

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
2  
3 HABITAT PROTECTION AND RESTORATION COMMITTEE  
4

5 Webinar  
6

7 January 24, 2022  
8

9 **VOTING MEMBERS**

10 Bob Gill.....Florida  
11 Susan Boggs.....Alabama  
12 Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi  
13 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC  
14 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana  
15 Chris Schieble (designee for Patrick Banks).....Louisiana  
16 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi  
17 Greg Stunz.....Texas  
18

19 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

20 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama  
21 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana  
22 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi  
23 Phil Dyskow.....Florida  
24 Tom Frazer.....Florida  
25 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas  
26 Jessica McCawley.....Florida  
27 LTJG Adam Peterson.....USCG  
28 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS  
29 Troy Williamson.....Texas  
30

31 **STAFF**

32 Assane Diagne.....Economist  
33 Matt Freeman.....Economist  
34 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director  
35 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer  
36 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist  
37 Ava Lasseter.....Anthropologist  
38 Mary Levy.....NOAA General Counsel  
39 Jessica Matos.....Document Editor & Administrative Assistant  
40 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer  
41 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison  
42 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager  
43 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director  
44 Carly Somerset.....Fisheries Outreach Specialist  
45

46 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

47 Michael Celata.....BOEM  
48 Kerry Marhefka.....SAFMC  
49 Clay Porch.....SEFSC  
50

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[PAGE 22](#): Motion to request that the council work with NMFS and BOEM to ensure that the complete historical Gulf shrimp fishing effort dataset is fully included and considered as part of the collaborative BOEM/NOAA spatial management analyses for evaluating potential sites for offshore wind energy facilities and transmission lines in the Gulf. [The motion carried on page 23.](#)

[PAGE 23](#): Motion to request the council to work with NMFS to ensure that BOEM enters into consultations with NMFS, pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) with respect to any action BOEM takes, or proposes to take, to authorize offshore wind energy development in the Gulf that may affect any ESA listed species or designated critical habitat. Such consultations should begin as early in the BOEM process as possible. [The motion carried on page 24.](#)

[PAGE 38](#): Motion to recommend the letter be sent to Full Council for approval. [The motion carried on page 38.](#)

- - -

1 The Habitat Protection and Restoration Committee of the Gulf of  
2 Mexico Fishery Management Council convened on Monday morning,  
3 January 24, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Bob Gill.

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

9 **CHAIRMAN BOB GILL:** I would like to call the Habitat Protection  
10 and Restoration Committee to order. That comes under Tab P, and  
11 the first item on the agenda is the Adoption of the Agenda.  
12 Excuse me. Let me take roll call first. Roll call, and so I am  
13 here, Chris Schieble is here, Susan Boggs is here, Leann Bosarge  
14 is here, Dave Donaldson is here, J.D. Dugas is here. Bob Shipp  
15 is absent, and our thoughts are with you, Bob. General  
16 Spraggins is here, and Greg Stunz is here, and so we have a  
17 quorum.

18  
19 The first item on the agenda is the Adoption of the Agenda. Are  
20 there any changes or modifications to the agenda from the  
21 committee? Hearing none, is there any objection to adoption of  
22 the agenda as written? Hearing none, the agenda is adopted as  
23 written.

24  
25 The next item on the agenda, which is Tab P, Number 2, is  
26 Approval of the August 2021 Minutes. Are there any changes to  
27 the minutes as written? Hearing none, is there any objection to  
28 approval of the minutes as written? Hearing none, the August  
29 2021 minutes are approved as written. The next item on the  
30 agenda is the Action Guide and Next Steps. Dr. Hollensead,  
31 would you do the honors?

32  
33 **DR. LISA HOLLENSHAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. For our agenda  
34 today, we are going to have a presentation from the Bureau of  
35 Ocean Energy Management, or BOEM, and Mr. Mike Celata will give  
36 us that presentation. He had given a similar, or BOEM staff had  
37 given a similar, presentation to the Shrimp AP, during their  
38 meeting, and so they had a couple of items that they passed  
39 motions on, in terms of looking at that ongoing development of  
40 offshore wind energy in the Gulf, and so Dr. Matt Freeman also  
41 has that summary, and so he can review those items coming out of  
42 that AP for the committee and answer any questions that may have  
43 been had at that previous meeting.

44  
45 Next will be the discussion of the Essential Fish Habitat  
46 Generic Amendment, and this will be a revised version of the  
47 amendment for the committee to consider. Specifically, I will  
48 be going over some of the amendment structure, and it was

1 related to the various alternatives in that document, and so the  
2 committee can feel free to ask any questions or certainly  
3 provide any input on the document as it continues to be  
4 developed.

5  
6 Then, finally, there is a draft response letter for review, and  
7 this has to deal with the Executive Order 14008, Tackling the  
8 Climate Crisis At Home and Abroad, and there was a request, on  
9 October 29, from NOAA, and they issued a request for information  
10 on the Executive Order, and so staff has drafted a letter that  
11 directly addresses what was in that call for information, as  
12 well as some comments on the year-one report of the initiative,  
13 and so, if the committee could review that letter and then  
14 provide any comments or edits to staff at this time, we will  
15 look to getting that formally submitted. If there aren't any  
16 other questions, that concludes the presentation of the action  
17 guide, Mr. Chair.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. Any comments or  
20 discussion on what we're going to accomplish this morning in  
21 this committee? Hearing none, we'll move on to the presentation  
22 from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) on Wind Energy  
23 Development in the Gulf of Mexico. Mr. Celata, if you are  
24 ready, please proceed.

25  
26 **PRESENTATION FROM THE BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT (BOEM)**  
27 **ON WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN THE GULF OF MEXICO**  
28

29 **MR. MICHAEL CELATA:** Good morning. Let me introduce myself. I  
30 am Mike Celata, and I'm the Regional Director for the Bureau of  
31 Ocean Energy Management, Gulf of Mexico Office, in the New  
32 Orleans area. BOEM is the Department of Interior agency that  
33 oversees offshore energy and minerals development, and I want to  
34 thank the council and the committee for the opportunity to speak  
35 and follow-up on my previous presentation.

36  
37 I will talk about the process, review the process, give an  
38 update on the process, where we are, talk about some comments  
39 that we received, and we actually have some detailed answers to  
40 questions in the presentation, and we'll see how much time we  
41 want to spend on those, but those also will be available online,  
42 and we're in the middle of beginning an environmental  
43 assessment, and we have a thirty-day comment period open, and so  
44 we'll touch on that, and then we'll talk a little bit about next  
45 steps.

46  
47 This is the process, and we're in the early stages, planning and  
48 leasing, and so BOEM considers this the early stages because,

1 once you get a lease, there is no guarantee that you will put a  
2 project in the water, and you have to do a site assessment and  
3 then come to BOEM with a construction and operation plan, which  
4 is the detailed plan of where the wind turbines will be in the  
5 water, what the configuration will be, how much power you're  
6 going to generate.

7  
8 This first process is up to four years, and we received a  
9 request from the Governor of Louisiana, back in I think October  
10 of 2020, to have a taskforce, and that's the process. We put  
11 together a regional taskforce from Alabama, Mississippi, Texas,  
12 and Louisiana, and we had a meeting, in June of last year, to  
13 kick off this planning process, the intergovernmental taskforce  
14 that you see there in the top left, under the planning and  
15 analysis.

16  
17 The goal was to have a wind energy auction in December of this  
18 year, though I believe that's probably going to be early 2023,  
19 and so an overall process, and we're in the early stages, but we  
20 still have a lot of work to do to get to this leasing stage.

21  
22 Then this is just another way to look at that, and we had our --  
23 In part of the process, we had a request for interest, and we  
24 had a public comment period. We're going to go into a little  
25 detail about reviewing that. We had a call for information, and  
26 we had another forty-five days to comment on that, and the next  
27 step in this process is kind of a winnowing-down, based on the  
28 comments, and picking smaller areas to get to lease areas that  
29 can hold about one gigawatt of wind energy, or one-and-a-half,  
30 maybe, and that is one of the requests that we had from  
31 comments, and then, normally, the environmental assessment comes  
32 later, after the wind energy area, but, in the Gulf, we're  
33 actually conducting that now, before the wind energy areas, on  
34 the call area, and we can go into the reasons for that in a  
35 little bit.

36  
37 This is just to show you what the process does, and we start at  
38 the -- So the Gulf of Mexico, and we look at it, and then we  
39 say, based on what we think the potential is, we go out with an  
40 RFI area, and so that's smaller than the whole planning area,  
41 and we collect some information and look at interest. One of  
42 the things we need to develop, determine, is competitive  
43 interest in our process, and so we've had the RFI, and so the  
44 call area was smaller, and I will show you that on a map.

45  
46 Then the next step, after this, would be to look for wind energy  
47 areas, and that's kind of where we area. We're between the call  
48 and the wind energy areas, and then, in those wind energy areas,

1 we would have lease auctions early next year.

2  
3 This map shows you the larger RFI area that we had, and so it  
4 was the western and central planning area of the Gulf of Mexico,  
5 and we went out to the furthest line that you see out there, the  
6 pink line, and that was at 1,300 meters, and the reason we went  
7 out for that call for that water depth is because you have  
8 technologies for floating wind, based on a study we have in the  
9 Pacific, that they can be effective out to 1,300 meters.

10  
11 Now, are they economical? Probably not, and so, on the next  
12 slide, based -- We got thirty-nine comments from the RFI, and  
13 you can see the distribution, and we had a number of private  
14 citizens, states, and federal agencies, and we had fourteen NGOs  
15 and ten industry comments.

16  
17 In those ten industry comments, competitive interest did not  
18 cover that entire area, and so, again, if you can see that pink  
19 line that goes from the Mexico border off of Texas and all the  
20 way -- It has a straight line running north, just kind of west  
21 of the mouth of the Mississippi there, and so the comments  
22 indicated that we didn't have any competitive interest outside  
23 of that area, and so we narrowed down the focus.

