GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Mackerel Management Committee

Renaissance Battle House Mobile, Alabama

October 22, 2018

VOTING MEMBERS
Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon)................. Alabama
Susan Boggs................................................. Alabama
Leann Bosarge........................................... Mississippi
Roy Crabtree.............................................. NMFS
Dale Diaz.................................................. Mississippi
Jonathan Dugas.......................................... Louisiana
Robin Riechers........................................... Texas
John Sanchez............................................. Florida

NON-VOTING MEMBERS
Patrick Banks........................................... Louisiana
Doug Boyd................................................. Texas
Dave Donaldson......................................... GSMFC
Tom Frazer................................................ Florida
Martha Guyas (designee for Jessica McCawley)........... Florida
Paul Mickle (designee for Joe Spraggins)................ Mississippi
Greg Stunz................................................ Texas
Ed Swindell............................................... Louisiana
Lt Mark Zanowicz...................................... USCG

STAFF
Assane Diagne........................................... Economist
Matt Freeman............................................ Economist
John Froeschke........................................ Deputy Director
Beth Hager............................................... Administrative Officer
Karen Hoak.............................................. Administrative & Financial Assistant
Morgan Kilgour......................................... Fishery Biologist
Mara Levy................................................. NOAA General Counsel
Emily Muehlstein...................................... Public Information Officer
Ryan Rindone.......................................... Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
Bernadine Roy.......................................... Office Manager
Carrie Simmons....................................... Executive Director

OTHER PARTICIPANTS
Luiz Barbieri............................................ SSC
Avery Bates..........................Organized Seafood Association of Alabama, AL
Eric Brazer........................................ Shareholders Alliance
Shannon Calay......................................... SEFSC
Michael Drexler...................................... St. Petersburg, FL
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Joel Fightmaster</td>
<td>USCG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Traci Floyd</td>
<td>MDMR, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Susan Gerhart</td>
<td>NMFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tim Griner</td>
<td>SAFMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ken Haddad</td>
<td>Lloyd, FL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Joe Jewell</td>
<td>MDMR, MS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rich Malinowski</td>
<td>NMFS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lawrence Marino</td>
<td>LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Clay Porch</td>
<td>SEFSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ashford Rosenberg</td>
<td>Shareholders Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chris Schieble</td>
<td>LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Jim Zurbrick</td>
<td>Steinhatchee, FL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Table of Contents.........................................................3
2. Table of Motions.........................................................4
3. Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes.........................5
4. Action Guide and Next Steps..........................................5
5. CMP Landings Update....................................................6
6. Final Action: CMP Framework Amendment 7: Modifications to Gulf
   Cobia Size and Possession Limits...................................7
7. Adjournment....................................................................24
   - - -
TABLE OF MOTIONS

PAGE 10: Motion in Action 2 to change the language in Alternative 3 and its options to reflect a vessel trip limit as opposed to a daily vessel limit. The motion carried on page 13.

---
The Mackerel Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at the Renaissance Battle House, Mobile, Alabama, Monday morning, October 22, 2018, and was called to order by Chairman Kevin Anson.

ADOPATION OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS

CHAIRMAN KEVIN ANSON: We are going to adopt the agenda as the first order of business. However, before we do that, I just want to review the committee members that were just approved a little bit ago. That would be myself, of course, and Susan Boggs, and these are people that are here at the table right now, Ms. Bosarge, Dr. Crabtree, Mr. Diaz, Mr. Dugas, Mr. Riechers, and Mr. Sanchez.

First, we will go to the Adoption of the Agenda. Do I have a motion to adopt the agenda? It’s moved by Mr. Diaz. Do I have a second for that? Ms. Bosarge, thank you. Any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the agenda is adopted.

Approval of the Minutes, does anyone have any changes, or suggested changes, for the minutes for the previous committee meeting held in August? Can I get a motion to accept the minutes? Mr. Diaz, thank you. It’s seconded by Ms. Bosarge. Thank you. Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion passes. Item Number III on the agenda is the Action Guide and Next Steps. Mr. Rindone.

MR. RYAN RINDONE: Thank you, sir. All right, folks. We have an update on the coastal migratory pelagics species landings for kingfish, Spanish, and cobia, and SERO staff will cover that one for us, and then we have final action on Framework Amendment 7 for Gulf cobia management, and so you folks will be taking a look at your current preferred alternatives, and you will hear what the AP’s comments were.

