ago with it. My concern is that we're a year from
46 there, and everything that can be thrown in front of progress on
47 that has been, and I'm just trying to figure out how is the best
48 way to move the ball down the court.

1
2 I agree with you that we all should succeed together, but what's
3 happening in Louisiana is we are failing, but we're failing
4 because we can't get other states to move forward with us, and
5 we have a very good system that can control harvest, that tracks
6 harvest. If you would just give us our 14 percent and let us
7 go, we can do it. We have the ability to succeed, and we are
8 being held back at every turn, and that is what I am worried
9 about for our anglers.

10
11 We have to do that through the state season, and that's great.
12 It gives some people access, but there's a whole ton of folks in
13 western Louisiana that have no access, and if they just had
14 access to that federal season, we could stop it at 14 percent,
15 whether they go to 200 miles or they only go out to nine miles,
16 and so that's what I am struggling with, is how to move it down
17 the road, so that our anglers can take advantage of a resource
18 that we know how to manage very well.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Ms. Bosarge.

21
22 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you. I appreciate that. I know maybe that
23 unnerves some people to hear that, but I think we've got to have
24 these tough discussions. We have to, if we want to make sure
25 that we all succeed, and I know it's not fun, but we've got to
26 do it. We can do it.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN GREENE:** Thank you. Is there further discussion?
29 Seeing no further discussion, that pretty well completes our
30 schedule. Is there any other business to come before this
31 committee? Seeing no further business, we stand adjourned.

32
33 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 4, 2017.)

34
35 - - -