24  
25 The call -- These are the comments we got, and we're still  
26 working through these. The comment period closed in the middle  
27 of December, and they are similar to the total comments, at  
28 thirty-nine. There's a slightly different distribution and more  
29 federal agencies and more NGOs and a little less in industry  
30 comments.

31  
32 Our goal here, and we have a taskforce coming up on the second  
33 of February, is to put a map that even narrows the areas down  
34 further, further for discussion, before we get to the wind  
35 energy areas, based on industry competitive interest.

36  
37 I think this may help for some of the guidance that we may be  
38 headed, and so this is the call area, with the infrastructure  
39 map, in the Gulf, and the green are the leases, and the long  
40 lines are the pipelines, and the dots are the wells and the  
41 platforms, if you can see them, but you can see, in that call  
42 area, heavily in offshore central Louisiana, there's a lot of  
43 infrastructure, and there was, I would say, no competitive  
44 interest, and this is -- We still have to do a detailed  
45 analysis, but, based on just reviewing it in that area, in the  
46 call, where you see all those green leases, there really wasn't  
47 any competitive interest, and so most of the competitive  
48 interest was west of there, and so we're working on a map to

1 define that as we move forward.

2  
3 Let's go through some of the comments and some of the answers,  
4 and you'll be able to read these, and you'll be able to ask  
5 questions later, and so one of the things that we wanted to make  
6 sure that we're doing, and one of the reasons for the  
7 presentation, is we want to make sure that we are giving a  
8 feedback loop, and so, in our process, a lot of times we have  
9 comments, and then we might post them on our website, which we  
10 have done, but we reached out to fisheries, that they're an  
11 important constituent, and I think we had eleven meetings last  
12 year, and we just had a summit last week, where we invited  
13 different groups of fisheries to come in and talk to us.

14  
15 We actually presented this exact set of questions and answers to  
16 them, because these were concerns of the fishing industry. One  
17 is how will BOEM consider other ocean uses? Well, for BOEM,  
18 it's a balance. Well, for BOEM, it's a balance, and we actually  
19 are trying to work with NOAA and their spatial planning process  
20 they used for aquaculture, but we need to look at fisheries,  
21 military activities, and, for us, vessel traffic and significant  
22 sand sediment resources are important for us too, and so we  
23 provide sand sediment for coastal resiliency, and we don't  
24 necessarily want to put wind turbines in those areas, and so  
25 we'll come up with a process hopefully based on what NOAA has  
26 done, to help guide us as we move forward.

27  
28 Are there siting and design concerns that address navigation  
29 safety, and so, basically, BOEM can put restrictions on there,  
30 and the Coast Guard really has a lot of jurisdiction in this,  
31 and we're going to evaluate that as we go.

32  
33 I think some of the concerns is how far these are going to be  
34 placed apart and, on the east coast, they've been at least a  
35 mile, and they've been designed so that you can have fishing  
36 vessels going in through there, but a lot of this will be based  
37 on the Coast Guard requirements.

38  
39 What's the average height, and so, again, a safety issue, and so  
40 this is from the sea to the bottom of the turbine, right, and  
41 it's about sixty-five to a hundred feet, based on current  
42 technology, but one of the expectations in the Gulf is that,  
43 since the actual installations are years away, that technology  
44 will improve, and they may have taller turbines, and those which  
45 can produce more gigawatts of energy, and that would give you a  
46 200-foot clearance from the water to the bottom of the blade.  
47 Then, as I said, the projects have a one-by-one-nautical-mile  
48 space.

1  
2 Will vessel traffic and fishing activity be excluded around and  
3 within the offshore wind site? BOEM doesn't have that  
4 authority, and, as of now, the Coast Guard has only implemented  
5 safety zones on construction, and so there's only one that's  
6 been constructed, and that was in Rhode Island state waters, and  
7 they put a buffer zone around the area during construction, but,  
8 otherwise, there haven't been any, to-date.

9  
10 Electrical cables and are they going to be buried? Yes, and  
11 it's three to ten feet in water depths shallower than 6,562  
12 feet, and our turbines, the potential wind farms, should be in  
13 water depths lower than that. They will be buried, and so like  
14 pipelines in the Gulf, oil and gas, and they could have  
15 protective concrete structures, depending on certain situations.

16  
17 Windfarms should be removed, right, and they will have a  
18 lifespan of thirty years, and they are supposed to be  
19 decommissioned, and that's the regulation, and there is always  
20 exceptions, and people can apply for the Rigs to Reef Program,  
21 like oil and gas, and so that's something down the line, but,  
22 yes, they're supposed to be removed.

23  
24 How do we assess fishing impacts, and so meetings like this, and  
25 we're in our NEPA process, where we're looking for comments, and  
26 we're meeting directly with fisheries, the shrimp fishermen  
27 especially, and we had our summit, and the goal was to get  
28 questions and understand the feedback, and, in our workshop last  
29 week, we had a question in the meeting, and so we have cables,  
30 and they have electromagnetic currents, but, if they're buried  
31 to the right depth, those shouldn't have impacts on fishing or  
32 fish.

33  
34 The question was, if the cable will hang from the turbine down  
35 to the seafloor, what happens with that, and, by the next day,  
36 we had an answer there, and, basically, the water should  
37 mitigate any temperatures or any issues related to the cables,  
38 along with the currents, and there shouldn't be any impacts,  
39 based on the studies we have, and so our goal is to get these  
40 questions and answer them and turn them around and feed them  
41 back to everybody. Of course, everything uses best available  
42 science.

43  
44 Is there a fishermen's contingencies fund, and this is a big  
45 one, and there is not one. We didn't -- In our authorizing  
46 legislation, the Energy Policy Act of 2005, we did not get a  
47 contingency fund like there is for oil and gas. Now, if some  
48 developers are providing that on their own, and we had a recent

1 national fisheries mitigation workshop that is looking at  
2 standard mitigations and what would be a mitigation that it  
3 recommends, or guides, operators to do this, and I'm not sure,  
4 but hopefully those mitigations will be in place before we get  
5 to our auction, and we'll have those tools in our toolbox in the  
6 Gulf of Mexico for those potential mitigations.

7  
8 Here is an EMF question that I think I've answered, and they  
9 don't act as barriers to movement, and they don't impact  
10 populations. Some species respond, but they don't have to seem  
11 have long-term negative impacts.

12  
13 Let's talk about NEPA and where we are and what we're doing.  
14 We're looking, and we're doing an EA. We're in the beginning  
15 process, and we're looking for input of what should we analyze,  
16 what impacts should we analyze, what risks are out there, what  
17 data might we not have.

18  
19 Our EA is only going to focus on what happens between the lease,  
20 or getting the lease, and having the construction and operations  
21 plan. The construction and operations plan, when that's  
22 submitted, will have an EIS, because, at that time, we know the  
23 direct impacts from the project.

24  
25 What happens in between an auction and a COP is they go out and  
26 put meteorologic buoys or towers, and they have vessel trips,  
27 because they're collecting data on the site, to see what the  
28 soil types are, and so to help design their project, and I think  
29 I covered the last two sections already, and so we'll move on.

30  
31 It is a programmatic document covering the entire call area, and  
32 we'll be looking at analysis from all these things. The good  
33 thing, for the Gulf of Mexico, is that we have a lot of data and  
34 information from oil and gas that we can use, but, if there's  
35 anything that you're aware of, from our oil and gas analysis,  
36 that we're missing, or that we need to add, it will be good to  
37 have those comments and include it into our process, and so  
38 we'll be looking at impact-producing factors and the cause and  
39 effect analysis.

40  
41 This is the timeframe for the EA, and the draft should be out in  
42 the summer, and we'll have another comment period, to see  
43 whether stakeholders think that we have done a sufficient  
44 analysis, where we have enough scenarios and have done  
45 appropriate impacts, and then the EA will be published in early  
46 2023, making way for us to have a decision, and an auction as  
47 well, in early 2023, and I am thinking the first quarter of 2023  
48 is where we would be.

1  
2 We're still working on the EA, and we're going to winnow-down  
3 our area to wind energy areas, and, as I said, we should have a  
4 map by February 2 that has the area smaller than the call  
5 already, based on competitive interest, and it's probably -- As  
6 I said, it's southwest Louisiana all the way along the Texas  
7 coast, and there may be a few other small areas that fit in  
8 there, but that seems to be the general trend.

9  
10 In that process, we'll be putting out a proposed sale notice,  
11 and then, of course, a final sale notice and an auction in early  
12 2023, and, if you have any questions, I suggest the best way to  
13 get the information is to contact Tershara or Idrissa. If you  
14 want some fisheries-specific information, call Mariana, and you  
15 can always go to our website, but it's not always easy to find  
16 the information.

17  
18 In the presentation last week, we actually had QR codes, but I  
19 submitted mine earlier than that for this meeting, so that you  
20 could have scanned those codes and gone directly to our website,  
21 and so, hopefully, in future meetings, we will have those direct  
22 links as well, but I would just reach out to Tershara or Idrissa  
23 or Mariana, if you have any specific questions, and so thank  
24 you.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Celata. We certainly appreciate  
27 the update and the current information and the status of wind  
28 energy development in the Gulf. It's very much appreciated.  
29 Any comments, questions, or discussion from the committee  
30 relative to Mr. Celata's presentation and wind energy and  
31 development?

32  
33 **MS. BERNADINE ROY:** Mr. Gill, I just wanted to explain that we  
34 will be using the hands-up, and I do have several hands up right  
35 now, so that chairs of these committee can see, on the screen,  
36 who wants to speak, and, like I said, I will be putting those  
37 hands up written out here on the screen, and so one second and I  
38 will type up who has their hands up.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you very much, Bernie. That should work  
41 well. Dave Donaldson, you're up first.

42  
43 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mike.  
44 I appreciate the presentation. During the question section, you  
45 were talking about buffer zones, and, as I understand it, there  
46 was a buffer zone during construction for that project in Rhode  
47 Island, but, currently, there are no buffer zones now, and is  
48 that correct?