They met via webinar a couple of weeks back, and also we reached out to the folks that were unable to participate in the webinar, due to the hurricane, and got some feedback from some of them, but not all of them. Then, if you guys like the way that everything sits, you can recommend it to the council for final action and implementation.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. All right. That will take us to Item Number IV, CMP Landings Update, and I guess, Ms. Gerhart, you would like to take care of that?
CMP LANDINGS UPDATE

MS. SUSAN GERHART: I think so, and I apologize that this isn’t in the briefing book. I was waiting for some late incoming landings, and so I wanted to get the most up-to-date for you. Unfortunately, those didn’t come in yet, but what you see before you is first the king mackerel landings.

These are by the zones. First is the commercial. I’ve got first this year’s landings and then last year’s landings below that. The Western Zone we closed on October 5. At the time, we had a higher landings projection, and there is 91 percent right now. I have not gotten in a report for last week yet, and so we may have higher landings. There do tend to be later landings that come in for these zones for king mackerel, and so we’ll be looking at what those are and how much of the quota is left.

The Northern Zone just opened on October 1, and so that’s very low landings, and the Southern Zone, although it’s been open since July 1, we don’t have the mackerel down in that area yet. They’re just heading down to that area, and so there’s not many landings there either, and then the gillnet, of course, doesn’t open until the Tuesday after the Martin Luther King holiday, and so that’s -- If we page down then to recreational landings and stock landings, the king mackerel recreational landings, these are for the 2017/2018 fishing year, which ended June 30, and so that is complete.

We do not have Wave 3 landings yet, which is the May/June landings, and so we do not have complete for last year yet, but you can see we have quite a low percentage of the ACL that was landed during the last fishing year.

The stock ACLs are for Spanish mackerel and cobia, and, again, we’ve got the 2018 landings there and the 2017 landings below. The Spanish mackerel fishing year ended March 31, and the cobia is on the calendar year, and so that’s ongoing still. We had very low landings so far, at least, of both of those as well for this year, and, as you can see, cobia is down a little bit this year versus a full year of last year, where there was still less than 50 percent of the quota taken. That is my report. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Any questions? I have a question, Sue. 2017/2018 recreational, that was the first full year that the three fish was put into place?
MS. GERHART: Yes, it was.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you. All right. The next item on the agenda is Final Action for CMP Framework Amendment Number 7, Modifications to Gulf Cobia Size and Possession Limits. Mr. Rindone.

FINAL ACTION: CMP FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT 7: MODIFICATIONS TO GULF COBIA SIZE AND POSSESSION LIMITS

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, sir. I would like to start, I think, by just reviewing the purpose and need and what your preferred alternatives are, and then we will go to the AP summary. The purpose of this action is to modify the minimum size limit and possession limit of Gulf cobia in order to reduce harvest. The need is to respond to concerns of potential overfishing of Gulf cobia until more information on the stock status becomes available.

We have two actions in the document. Action 1 is on page 8, and Action 1 would modify the minimum size limit for Gulf cobia. No action would leave it where it is, at thirty-three inches fork length, which dates back to about 1990. Preferred Alternative 2 would increase the minimum size limit to thirty-six inches fork length. Alternative 3 is thirty-nine inches, and Alternative 4 is forty-two, and you guys currently prefer Alternative 2.

The other action is Action 2, which talks about the possession limits, which are currently two fish per person daily recreational and commercial possession limit, and so the same regs for both sectors, regardless of the number or duration of trips, and you guys currently prefer Alternative 2, which would drop that possession limit to one fish per person, and also Alternative 3, which creates a commercial and recreational daily vessel limit, with anglers not being able to exceed the per-person possession limit, and you guys preferred two fish per vessel for a daily limit.

If we bounce to the AP summary, which is Tab C, Number 5(b), the AP talked at length about these different things, and, generally speaking, the commercial representatives on the AP were happy to defer to whatever it was that the recreational members on the AP thought was best on this, since Gulf cobia -- Even though it’s a stock ACL, the vast majority of the landings, better than 90 percent, come from the recreational sector, be it from private boats or for-hire. Most of it, I think about 78 percent, is private boats.
They talked about the merits of increasing the minimum size limit versus a possession limit, and we talked about how increasing the minimum size limit results in a larger decrease in fishing mortality than changes to the possession limit, because, for the most part, the average angler is catching less than one cobia per person, and the average vessel, regardless of fleet, is catching two or fewer cobia per vessel per day, regardless of the number of trips. Decreases in the possession limit have less of an overall effect on reducing fishing mortality than increases in the size limit.