1  
2 **MR. CELATA:** That is my understanding, and then some of the  
3 biggest questions we have from recreational fishers, as to  
4 whether they can actually tie-up to one of these turbines, and I  
5 don't -- That's a question really for the operator, and I'm not  
6 sure that they're going to let you do that, but they can get  
7 pretty close, similar to the oil and gas platforms, and  
8 hopefully they will aggregate some fish there, but they are  
9 being designed so that vessels can navigate through them, and  
10 that's why they're at least a mile apart from each of the  
11 individual turbines.

12  
13 **MR. DONALDSON:** I appreciate the clarification. Thanks.

14  
15 **MR. CELATA:** Sure.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Next up is Troy Williamson.

18  
19 **MS. ROY:** We seem to be having a problem with his sound. We'll  
20 work to get that fixed.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Okay. We will then move on to Leann Bosarge and  
23 come back to Troy when we have the audio fixed on that end.  
24 Leann.

25  
26 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was wondering if  
27 we could go back to Slide 15 for just a second. I just wanted  
28 to commend Mr. Celata, and I think that's probably one of the  
29 prettiest boats in the Gulf of Mexico that you picked to put on  
30 that slide, but, in all seriousness, that boat right there has  
31 been owned and run only by two men, and Mr. Tommy Scholtz was  
32 one of them, and Mr. Steve Bosarge was the other one, and it was  
33 built in 1973, and so it's almost fifty years old, and it still  
34 looks, I mean, like it just rolled off the showroom floor, and,  
35 just as a tidbit here, those two men, Steven and Thomas, that's  
36 actually the name of my son, who is about four weeks old, and I  
37 named him after those two men that owned and ran that boat, two  
38 of the best shrimpers that I have ever known, and the best men  
39 I've ever known, and so kudos to you for picking that boat to  
40 put in there. You certainly buttered me up with that.

41  
42 **MR. CELATA:** Congratulations on the birth of your child. I  
43 can't take credit for taking the image, and I will have to let  
44 my public affairs folks know, and fisheries folks know, that you  
45 appreciate that image, but I will probably make sure it's never  
46 taken out, and so thanks.

47  
48 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, and the only comment I will make right

1 now is on that fisheries contingency fund, and I would  
2 recommend, strongly, that BOEM consider that as something that  
3 is set up as a central fund and not an individual fund by a  
4 particular operator, but a centralized fund that all operators  
5 must contribute some percentage to as they begin their work out  
6 there in the Gulf of Mexico, because it has been instrumental  
7 and well utilized in the oil and gas development side of things  
8 in the Gulf, and I think that's only fair, for the other users  
9 of the sea, if they cause damage to our gear or something else,  
10 and, you know, loss of revenue, because we have to stop because  
11 of damage to our gear, whatever it may be. I think that's only  
12 right, and I hope that BOEM will consider that.

13  
14 I have a few other comments, and nothing major, but I'm going to  
15 wait until we get to the Shrimp AP report and go through that,  
16 and so thank you for your presentation, and it was excellent.

17  
18 **MR. CELATA:** Thank you. I mean, on the fishermen's contingency  
19 fund, we're working on different avenues, and it's -- In  
20 reality, what it needs is Congress to change the rule, but I  
21 know we had our fisheries mitigation meeting, and we're looking  
22 at options, and we've been working, within the department, to  
23 see what other options -- You know, if BOEM doesn't have a fund,  
24 then somebody else, but I don't have a good answer, but we are  
25 looking into it, but, ideally, Congress would change the rule  
26 and the law, and that would make it simplest, but we are working  
27 on it, but I can't guarantee anything.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Leann. Next up is Troy Williamson.  
30 Troy, is your audio working?

31  
32 **MR. TROY WILLIAMSON:** Your lease provision for thirty years,  
33 what happens, as in the oil and gas industry, when the  
34 production ceases, and there's a provision for removing the  
35 structures, and is that included in this wind energy, if the  
36 operator quits operating, so to speak, and is there a removal  
37 provision for the wind turbines?

38  
39 **MR. CELATA:** Yes, and they need to be decommissioned.  
40 Absolutely that is part of the lease.

41  
42 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Okay, and so it's a thirty-year lease, as long  
43 as it's producing.

44  
45 **MR. CELATA:** Well, it's a little different than oil and gas,  
46 where it's not a finite resource, and so the lease term -- They  
47 should be able to produce. I mean, I think that's probably  
48 right, but it's not like the wind will be depleted. The wind

1 will still be there, and so it's slightly different, but, yes,  
2 they would need to remove them at the end of that, absolutely.

3

4 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** If they're not operational.

5

6 **MR. CELATA:** Right.

7

8 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Okay. Thank you very much.

9

10 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Troy. Next up is Clay Porch.

11

12 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Thank you, Chair, and good morning, everyone.  
13 Michael, thank you for this presentation. It was really helpful  
14 for me. I noticed, on one of your slides, it says BOEM funds  
15 research to fill information gaps. As we've discussed before,  
16 and, actually, this will probably affect some of our surveys,  
17 which creates information gaps, and it's going to affect a lot  
18 of our fishermen, in particular the shrimp fishery, and it's  
19 possibly going to have a big impact on the marine mammal  
20 population, with the increased vessel traffic and everything  
21 else.

22

23 I wonder if you could give us an idea of the kind of research  
24 that you would fund to address information gaps, and, in  
25 particular, how we will monitor the potential impact on marine  
26 mammals.

27

28 **MR. CELATA:** I think the first thing is -- I believe, on the  
29 Atlantic coast, that there's a requirement for all installations  
30 to have long-term monitoring operations and to study the  
31 impacts. I don't know how far away from the installation that  
32 they have to study those impacts, but there is a long-term  
33 monitoring component that is going to go on, and, when BOEM's  
34 general lease search is done, we have a program that is not just  
35 tied to wind energy, but it affects all our programs, where we  
36 get funding and we go out and study things like -- In the Gulf,  
37 we had worked with NOAA and others, and we have maps, where they  
38 go out and run transects, and they have flights go out to look  
39 for marine mammals and catalog them and check what their  
40 locations are.

41

42 We're doing that now for oil and gas, and I think the plan is to  
43 continue doing those things, moving forward. I would just say  
44 that it's looking like where the turbines are going to go are in  
45 areas where had oil and gas in the past, and there's probably  
46 less oil and gas activity now, and so I don't think it's going  
47 to be adding to the activities in the eastern Gulf, where we  
48 have a lot of oil and gas, but it will probably be in areas

1 where there is less oil and gas activity, but we have a process  
2 internally that we put forward studies, looking at turtles as  
3 well, and looking at other impacts that we may not have, but an  
4 annual process where we get funding, and so, if there's a  
5 certain study that you think we need to conduct, you can send  
6 that in and provide us input, and we can put that into our  
7 studies process. It's separate from any other thing that you've  
8 heard today, and it happens every year, where we look where we  
9 have gaps and try to fill them.

10  
11 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Clay. Next up is Tom Frazer.

14  
15 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for recognizing me, and  
16 I'm not on the committee, but I want to thank Mr. Celata for the  
17 presentation. Dave Donaldson asked a question that had to do  
18 with buffer zones, but, in the presentation, you indicated that  
19 you continue to kind of winnow-down the area that might be  
20 available for leases, and so I have two questions.

21  
22 Can you give us an idea of what the -- In your scenario  
23 planning, what the maximum lease area might look like, in terms  
24 of square kilometers, and I just wanted to get some  
25 clarification on Dave's question, and the lease areas will not  
26 be considered exclusive use zones, and, if you can clarify that,  
27 that will be great.

28  
29 **MR. CELATA:** I would have to go back and read the lease, but, on  
30 an oil and gas lease, it's not exclusive, clearly, and I think  
31 the goal would be to make sure that we do have other  
32 opportunities, right, and so, I mean, there's other things out  
33 there, like aquaculture, and I don't think, necessarily, in  
34 those areas that NOAA has outlined, that the wind energy areas  
35 would be there, but we definitely have multiple uses, and the  
36 first thing that we're trying to do is avoid conflict, and that  
37 is -- The process, when we winnow-down, where we're headed is to  
38 avoid conflict, as much as possible and then to mitigate those  
39 conflicts away as much as possible after that.

40  
41 When we put our map out of the areas, and this is just for  
42 example, and we don't have them in here, but we have a map of  
43 the avian densities, and most of the red, the high numbers, are  
44 along the edges of the call area, and we're clearly going to be  
45 moving in away from that.

46  
47 The shrimp industry, we have a trawl map that we're working with  
48 NOAA and the shrimp industry to try to understand exactly what

1 is significant there and then overlay those with the competitive  
2 interest area and try to find these areas of competitive  
3 interest that don't have any impact, or the least impact, to the  
4 different fisheries.  
5

6 I think, when NOAA did their analysis, they had six different  
7 fisheries layers, and so we're talking to them about using those  
8 same layers, and maybe if we have others that we can add in  
9 there, and so this is why I said it's -- BOEM always talks about  
10 we're early in the process, and we have a lot of work to do with  
11 doing this de-conflicting between now and early next year, to  
12 get us where we have -- I think the lease areas were about -- I  
13 want to say 80,000 acres, but I don't know if -- I would like to  
14 get back to you on whether that answer is right, but I think, if  
15 I remember correctly, we're looking at about maybe 80,000 acres,  
16 but that's the number that crosses my head, but I would prefer  
17 to check on that and get back to you all with the right answer.  
18

19 **DR. FRAZER:** I appreciate that. Thank you.  
20

21 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Tom. Next up is Andy Strelcheck.  
22

23 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Good morning. Thanks, Michael, for the  
24 presentation. It's really not a question for you, but I just  
25 wanted to make a comment, and certainly feel free to add to my  
26 comments, but I wanted to thank you and your organization,  
27 obviously, for the coordination that's been happening to-date.  
28

29 I know we, as an agency, have learned a lot from what has  
30 happened in the Northeast, and, just recently, our respective  
31 agencies signed a memorandum of understanding with regard to  
32 renewable energy and offshore wind development, ensuring that we  
33 maintain the coordination and improve upon the NEPA process and  
34 efficiencies that we need to achieve with regard to reaching the  
35 administration's goals.  
36

37 For the council's benefit, for your awareness, my office has  
38 been working closely with Michael and his team, and we've been  
39 providing comment letters and response letters, with the Science  
40 Center and others, on the various public comment opportunities,  
41 not only on fisheries, but also marine mammals, protected  
42 resources, and habitat, and we're going to continue to,  
43 obviously, work with them closely as the environmental  
44 assessment develops.  
45

46 We also are trying to maintain close coordination with  
47 leadership, in particular with the science behind supporting,  
48 obviously, the development of aquaculture in the Gulf of Mexico,

1 and so I just wanted to let the council know that that's all  
2 ongoing and maybe not something that you're aware of, but  
3 there's definitely good coordination happening.  
4

5 **MR. CELATA:** Andy, thanks for that. I think we're working  
6 really well together, and I think trying to figure out, with the  
7 MOU and all this, how to continue this moving forward, but it's  
8 critical for us to work with NOAA, especially in the fisheries  
9 area, and they're the experts, and I know, with the shrimp  
10 industry, that they pointed us to NOAA and their spatial  
11 analysis, and we're committed to doing similar spatial analyses,  
12 moving forward, for this process.  
13

14 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Andy. Are there any other comments  
15 or questions from the committee or council members not on the  
16 committee? Leann, back to you. You're up.  
17

18 **MS. BOSARGE:** Will Mr. Celata still be on the line and available  
19 for feedback as we go through that Shrimp AP report?  
20

21 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** I would hope so.  
22

23 **MR. CELATA:** Is that this morning still, between now and 10:15?  
24 If that's true, then yes.  
25

26 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** It's the very next item.  
27

28 **MR. CELATA:** I will be here.  
29

30 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you.  
31

32 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Leann, any further questions?  
33

34 **MS. BOSARGE:** No, and I will go through my comments as we go  
35 through that report.  
36

37 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Very good. Thank you, Leann. Any other input  
38 on the presentation by Mr. Celata on wind energy from the  
39 committee or council members not on the committee? No hands  
40 raised.  
41

42 Then I have a couple of comments. First of all, Mr. Celata,  
43 thank you very much for that presentation. I found it to be  
44 very helpful in bringing myself up-to-date and understanding the  
45 process a little better, and I want to congratulate you for the  
46 greatly enhanced outreach that you've done, especially when you  
47 compare it to what was done in the Northeast and the far west.  
48

1 I think you've done a good job there, in getting that word out  
2 and spending a lot of time and energy in trying to ensure that  
3 all folks that are interested know what's going on, and I  
4 appreciate that, and, as you've noted from your prior  
5 presentation, and this one, there is a lot of interest by this  
6 group on the activities going on in your arena, and I would hope  
7 that you would be willing to come back, on a periodic basis,  
8 particularly as things are evolving, to keep us up-to-date and  
9 keep us apprised of the progress on this program and how it may  
10 impact the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

11  
12 **MR. CELATA:** Thank you. I would love to come back, and I would  
13 love to do it face-to-face one day.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** I would be delighted, and so, if we can get that  
16 worked out, we'll look forward to it in the future. Thank you,  
17 Mr. Celata, and, if you would stay on during the next item,  
18 which is getting the Shrimp Advisory Panel's comments on that,  
19 it would be much appreciated.

20  
21 **MR. CELATA:** I will stay on.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, sir. With that, we'll move on the  
24 next item on the agenda, which is the Shrimp AP's comments on  
25 this particular topic, and that can be found under Tab D, in the  
26 Shrimp Committee groupings, Tab D, Number 6. It will be led by  
27 Dr. Freeman. Dr. Freeman.

28  
29 **SUMMARY OF THE SHRIMP ADVISORY PANEL MEETING**

30  
31 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. The Shrimp Advisory Panel had a  
32 two-day meeting on December 7 and 8, and, as Mr. Celata  
33 previously mentioned, one of the presentations they received was  
34 a very similar presentation as the committee just saw by BOEM.  
35 The AP made five motions related to BOEM's presentation, and so  
36 I will go through those one at a time.

37  
38 The first is on page 10, and it says, pursuant to Section  
39 305(b)(3) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, to request the council to  
40 comment on and make recommendations to NMFS and BOEM regarding  
41 any potential impacts of offshore wind energy development,  
42 including offshore facilities and transmission lines, on all  
43 essential fish habitat in the BOEM call area in the Gulf of  
44 Mexico, and that motion carried unanimously. Mr. Chair, would  
45 you like for me to go through all of them or pause and see if  
46 there's any questions or comments first?

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** I think it would be better if you paused on each

1 motion, to see whether the committee has any questions or  
2 comments or would like to make a motion or otherwise act on the  
3 item that you're discussing. Thank you.

4  
5 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. Sounds good, and so I will pause here.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Seeing no hands, Dr. Freeman, please proceed.

8  
9 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay. Certainly. The next motion was to request  
10 the council to work with NMFS to ensure that BOEM enters into  
11 consultations with NMFS, pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered  
12 Species Act, with respect to any action BOEM takes, or proposes  
13 to take, to authorize offshore wind energy development in the  
14 Gulf that may affect any ESA-listed species or designated  
15 critical habitat. Such consultations should begin as early in  
16 the BOEM process as possible, and that motion also carried  
17 unanimously, and so I will pause there.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Leann Bosarge.

20  
21 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was wondering if Mr.  
22 Celata and Mr. Strelcheck could speak to that motion and kind of  
23 let us know what is ongoing or slated for the future, as far as  
24 NMFS and BOEM consulting on Section 7 of the Endangered Species  
25 Act, as it regards offshore wind energy development.

26  
27 **MR. CELATA:** I don't know -- I think that we will be conducting  
28 ESA consultation. I mean, I think that's a requirement for  
29 BOEM, as we move forward. I don't think, at this point, we've  
30 engaged in that, and I think, as we move through the EA process,  
31 the EIS -- As we move specifics, I think at a later date, we  
32 will be working on the Section 7 ESA consultation, and so we're  
33 still trying to get to more specific areas, and then, after that  
34 point, I think that would be the appropriate time.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Mike. Andy.

37  
38 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. In terms of coordination,  
39 and so I mentioned earlier that we've sent several letters, kind  
40 of early on in the process, commenting on NOAA trust resources  
41 and the impacts that potentially could occur for those trust  
42 resources.

43  
44 Our agency is responsible for conducting both ESA and EFH  
45 consultations on these projects. Timing-wise, I don't know when  
46 those will occur, but we will receive a biological assessment  
47 and EFH assessment from BOEM, the action agency, and we  
48 determine, once that's complete, in terms of proceeding with

1 consultations and specific timelines that we meet then to  
2 consult on the project, once that information is available, and  
3 so we will be doing that, and I can circle back with my team, in  
4 terms of getting a better idea of the timeline as to when that  
5 work may occur in the future.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Andy. If there are no further hands,  
8 we will move on. Dr. Freeman, if you would proceed.

9  
10 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. The third motion that the AP made was  
11 to request that the council work with NMFS to ensure that the  
12 complete historical Gulf shrimp fishing effort dataset is fully  
13 included and considered as part of the collaborative BOEM/NOAA  
14 spatial management analyses for evaluating potential sites for  
15 offshore wind energy facilities and transmission lines in the  
16 Gulf. That motion also carried unanimously.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** No hands up? Then please proceed further.

19  
20 **MS. BOSARGE:** My hand is up, Mr. Chairman, and it's just not  
21 showing.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** I am sorry. Leann, please go ahead.

24  
25 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, sir. I appreciate it. The joys of  
26 doing this virtually. Again, I think that that motion right  
27 there is extremely important, and one of the most important  
28 words in it is the word "complete", as it regards historical  
29 Gulf shrimp fishing effort data.

30  
31 There is a lot of different ways you can parse that data and  
32 sort through it. You can do it by the start and endpoint of the  
33 tow, or you can take all the points in the tow, and then there's  
34 ways that you can determine what you consider heavily shrimped  
35 or, you know, moderately shrimped, things like that.

36  
37 I think that that motion, where we're requesting that the  
38 council work with NMFS to ensure that this full, complete  
39 dataset is utilized, is important, and I think maybe the best  
40 way, Mr. Chairman, to handle these motions is really to ask  
41 staff to write a letter that would go to NMFS and to BOEM that  
42 encompasses these motions, you know, and the conversations that  
43 surrounded them at the Shrimp AP meeting, to highlight to NMFS,  
44 and to BOEM, what is important to our stakeholders, as far as  
45 our bottom-trawling stakeholders in the Gulf, and what we hope  
46 to see happen as this process unfolds.

47  
48 I would like to make a motion to that effect, at some point,

1 especially since I heard that the consultations are going to  
2 happen, I guess, in the latter part of this EIS, the Section 7  
3 endangered species consultations will happen in the latter part  
4 of this EIS process, but yet we're planning to start hopefully  
5 leasing one year from now, in the first quarter of 2023.

6  
7 I don't know how much time that gives the government to react to  
8 anything they may see and make changes, and so I think that  
9 letter is going to be important, and so I'm going to turn it  
10 back over to you all, and Dr. Freeman has other motions to go  
11 through, and, as he finishes that, I will try and make a motion  
12 that encompasses all of this. Thank you.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Leann, and, to that point, I think  
15 that's a good approach. However, given there is six motions  
16 that we're dealing with, one motion to reflect all of that may  
17 not be the best way to go, and you may want to consider parsing  
18 it down to segment it, for better discussion and consideration  
19 by the committee, rather than loop it into one, but that's just  
20 a suggestion. With that in mind, Dr. Freeman, if you would go  
21 to the next one.