Ultimately, the AP agreed with the council’s current preferred alternative for the size limit, which is Alternative 2, which would increase the minimum size limit to thirty-six inches fork length.

Moving on to Action 2, the AP talked about the difference between having a daily vessel limit and a vessel trip limit, with the main concern being that, if you are say a for-hire operator and you run two-a-day trips, if it’s a daily vessel limit, and you land two cobia on that vessel on the first trip of the day, then, on the afternoon trip, you wouldn’t be able to land any, and so your customers would have to throw those fish back.

Instead of a per-day vessel limit, they recommended a per-trip vessel limit, because they thought that not every charter vessel, or every recreational vessel, for that matter, is going to be going out more than once per day. Most of them, in fact, only go out once per day, and the average length for a commercial trip that lands cobia is about four days, and so, from the commercial side of it, it has no effect.

They ultimately recommended that the council decrease the per-person possession limit for Gulf cobia to one fish per day, which is commensurate with Preferred Alternative 2 of Action 2, and that the council create a recreational and commercial vessel limit for Gulf cobia of two fish per trip, as opposed to per vessel per day, and that anglers would still have to abide by the stricter of the regulations. Are there any questions on the AP recommendations?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any questions? Mr. Sanchez.

MR. JOHN SANCHEZ: I guess, if we were to -- How does everybody feel about dropping the word “daily” from these options and the preferred alternative, just to address the dual trips per day?
CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any committee discussion? Ms. Boggs.

MS. SUSAN BOGGS: I kind of agree with what Ryan said about most of your charter/for-hire are only going to take one trip per day, and so I think dropping the “daily” is not going to make that much difference.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Frazer.

DR. TOM FRAZER: Thank you, Kevin. I’m not on the committee, but I did attend this meeting, and I think the intent of the AP was to modify the language in way to where they left “daily” in there, but they inserted the word “trip”. Is that right, Ryan?

MR. RINDONE: That’s correct, and so, instead of it saying -- Preferred Alternative 3 would be changed to say create a recreational and commercial daily trip limit, or create a recreational and commercial trip limit for Gulf cobia. Anglers may not exceed the per-person possession limit, and Preferred Option 3a would say something to the effect of the recreational and commercial trip limit per vessel for cobia is two fish.

As far as how that difference shakes out, like per day versus per trip, a two cobia per vessel per trip limit still reduces the commercial landings by 5 percent and the recreational landings by 2.3 percent, as opposed to -- It doesn’t have any effect on the commercial whether it’s per trip or per day, like I said, because their average trip length is like four days, but the change in the reduction for Preferred Alternative 3a -- I am looking at Table 2.2.1 right now, and the reduction goes from 9.1 percent for recreational to 2.3, but, again, still the bulk of where your reduction in fishing mortality comes from is from the size limit increase and not from changes in the possession limit.

I have asked for an examination of the cumulative effect of thirty-six inches fork length, one per person, and two cobia per vessel per day and also per trip from the SERO staff, and we’ll see if we can get that for you guys by Full Council, but we don’t have that yet.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Crabtree.

DR. ROY CRABTREE: Yes, and I agree that we need to change this to trip limit in Alternative 3. To fix this, Ryan, we would just change the phrase “daily vessel limit” to “vessel trip limit”? I would make a motion that, in Action 2, Alternative 3, we change the phrase “daily vessel limit” to “vessel trip
limit”, throughout that alternative.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a motion on the board, and it’s seconded by Mr. Sanchez. I will give staff a moment to catch up with that.

DR. CRABTREE: I think, the way the regs are set up, that that’s regardless of the length of the trip, and so, when you’re out there on the water, that’s all you can have on the boat, if you’re out for three days or two hours.

MR. RINDONE: You could just say, in Action 2, change the language of Alternative 3 to “vessel trip limit”, and we will know what to do.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: You might want to add in there “daily vessel limit” to “vessel trip limit”. Roy, is that your motion?

DR. CRABTREE: From “daily vessel limit” to “vessel trip limit”. Yes, I think that captures it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, and so the motion has been seconded. Any discussion on the motion? Mr. Diaz.

MR. DALE DIAZ: I just want to kind of say what I am thinking. I feel pretty strongly about the size limit. I think that’s where we get that pretty good percentage, and I believe the reduction is about 26 percent. Here, even with doing this, it’s probably going to be something under 10 percent, and is that about correct, Ryan, for change in the possession limit?