22  
23 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. I was going to wait to mention this  
24 until I had finished with all the AP motions, but I did want to  
25 bring something up related to the potential motion that Ms.  
26 Bosarge is going to make.

27  
28 Given the interest from the AP in having a letter generated, I  
29 did ask, during the AP motion, Ms. Matthews, as far as the  
30 deadline for the council to send comments, or recommendations,  
31 to BOEM, and this is on page 10 of the notes, and so it is  
32 recorded, and Ms. Matthews said that the original deadline was  
33 December 16 of 2021, but that she would speak to senior leaders  
34 that council comments will be expected the first week of  
35 February 2022. Again, she was present, and so she was aware of  
36 the motions that the AP was making at that point.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you for that point.

39  
40 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. Proceeding to the next motion, and that  
41 is on the top of page 12, to convey to the council, NMFS, and  
42 BOEM that the AP believes the analytical approach to spatial  
43 planning applied by NOAA in the AOA Atlas would be the most  
44 comprehensive, transparent, objective, and, therefore, effective  
45 tool for supporting critical decision-making regarding competing  
46 ocean uses in the Gulf and for minimizing any adverse impacts of  
47 those uses on the shrimp industry, including the siting of  
48 offshore wind facilities and transmission lines in the BOEM call

1 area. That motion carried unanimously.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Not seeing any hands up, Dr. Freeman, please  
4 proceed.

5  
6 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay. The last motion is on the top of page 13,  
7 and that was to request that the council communicate with BOEM  
8 that two shrimp industry representatives be added to the  
9 taskforce, and that motion carried unanimously.

10  
11 In response to that, I did follow-up with Ms. Matthews, after  
12 the AP meeting, just to communicate some information about that,  
13 and perhaps, if anyone has any additional questions, Mr. Celata  
14 may be able to answer those, and Ms. Matthews had responded back  
15 that the members of the taskforce include state, federal, and  
16 tribal governments, and the taskforce is neither a decision-  
17 making body nor an approval body, and that she did check, and  
18 that the council does not meet that criteria. However, they do  
19 have a NOAA representative on the taskforce, and that member may  
20 represent council interests on the intergovernmental taskforce,  
21 and that was the last motion from the AP.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Dr. Freeman, and so any questions?  
24 Leann, would you like to weigh-in, at this point, with your  
25 motion?

26  
27 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, sir, and thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am  
28 trying to do this in a streamlined fashion, so that I don't slow  
29 your committee down, and so I do want to make an overarching  
30 motion, but I may hold that until Full Council, and, at this  
31 point, I will take up your suggestion and at least make this one  
32 motion that the AP made, which was to request -- It's on page 10  
33 of the Shrimp AP summary, at the very bottom, the last motion on  
34 that page.

35  
36 **It's to request that the council work with NMFS to ensure that**  
37 **the complete historical Gulf shrimp fishing effort dataset is**  
38 **fully included and considered as part of the collaborative**  
39 **BOEM/NOAA spatial management analysis for evaluating potential**  
40 **sites for offshore wind energy facilities and transmission lines**  
41 **in the Gulf. The only change I would make to that, Mr.**  
42 **Chairman, is, on the very first line, where it says, "to request**  
43 **that the council work with NMFS", and I would put "NMFS/BOEM",**  
44 **because I would venture to guess that staff would have to work**  
45 **with both.**

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Leann. We have a motion on the  
48 table, and is there a second for the motion?

1  
2 **MR. BILLY BROUSSARD:** I will second.  
3  
4 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Billy. The motion is made and  
5 seconded. Is there discussion on the motion?  
6  
7 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** Mr. Gill, just a point of order, and I don't  
8 think that Mr. Broussard is on your committee for a second.  
9  
10 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** You're correct, Mr. Chairman. My apologies.  
11 Thank you.  
12  
13 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** I will second the motion.  
14  
15 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Chris, and my apologies to the  
16 committee for not thinking that through, and so a motion is made  
17 and seconded. Is there discussion on the motion? No hands are  
18 up. **Are there any objections to the motion to request that the**  
19 **council work with NMFS and BOEM to ensure that the complete**  
20 **historical Gulf shrimp fishing effort dataset is fully included**  
21 **and considered as part of the collaborative BOEM/NOAA spatial**  
22 **management analyses for evaluating potential sites for offshore**  
23 **wind energy facilities and transmission lines in the Gulf? Any**  
24 **objections to that motion? Seeing no hands, the motion passes**  
25 **without objection.** Dr. Freeman, are there any other comments  
26 that you would make relative to the AP discussion of this item?  
27  
28 **DR. FREEMAN:** No, sir, but certainly, if Ms. Bosarge has any  
29 additional motions during Full Council, if there are questions  
30 related to the AP summary, I can certainly answer them at that  
31 point. Thank you.  
32  
33 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you. Leann, if you hand is up, please  
34 proceed.  
35  
36 **MS. BOSARGE:** Mr. Chairman, I think I will go ahead and make the  
37 motion from the Shrimp AP report that's right above that one we  
38 just did, and it's also on page 10, and I don't think that's a  
39 real controversial one, and it's something that will take place  
40 anyway, but this will just highlight that we want this to happen  
41 early, as early in the BOEM process as possible.  
42  
43 **It is to request the council to work with NMFS to ensure that**  
44 **BOEM enters into consultations with NMFS, pursuant to Section 7**  
45 **of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) with respect to any action**  
46 **BOEM takes, or proposes to take, to authorize offshore wind**  
47 **energy development in the Gulf that may affect any ESA listed**  
48 **species or designated critical habitat. Such consultations**

1 should begin as early in the BOEM process as possible.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Leann. We have a motion on the  
4 table. Is there a second to the motion?

5  
6 **MR SCHIEBLE:** I will second.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Chris. The motion has been made and  
9 seconded. Is there discussion on the motion? **Not seeing any**  
10 **hands, are there any objections to the motion to request the**  
11 **council to work with NMFS to ensure that BOEM enters into**  
12 **consultations with NMFS, pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered**  
13 **Species Act (ESA) with respect to any action BOEM takes, or**  
14 **proposes to take, to authorize offshore wind energy development**  
15 **in the Gulf that may affect any ESA listed species or designated**  
16 **critical habitat. Such consultations should begin as early in**  
17 **the BOEM process as possible. Do I hear any objections to this**  
18 **motion? Not seeing any objections, the motion passes with no**  
19 **objection.** Dr. Freeman, you're done. Leann, are you  
20 considering additional motions on this topic?

21  
22 **MS. BOSARGE:** No, sir. I will hold it until Full Council.  
23 Thanks.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Very good. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr.  
26 Celata, again, for your presentation and your information, and  
27 hopefully we'll see you back in the not-too-distant future.

28  
29 **MR. CELATA:** Thank you, and I would like to add that I did get  
30 confirmation that, for a one-gigawatt project, it's about 80,000  
31 acres, and so I can confirm that.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you for that information. We'll now move  
34 on to Agenda Item Number V, which is the Essential Fish Habitat  
35 Generic Amendment, which is found under Tab P, Number 5, and Dr.  
36 Hollensead will lead the discussion.

37  
38 **ESSENTIAL FISH HABITAT GENERIC AMENDMENT**

39  
40 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Bernie, if you wouldn't  
41 mind pulling up the document and just on the title page right  
42 there. Thank you. Just to remind the committee, and it's been  
43 a little while since they've seen this document, but the council  
44 is required to have identifications and descriptions of  
45 essential fish habitat, or EFH, for all managed species and by  
46 life stage, and so it's not even actually just species, but it's  
47 the number of life stages within those species.

1 As well as have a five-year review, every now and again, to  
2 review those identifications and descriptions. The last one was  
3 due in 2020. However, in speaking with NOAA Habitat Division  
4 staff, we reached an agreement where that deadline would be  
5 extended a bit, in order to draft the amendment that you have  
6 before you, recognizing that's a little bit more comprehensive,  
7 and it requires a little bit more work, but this, along with  
8 folding in the requirements for the five-year review, would sort  
9 of be this nice comprehensive overlook, and so the goal is to  
10 have this document completed by 2022, and so just to sort of  
11 keep that in mind, for the committee.

12  
13 Then, to give a little bit of a progress report on where it's  
14 been so far, the SSC did review this version at their January  
15 meeting, a couple of weeks ago, and they've had some questions,  
16 just in general wanting to get a better idea of the spatial data  
17 layers being used.

18  
19 Back in August, we had provided some metadata for them, in the  
20 form of lists and sort of descriptions of, for example, the  
21 years being used and how the data was collected, what agency did  
22 that collection, if it was just at the state level or the  
23 regional level, those sorts of things, which is good  
24 information, but, for these kinds of data, it's much better to  
25 have maps that you can sort of look through and visualize those  
26 data, in addition to seeing sort of how things are listed out,  
27 to update some of those data layers with more contemporary  
28 information.

29  
30 Council staff is currently working on that, and we are working  
31 on creating a webpage that would allow SSC members to sort of  
32 toggle through and compare what's the raw data information, what  
33 are some of the differences in the data collection  
34 methodologies, how -- Give a couple of examples for species, how  
35 these data layers may be combined, to give some information  
36 about -- Examples of what those alternatives would look like and  
37 what the differences between those might be.

38  
39 That's going to take us a little bit of time, but I would  
40 imagine, once the SSC has been able to review that and ask some  
41 questions of staff, we would be able to bring back some  
42 recommendations to this committee and get some of the feedback  
43 from the SSC to help inform the committee on sort of next steps,  
44 but one thing that can be done, while we're working on that, and  
45 while we're waiting on some of the SSC recommendations that may  
46 come from that work, is to look at sort of the alternative  
47 structure for the document, and so this document is a little  
48 unorthodox, compared to some of the other documents that we do.

1  
2 The committee may remember the stock criteria document and how  
3 that sort of had to go by for various species, and some had  
4 stock assessments available, and some did not, and so there had  
5 to be some sort of special ways to break up those alternatives,  
6 and so that is not all that dissimilar from this document, and  
7 so it takes a little bit more into consideration. Bernie, if  
8 you wouldn't mind scrolling down to Table 1.2.1.

9  
10 In the document, there is -- If you will recall, there is a  
11 couple of options for methodology for identifying and describing  
12 EFH. Alternative 1 would be what we currently have on the books  
13 from 2004, which just takes the literature, and it says, for  
14 example, juvenile gag grouper, seagrass habitat, and then it  
15 would look at seagrass layers, and that would be the described  
16 EFH for juvenile gag grouper, for example, in the Gulf.

17  
18 Alternative 2 would still keep that methodology, but, as you can  
19 imagine, there has been changes in the spatial layout of  
20 seagrass over time, and so those maps may change, depending on  
21 where you are in time, and so, Alternative 2 would update those  
22 with those more contemporary data, and so we have that  
23 information. We have life history information, and we have  
24 habitat spatial layers information for all -- That is all  
25 available for every life stage and every managed species, and  
26 that is sort of, perhaps, the most just cut-to-the-chase way to  
27 do this document.

28  
29 However, for the tables listed, or, excuse me, for the species  
30 listed in Table 1.2.1, we have a little bit more information,  
31 and we could have some more quantitative methodologies with  
32 which to describe EFH, and, here, we have data on occurrence,  
33 and so we have some good survey data of where the critter in  
34 question has been encountered, and so we can actually put a pin  
35 in a map and say, okay, this is where we know this animal was  
36 located during a survey, and so, over time, you can get an idea  
37 of perhaps hotspots that they may be, and, additionally -- So  
38 that would be Alternative 3.

39  
40 Then, for Alternative 4, we have some information of not only  
41 where occurrence happened, but we also have some environmental  
42 information, and so then we can begin to piece together some of  
43 the driving environmental factors for that, and so Bernie has  
44 got these up here, and so these are the various alternatives, if  
45 you recall sort of the different things.

46  
47 One of the things that I wanted to note is, if you wouldn't mind  
48 going back to Table 1.2.1, those Alternatives 3 and 4 can only

1 be used -- We only have data available for the species you see  
2 listed here by FMP, and so that's gag grouper, red grouper, red  
3 snapper, white shrimp, brown shrimp, pink shrimp, and Spanish  
4 mackerel.

5  
6 Within that, we only really have data available for the juvenile  
7 and the adult life stages, and so just to keep in mind that  
8 we've got these different alternatives, but there is only a  
9 handful of situations in which Alternatives 3 and 4 could be  
10 done.

11  
12 Looking at this, you can imagine, if you were to try to tackle  
13 this document by species and within life stage, you get about  
14 more than 200 or so options, which is what I would describe as  
15 less than ideal. If you, did it by data availability, which is  
16 what I kind of showed on Table 1.2.1, there would be something  
17 more along the lines of perhaps thirty options, when you look at  
18 the number of species available and then the life stages that  
19 you would have to take into account.

20  
21 One of the other ways that council staff has thought about  
22 perhaps tackling this document, and so if you scroll down just a  
23 little bit, to the top of the next page, and there should be a  
24 table there, and so this is new. The committee hasn't seen this  
25 before, but the level of precision -- The lowest level of  
26 precision to think about, when identifying and describing EFH,  
27 is the life stage.

28  
29 Perhaps the document could be written -- Instead of taking  
30 species-by-species, it could be done in these life stages, and  
31 so there would be just a consideration for eggs and larvae, in  
32 which case only Alternative 1 or Alternative 2 would apply,  
33 because we don't have any occurrence information for eggs and  
34 larvae down that small.

35  
36 For juveniles and adults, or spawning adults, we do have some  
37 information that could be used to inform Alternatives 3 and 4,  
38 but only for those seven species in that Table 1.2.1. Mr.  
39 Chair, I guess the question I would pose for the committee, for  
40 their consideration, and certainly we can take this back to the  
41 IPT and discuss it a little bit more, but it might be helpful  
42 for the IPT to know, for the committee, when choosing --

43  
44 After getting some of the SSC recommendations, would the  
45 committee feel most comfortable in selecting perhaps preferred  
46 alternatives looking at a species-by-species basis, and not for  
47 all managed species, certainly, but perhaps those that we only  
48 have information for to use in Alternative 1 and 2, and then

1 maybe have subsequent -- You know, seven more actions that would  
2 deal with each one of those species in 1.2.1, such that it's not  
3 so far off from what we've done in the past, taking it sort of  
4 species-by-species, in terms of those decision points.

5  
6 This is a little bit more unorthodox way of looking at the life  
7 stages, because that would lead to fewer decision points, but,  
8 again, it's a little more difficult, perhaps, than traditional  
9 amendments, in that it's not species-specific considerations for  
10 those decision points, and so, if the committee wouldn't mind  
11 providing a little input on that, that's something I could take  
12 back to the IPT, and we could begin thinking about the best way  
13 to structure this.

14  
15 My hope is that, with some SSC recommendations, just on the  
16 methodology and things like that, that we then can perhaps kick  
17 off a little bit of consideration for combining these, or  
18 comparing these, alternatives and moving forward.

19  
20 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. I think that's a  
21 weighty question, or at least it is for me, and so I open the  
22 floor to discussion on the question of wrapping our arms around  
23 how to proceed, holistically or not, on this amendment. Is  
24 there any discussion by the committee? Susan Boggs, you're up.

25  
26 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Bernie, would you mind scrolling back up to  
27 the top of these alternatives, and I want to clarify, with Lisa,  
28 that, if we do Alternative 2, and I read this yesterday, but it  
29 was a little over my head, and let me ask the question this way,  
30 and which one of these alternatives only looks at the species in  
31 that table above? Alternatives 3 and 4, correct?

32  
33 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, ma'am. That's correct.

34  
35 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Susan. Dr. Stunz.

38  
39 **DR. GREG STUNZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess my question  
40 is, if we go to this sort of life history, or life stage, and,  
41 Dr. Hollensead, maybe this is to take back to the IPT, and I'm  
42 not -- What I can't understand, I guess, in my mind, is all the  
43 species don't share the common areas they utilize during those  
44 life history phases, and so that still -- I don't know if that  
45 solves our problem of getting away from a single-species  
46 approach.

47  
48 I mean, I don't know, and I don't have a good solution for that,

1 but it seems like that is just as complicated as having all  
2 these issues with a single species, and so, with that said,  
3 we've been talking, for a long time, and not the council, but,  
4 you know, scientists, about this concept of EFH, because, when  
5 you begin to really look at it, you know, everything becomes  
6 EFH, and it becomes not a useful term, because an estuarine  
7 system, or the Gulf of Mexico, for example, becomes essential  
8 fish habitat.

9  
10 I would encourage that you guys consider and the IPT talk -- In  
11 fact, Phil Levin and I wrote a paper, and this has been some  
12 time ago now, to define what is essential essential fish  
13 habitat, and it was kind of a tongue-in-cheek thing to say,  
14 okay, well, we know everything is essential, and what are the  
15 really, really key things that are really needed, and I think  
16 that may be a useful approach, is that we can't identify  
17 everything, but there are certain areas that are exceptionally  
18 important, and maybe we start there, with these alternatives  
19 where we're still looking at single species, but I wouldn't  
20 exclude these other approaches too, looking at life history  
21 phases, and it just -- In my mind, it gets difficult, just as  
22 difficult, when you really get into it.

23  
24 Sorry, Dr. Hollensead, and I probably didn't help you out at all  
25 there, but, you know, this is a very difficult concept, when you  
26 try to start putting this into actual practice in a management  
27 plan.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Greg. Dr. Hollensead.

30  
31 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Dr. Stunz. I appreciate your input  
32 and your sympathy. I think one of the things that I kind of  
33 want to also make clear, in case I didn't, is the life stage  
34 approach would include sort of the species-specific attributes  
35 for each one of those life stages, and so, for example, looking  
36 at eggs and larvae, we could only have the methodologies to use  
37 for Alternative 1 and Alternative 2.

38  
39 However, that would be different for each of the species, and  
40 each one would be considered individually, but just use that  
41 methodology, whereas, for Alternative 2, for a species like  
42 mangrove snapper, we don't have the information to use  
43 Alternative 3 or 4, and we would have to use Alternative 2 for  
44 all of those life stages, if that makes sense.

45  
46 It would be -- The decision points would -- It would make fewer  
47 decision points, but all of the work to describe and identify  
48 EFH for each life stage and species would still be conducted,

1 and so, either way, on my end, it's not more difficult,  
2 necessarily, to do it one way or the other, and, like I said, I  
3 was just trying to provide something for the committee, to at  
4 least where everybody is on the same wavelength, in terms of  
5 where the decision points are, and that's just something that  
6 the IPT has wanted to try to effectively communicate to the  
7 committee, and so certainly any way that we could approach that  
8 would be ideal. I guess that's what I was getting at, in case I  
9 didn't answer your question.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. I will weigh-in a  
12 little bit here, and I agree 100 percent with Greg, and it's  
13 always been a puzzlement as to how do you narrow down EFH to  
14 something that's meaningful, and we're currently not there  
15 today, and so I think that's a question that continues to need  
16 to be asked and a way to get it to something that is meaningful  
17 and we can handle. Any other questions or comments from the  
18 committee? I have a few more questions and comments, if no one  
19 else does. Leann Bosarge, go ahead, please.

20  
21 **MS. BOSARGE:** Lisa, I am not opposed to your idea about this  
22 life history phases and utilizing that, so long as we continue  
23 looking at each of those species that we do have the data for  
24 individually, and, obviously, shrimp is front of mind for me,  
25 and so I'm not opposed to that.