MR. RINDONE: Cumulatively? I would be guessing.

MR. DIAZ: You would stack them though, wouldn’t you? If you had 26 percent reduction for possession, and then you added a size limit reduction, those two would be -- That would be a cumulative reduction?

MR. RINDONE: There would be a cumulative effect, yes. I can’t say for certain that you could just add them all together, because the combination of the one fish per person and the vessel trip limit, in this case, as you guys are changing it to, wouldn’t necessarily just be stacked, arithmetically. There might be some adjustment that happens because of the reduction in the per-person possession limit, but, like I said, we’ve asked for the cumulative effects of the size limit and the possession limit, and hopefully we’ll have that by Full Council.
MR. DIAZ: Whenever I read through the public comments on this, the public comments were kind of all over the place, but there were several people, it seemed like mostly in the western Gulf, that was not in favor of really probably any action, and there were a few spear fishermen that made some notes that they think that the population is still in good shape.

I am just trying to take in those public comments as I dwell on this, but I don’t know that I am necessarily opposed to this, but I do think the big thing for us to do is the size limit, more than the possession limit. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. I have Dr. Froeschke, followed by Ryan, unless it’s to that point, Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: I was just going to say that it might be a good time to have Emily talk about the public comments.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Yes, and I want to, I guess, dispense with the motion first, and I want to get through that, and then we’ll go into public comment and maybe talk about it a little bit more in detail. Dr. Froeschke.

DR. JOHN FROESCHKE: If I recall, Dr. Porch has commented on these two in the past, and what he has said is that, over time, for the size limit, the fish tend to grow into this, and so the effect of rate on fishing mortality reduction would be expected to decrease over time, because, again, they grow up to the size limit.

However, for the vessel limit, that change would be expected to increase over time, because the stock size is expected to increase, and so more fishermen would be bumping up, again, into those limits, and so you would expect sort of some complementary things through time if you kept both.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Sanchez.

MR. SANCHEZ: Thank you, Kevin. I speak in favor of this, because we have an assessment coming up in the near future, and, rather than doing stuff based solely on anecdotal concerns and everything, which we take seriously, I would just as soon do this and wait for the results of the assessment, and then we can do some science-based management.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Robin.

MR. ROBIN RIECHERS: I want to go back to what Ryan said. You
said you were waiting on information from the Center. Is that
to tease out these daily versus trip limit question, because
I’ve got to believe there is not going to be much information to
base that on.

MR. RINDONE: I have the daily versus trip. What I don’t have
is the cumulative predicted reduction in fishing mortality or in
landings from the combination of the increase in the minimum
size limit to thirty-six inches fork length and the one-fish per
person possession limit and the two-fish per vessel or per trip,
whatever the ultimate result is, and so that three-way reduction
that you guys are proposing, with the combination of the
alternatives presented, to give you that final number for the
recreational and the commercial side of what the predicted
reduction in landings would be.

MR. RIECHERS: But we do have relative ranges of those things
combined in Table 2.2.2. What we don’t have is the last
stacking mechanism regarding the bag limits, but knowing that
the bag limits are basically not giving us much here, and that’s
not going to -- I mean, we may not know the exacts, but we know
relative contribution is going to be quite low.

MR. RINDONE: If you threw a dart, you would be close.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Gerhart.

MS. GERHART: I just want to clarify a little bit about the
analysis that we have for the per trip that Ryan mentioned so
far when he talked about that. We don’t have any data on how
many trips vessels take at this point, the charter vessels, and
so what we did to get that number was assume that every charter
vessel takes two trips per day.

This is clearly an overestimate, and so it was just to get an
outer bound of what could be the maximum, and the change was
from a 9 percent reduction to a 2.3 percent reduction, and so
the reality would be something in between those things, if you
went with this per trip.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: Mike Larkin is awesome, and let’s make note. He
just sent me what I asked for. He says the combined reduction
in landings from the current combination of the thirty-six-inch
fork length, one fish per person, two fish per vessel, for the
recreational side, broken up is -- It comes to a 32 percent
reduction for the for-hire component and a 35 percent reduction
for the private angling portion.