26  
27 I will say though, and I think I said this the last time, that  
28 the two methods that I'm not keen on are those Alternative 3 and  
29 Alternative 4 methods, where we start modeling things, and I  
30 just -- I am not a fan of that, and I've seen that kind of go  
31 awry in the past, on separate issues, and not in the Gulf, but  
32 in the South Atlantic, and so would it help you at all if, at  
33 some point, if we streamlined the document, to maybe remove  
34 those from the document, and I don't know that we're at that  
35 point today, and you can tell me that, but, if you're looking to  
36 kind of streamline things and get a grasp on where we're headed,  
37 I hope we're not headed in that direction, if that could help  
38 you at all.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Dr. Hollensead, to that point, before we get to  
41 Mara Levy?

42  
43 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, that is  
44 something the committee could decide to do. There is precedent  
45 for using sort of that more qualitative description of EFH, to  
46 be able to encompass all managed species, and the South Atlantic  
47 does something similar, for example, and just using that  
48 Alternative 1 and 2, and so that would be something that the

1 committee could consider.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. Mara Levy.

4

5 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Thank you. Just a couple of things, and I guess  
6 I will address what Leann said, just because she just said it,  
7 and I would not advise on removing Alternative 3 or 4 from the  
8 document. I mean, you could decide, I guess, that you don't  
9 want to use the modeling approaches, but I would encourage a  
10 discussion more specifically about why, rather than a general  
11 modeling sometimes doesn't give you the result that you want, or  
12 some -- I am not sure what "goes awry" means, but I'm sure Leann  
13 can articulate what she means when we get to that point.

14

15 I was going to say, also, with respect to decision points, it  
16 has been difficult to kind of figure out how to articulate what  
17 the council might select, in terms of preferred alternatives,  
18 but, ultimately, for most of the species, it's Alternative 2,  
19 right, because we don't have the data to use Alternative 3 or 4.  
20 However, there are those species for which the data is available  
21 to use 3 or 4, and so, I guess, to me, the decision point is, to  
22 the extent we have the data, and the council wants to explore  
23 using these models, the decision point really is, for those  
24 seven species where the data is available, is the preference  
25 Alternative 3 or Alternative 4, and why, or, if you don't want  
26 to use the modeling, is everything Alternative 2, and why.

27

28 I think it's been difficult to set up the document in a way that  
29 would show what your decision points are there, and that's what  
30 we've been struggling with a bit, but those are really the basic  
31 decision points, no matter how you look at it, I think. Thank  
32 you.

33

34 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Mara. I think the argument could be  
35 made that Alternatives 3 and 4 bring in new technology, if you  
36 will, to the approach on how to handle the EFH, whereas  
37 Alternatives 1 and 2 are fundamentally the old version, with  
38 updates, kind of like an update assessment, whereas 3 and 4 go  
39 more towards a research track, or something like that, and so  
40 there could be considered an advantage to trying something  
41 different than what we recognize, I think, generally, as an  
42 inadequate version of what we've done before. Are there any  
43 other questions, before I raise some of mine, or comments, for  
44 that matter?

45

46 Seeing no hands, and I hadn't been part of the council when this  
47 thing started, but could you scroll back, Bernie, to the purpose  
48 and need section? Thank you.

1  
2 One of the things that strikes me, and is talked about in the  
3 document, is the fact that we've had two reviews of EFH prior to  
4 this, and we've basically not addressed much of either one, and  
5 it would seem, to me, that we could add to the need, and I throw  
6 it open for discussion, that part of the need is to address the  
7 recommendations not thus far addressed from the prior reviews of  
8 EFH, and I throw that out for consideration by the committee and  
9 comment by Dr. Hollensead, if you will, as to the  
10 appropriateness, or lack thereof. Dr. Hollensead.

11  
12 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that is  
13 something that, if the committee wanted to add it, we could.  
14 You're right that the five-year reviews serve as an opportunity  
15 to allow the council to look over its descriptions and  
16 identifications and perhaps make revisions to things during  
17 those times, but they do not go into sort of the official what's  
18 on the books for the description and identification, and that's  
19 required by the amendment, which is what's being done here.

20  
21 Unless -- I would imagine, unless Mara had any kind of comment  
22 about that, I do think that that would -- That is what this is  
23 looking to address, and so I think that added language, if you  
24 felt it warranted, or if the committee felt it warranted, would  
25 be good.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Lisa. Mara, any comment relative to  
28 inclusion of such a sentence?

29  
30 **MS. LEVY:** No, not really. I mean, I think, if you want to  
31 include it, that seems fine. I think Lisa is right that this is  
32 what this document is attempting to do, partially.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you. Committee, I will throw it out there  
35 as an option, and is there any objection to including, in the  
36 need statement, a statement that this is attempting to address  
37 recommendations from prior reviews? Susan.

38  
39 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, as I read it, the  
40 purpose already kind of -- To me, it already states that, and do  
41 we need to reiterate it in the need? I mean, sometimes we get  
42 in the weeds and busy this stuff up, and I just felt like the  
43 purpose already addresses that, and those are just my comments.  
44 Thank you.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Susan. I didn't see it that way,  
47 but, if others did, I'm fine with that, too. Any other comments  
48 on revising the need to reflect addressing prior review

1 recommendations? Not seeing any hands, my suggestion, Lisa, is  
2 why don't we add it, and, if the committee doesn't like it, the  
3 next time we see this document, we can remove it.

4  
5 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, sir. I think we can do that.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** My other question, for you, Lisa, is there any -  
8 - This is a highly technical amendment, and it seems to me that  
9 the SSC is clearly part of the body that ought to be advising  
10 this council on it, and have -- Do you intend to bring it before  
11 the Ecosystem Technical Committee, for their input? I recognize  
12 there is overlap with some of the members, but the Ecosystem  
13 Technical Committee is comprised of a more diverse group, and  
14 also highly technical, and can provide input of a different  
15 sort, I think, than the SSC, and could you comment on that?

16  
17 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Staff is talking, and we currently don't have  
18 an Ecosystem Technical Committee meeting planned, and,  
19 unfortunately, we do run along the deadline, and the goal is to  
20 have this document completed by the end of 2022, to be in  
21 somewhat within the timeline of the five-year review, which  
22 should have been completed in 2020, and so that's my only  
23 thoughts with that, is just the timing of the document.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** So there is no Ecosystem Technical Committee  
26 meeting planned before the end of the year, before October?

27  
28 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Mr. Gill, we just had one,  
29 and we need to report out to the council in April on a contract,  
30 and so we need to spend quite a bit of time going through that  
31 at the next meeting, but we can certainly talk about that and  
32 see how the timing works out, after we get that information to  
33 the council, when they might want to convene that body again,  
34 but I think we would just need to, at the staff level, think  
35 about what we're asking the technical committee to comment on  
36 that we haven't already asked the SSC to comment on, and perhaps  
37 we could revisit this at Full Council, Mr. Chair.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Fair enough. Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Greg,  
40 you're up.

41  
42 **DR. STUNZ:** I was going to say that my comment was largely along  
43 the lines that you just made about essential fish habitat, and I  
44 think, on the surface, we all get it and understand the  
45 importance of that, but it's very highly technical, and so,  
46 Lisa, I'm kind of recommending maybe even going a little bit  
47 beyond what Bob just said, where we have our ecosystem teams to  
48 meet that are part of the SSC, or whatever expert group, but

1 maybe bringing in some EFH experts that really understand this,  
2 because, you know, if I didn't do this professionally, I would  
3 have a hard time even commenting of how do you really put this  
4 into practice, because it is so technical, and I think it's  
5 going to require that level of discussion, to bring this  
6 committee back some ideas that then we can kick around and  
7 implement for management purposes, but I think it's going to be  
8 a struggle for us to develop anything kind of on the fly here.

9  
10 Speaking on the fly, what I would maybe recommend this group,  
11 whoever it is, consider, and I'm just thinking now, as this  
12 discussion is developing today, and we begin to prioritize EFH  
13 that really makes a difference, and back to your life stage  
14 approach, and, you know, there are certain life stages of  
15 species, and, of course, it's species-specific, that are much  
16 more important than other life phases.

17  
18 You know, they're all important, but there are some that are  
19 critically important, and I think, if we identify ahead of time  
20 what those are, and that can be done, and the science is there  
21 to do that, and, if that can be done, and you prioritize those  
22 life phases, then that would help guide us to implementing EFH  
23 that -- Let's say, for example, and this is the case for some  
24 species, their nursery habitats are particularly important,  
25 compared to their eggs in the water column, for example.

26  
27 So you prioritize, for example, seagrasses for these particular  
28 fish, like shrimp or red drum, for example, over other areas,  
29 because we can't protect everything, and we just don't have the  
30 resources to do that or understand it, and so I guess that's  
31 just one example of, I think, what some of this team could  
32 consider and then bring us back some more refined, detailed,  
33 well, here's some really essential areas that are worthy of  
34 management changes.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Greg. Good comments, and I  
37 completely agree that this amendment, for most of us, is way  
38 over our heads, and I think your suggestion of convening the  
39 special SSCs, with some outside input, perhaps, might be the  
40 best way to go, and certainly it's an alternative, but I am  
41 thinking as much technical advice as we can get would be very  
42 helpful to this committee and this council in addressing this  
43 amendment. Mara, you're up.

44  
45 **MS. LEVY:** Thanks. I mean, I just want to make clear, right,  
46 that, when we're talking about describing and identifying  
47 essential fish habitat, the definition of essential fish habitat  
48 is very broad, right, and it's those waters and substrate

1 necessary to fish for, spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to  
2 maturity, and so there's a difference between identifying and  
3 describing what that essential fish habitat is, which there are  
4 a number of alternative ways to do that in this document, and  
5 then identifying priority areas, which I am going to translate  
6 into habitat areas of particular concern, although might not  
7 necessarily be that, and then there is a difference between  
8 deciding whether you need management measures in those areas,  
9 right, to minimize adverse effects from fishing.

10  
11 I feel like the discussion might be getting a little conflated,  
12 and this document is looking at updating your descriptions and  
13 identification of essential fish habitat, and, again, that's  
14 very broad, and there are four alternatives, or three, 2, 3, and  
15 4, actually, on how to do that, some of which we can do with the  
16 data available and some of which we can't for certain species,  
17 and so I agree that all of this discussion is relevant and  
18 important, but I don't want to go down the path of which are the  
19 most important areas for such, when we haven't even, you know,  
20 decided how you're going to update the descriptions and  
21 identifications of the very broad essential fish habitat.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Mara. Leann.

24  
25 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If we are going to put  
26 it in front of some of those special SSCs, I would make one  
27 request, and that is that, especially with Alternative 3 and  
28 Alternative 4, those modeling approaches, that we get a very  
29 deep dive into those approaches and not the thirty-thousand-foot  
30 view, but let's get into what are the assumptions that you're  
31 putting into those models and, for areas of the Gulf where we  
32 have no prior knowledge of what the habitat is, how is --  
33 Exactly how is that --

34  
35 What are the steps that model is going through to determine and  
36 produce an outcome on what the habitat looks like right there of  
37 is it mud bottom or is it sand bottom or is it, you know, some  
38 sort of coral or something like that, and I want to know how  
39 that model is actually going about determining those things, and  
40 I think those are important items to consider, if we are going  
41 to move forward to truly understand these models before we bless  
42 one as our approach relative to essential fish habitat. Thanks.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Leann. Dr. Hollensead.

45  
46 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Ms. Bosarge, in August,  
47 the SSC got a pretty comprehensive presentation on the various  
48 modeling approaches, which, if we brought this document back, we

1 can include, perhaps, as background for any committee members  
2 that wanted to dive into that a little bit more or had any  
3 specific questions, and you're certainly more than welcome to  
4 ask any of those at any point.

5  
6 Then also just to note, for the committee, and it's not very  
7 clear, because it says "generic amendment", and it's for most  
8 FMPs, but this particular amendment will not include coral, and  
9 so it's all the shrimp and finfish species, and so I just wanted  
10 to note that, but, yes, certainly -- Also, to your point in  
11 terms of, number one, how do all these various methodologies  
12 work, what are their assumptions, what is some of the equations  
13 even behind them, and like I said, they were in that  
14 presentation to the SSC.

15  
16 Then, to get to your next point of what council staff wants to  
17 do next, it's what do the raw habitat spatial data layers look  
18 like, and we have presented the metadata, which gives a  
19 description, which is helpful, but, as I had mentioned earlier,  
20 it's nice to get visualizations of these things, and so that is  
21 what staff is looking to put together for the SSC, and we can  
22 certainly make all of those materials available for the  
23 committee the next time this group takes up this document.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. Any other further  
26 discussion on the Essential Fish Habitat Generic Amendment,  
27 before we move on to the next agenda item? Seeing no hands,  
28 that completes Agenda Item Number VI, and we'll move on to  
29 Number VI, which is the Draft Response Letter to NOAA Request  
30 for Comments on the Area-Based Management Goals Related to  
31 Executive Order 14008. It's Tab P, Number 6(a), and then the  
32 background is 6(b), and that will be led by Dr. Froeschke.  
33 John.

34  
35 **DRAFT RESPONSE LETTER TO NOAA REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON THE AREA-**  
36 **BASED MANAGEMENT GOALS RELATED TO EXECUTIVE ORDER 14008**

37  
38 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** Good morning, everyone. This item  
39 addresses a request for information from NOAA, and it was made  
40 available last October, and the request is to advance the goals  
41 and recommendations in the report *Conserving and Restoring*  
42 *America the Beautiful*, including conserving at least 30 percent  
43 of the U.S. lands and waters by 2030.

44  
45 A little bit of background, before we dive into the draft letter  
46 that staff has prepared. When the *America the Beautiful* report  
47 was made available last spring, the Council Coordinating  
48 Committee appointed an area-based management sub-committee

1 composed of various staff from the regional management councils,  
2 and I'm the staff representative for the Gulf Council, and, in  
3 response to this, we started working on how the council staff  
4 might evaluate areas within each of the respective regions and  
5 with respect to contributing to the atlas that is going to be  
6 developed as part of the *America the Beautiful* report.

7  
8 The staff -- While this area-based management sub-committee has  
9 met approximately monthly since June or July, and so we've had  
10 five or six meetings, and the idea was that we would look at the  
11 areas with place-based management in our respective regions and  
12 try to map them to whether they met the criteria for area-based  
13 conservation, or inclusion, in this 30 percent by 2030.

14  
15 The letter, or at least the comments that we've prepared to-  
16 date, are essentially resulting from the approach and what we've  
17 encountered, and so, if you would like, we could bring up the  
18 letter, and do you want me to summarize sort of the rationale  
19 for the respective sections, or do you want me to just open it  
20 up for comment?

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** I would suggest opening it up for comment, and  
23 everyone has had an opportunity to read it and think about it,  
24 and, if there is any comments, it would perhaps be a little more  
25 efficient to handle it that way. With that in mind, we're  
26 looking for comments from the committee or, for that matter,  
27 council members outside the committee on the draft letter for  
28 council review. Kevin, you're up.

29  
30 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Yes, sir, you're correct, and I'm not on your  
31 committee, and thank you for recognizing me, and I was going to  
32 possibly wait until Full Council, and the committee report, and  
33 I just have three typos to suggest incorporating into, or  
34 changing, in the letter, and I can mention them now, or I can  
35 just forward them to staff, and they can review and potentially  
36 incorporate them for the final version at Full Council, and it's  
37 up to you.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** If they're not substantive, I would suggest  
40 passing them on to staff, and they can modify the document for  
41 consideration at Full Council.

42  
43 **MR. ANSON:** Perfect. Thank you.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Any other comments or questions about the draft  
46 letter? It's pretty quiet out there, and so I do not see this  
47 as needing a motion for Full Council, Dr. Froeschke, and would  
48 you disagree with that?

1  
2 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, it would be my preference if we would get  
3 a motion to recommend approving this, so we could get it  
4 submitted.  
5  
6 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** If you want a motion, we'll try to get a motion.  
7 Would someone like to make a motion to forward this to Full  
8 Council, recommending approval, as written? Jessica.  
9  
10 **MS. JESSICA MCCAWLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am not on  
11 your committee, and I was just going to offer some insights, and  
12 I thought this letter was really well written, and I liked how  
13 it focused on the conservation area and what constitutes a  
14 conservation area, and I like how it suggested using the  
15 existing council process to answer some of these questions, and  
16 so I'm not on your committee, and I can't make a motion, but I  
17 thought this was a really well-written letter.  
18  
19 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Jessica, and I completely concur.  
20 Would someone on the committee like to make a motion to  
21 recommend this letter for approval by the Full Council?  
22  
23 **DR. STUNZ:** So moved.  
24  
25 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Greg. **We have a motion to Full**  
26 **Council recommending approval.** Is there a second on the motion?  
27  
28 **MR. DONALDSON:** I will second it.  
29  
30 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Dave. I appreciate that, and so we  
31 have a motion and a second, and is there any further discussion  
32 on the motion? We're getting it on the board. I would put "to  
33 Full Council recommending approval". Recommend the letter be  
34 sent to Full Council for approval, or something like that.  
35 We've got too many "recommends" in there. Instead of "the  
36 recommending", just put "for". All right.  
37  
38 **The motion reads: To recommend the letter be sent to Full**  
39 **Council for approval.** Any discussion on the motion? **Any**  
40 **objections to the motion? Seeing none, the motion passes with**  
41 **no objections.** Dr. Froeschke, any other further comment on this  
42 section of the agenda?  
43  
44 **DR. FROESCHKE:** No, sir. Thank you.  
45  
46 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, sir. That brings us to the last item  
47 on the agenda, Other Business. Does anybody have any other  
48 business that needs to be brought up to this committee? Leann.

1  
2 **OTHER BUSINESS**  
3

4 **MS. BOSARGE:** I was just going to go back, and I pulled up that  
5 -- To the last agenda item, the EFH, and I did pull up that SSC  
6 presentation that they received in August, and, essentially, it  
7 was a presentation on the actual amendment, and there were a  
8 couple of slides, like maybe four or five slides, that get into  
9 those modeling -- The Alternative 3 and 4, the different  
10 modeling methods, but it wasn't what I was intending, as far as  
11 when I said a deep dive.  
12

13 In other words, I never saw the assumptions that are made in  
14 each one of those models, the actual datasets, and it just says  
15 there is twenty-seven fishery-independent datasets and seven  
16 fishery-dependent, and, you know, for methods, it gives two  
17 bullet points on the methods considered, and there is a little  
18 bit of info on presence only and this and that, but that's not  
19 the deep dive that I'm talking about.  
20

21 I would like to see the assumptions, and I would like to  
22 actually take a deeper look at the datasets that are used, and  
23 are all the assumptions based on data from the Gulf of Mexico,  
24 or are we borrowing from other bodies of water when we decide  
25 what the nearest neighbor looks like for some of these models,  
26 to determine the unknown habitat and what it would look like,  
27 and the uncertainties that surround these outputs that we're  
28 going to make decisions on, and I think all of that is -- What's  
29 driving the uncertainty, and I think that's really important,  
30 because, if we do bless one of those models for specific  
31 species, then that becomes the gospel at that point, you know,  
32 once we make it regulation. I think we need to really consider  
33 all of those things before we get to that point. Thank you.  
34

35 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Leann. Any comment, Dr. Hollensead?  
36

37 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** No, Mr. Chair, and certainly we can get  
38 together a presentation looking at what Ms. Bosarge has asked,  
39 and, if there are any questions, we can make sure that we get  
40 those addressed.  
41

42 **CHAIRMAN GILL:** Thank you, Lisa. Any other topics to be brought  
43 up under Other Business? Seeing none, we will close this  
44 committee, and I will turn it back to the Council Chair.  
45

46 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on January 24, 2022.)  
47  
48

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