If you do it per trip, again assuming that every charter vessel makes two trips and keeps two cobia, which we know from the other data in the document is not happening, it results in a 3 percent increase for the charter trips, because that’s assuming that every charter trip is keeping two cobia, and, again, the data don’t reflect that, or a 35 percent reduction for the private boats. Again, the commercial side of this isn’t nearly as affected, because the trip length for the commercial sector is, on average, about four days, and so --

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Robin.

MR. RIECHERS: Could either you adjust, with footnotes, Table 2.2.2 at some point before the Full Council, just so that we can see that? I mean, you just read it off real quickly, and I was trying to jot notes, Ryan, and I don’t know that I got them all correct, but so that we can see what those add up to.

MR. RINDONE: I can put a table in the summary. How about that, in the committee summary report?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. We have a motion on the board. Is there any other discussion on the motion? I will just follow-up to Dale’s comment. Reading the minutes from the last meeting, John, you made a comment that, hey, people came and said there’s a problem with cobia, and this ought to be easy, and wham, bam, thank you ma’am, we’ll be done, and nothing is ever easy, I guess, particularly at the council, and so I am a little bit contrary, I guess, to your statement about taking some action without the science and without the assessment.

Although I am kind of Dale, and I might not vote, or I might in favor of this, but, when we get to Full Council, I don’t know about supporting this particular action, but, nonetheless, we’ll probably hear some more public testimony and maybe get some more folks over the line, so to speak, that might come out and say what they have to say.

All right. Based on that then, we’ll go ahead and vote up on the current motion. The motion is, in Action 2, to change the language from “daily vessel limit” to “vessel trip limit”. All those in favor of the motion, signify by raising your hand, eight; all those opposed, same sign. The motion passes eight to zero.

All right. Is there any other discussion on the action items
that are contained within -- We need to go through -- Go ahead, Ms. Muehlstein.

**MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Thank you. Because this is a framework, we didn’t go out to any in-person public hearings. We did, however, create a video presentation on this for the proposed changes, and that video did receive 530 views, and we also received forty-two written comments from anglers about this action.

I am going to go ahead and sort of go through a summary of what we heard from our anglers, and we will start by action-specific comments, and then I will go into the more general cobia comments.

Regarding Action 1, which takes a look at the cobia minimum size limit, we heard support for no action, which would retain the current thirty-three fork length minimum size limit. The rationale that was provided was that increasing the minimum size limit will result in higher total mortality. Also, we heard the rationale that anglers will still gaff fish, to avoid injury or boat damage. If the fish are too small, they will be discarded dead.

We also heard support for Preferred Alternative 2, which would be to increase the minimum size limit to thirty-six inches. We heard support for Alternative 3, which would increase the minimum size limit to thirty-nine inches fork length. We also heard support for a forty-inch minimum size limit and a forty-five-inch minimum size limit. We heard support for a size limit increase with no change in the possession limit, and we also heard that minimum size limits should only increase for charter and headboats.

Moving to Action 2, which discusses the cobia possession limits, we heard support for no action, which would retain the current two fish per person daily possession limit, and the rationale provided was that commercial fishermen depend on cobia in the winter and that fishing is an expensive hobby and that there is no reason to cut the cobia limit in half, especially since all of our other species are being taken away.

We heard support for Alternative 2, which would create a one fish per person per day limit, and the rationale we heard was that, during the week, charter and private vessels harvest multiple fish, and there is nothing left to catch on the weekends.
We heard support for Preferred Alternative 3, Option 3a, which would create a two-fish vessel limit, because it would take some pressure off of the fish and allow the stock to recover. We heard support for Preferred Alternative 3, Option 3b, which would create a four-fish per vessel limit, and we also heard support for a three-fish vessel limit. The rationale provided for that was that dropping it to three for now, in the absence of science, would allow room to drop it further if the science corroborates the need for a reduction.

Then we heard that there is no need to keep sixteen cobia on a single boat. Even partyboats can have a successful trip with two or three large cobia onboard, and, finally, we heard support for a possession limit change, but for no size change.

We also received numerous comments that were sort of general about cobia. We heard from a lot of anglers that there has been a decline in the number of cobia, which is why we’re here, I believe, and we heard that the removal of rig structures has contributed to that decline and that the shrimp opening was moved, and is now later than the migratory run of cobia, and so they’re harder to target.

We heard that cobia have been nonexistent off of Mississippi for this year and also last year, and we also heard that the annual spring migration along the north central coast has seen a dramatic decline.

Then, of course, we heard the opposite, and we heard that there were plenty of cobia. We heard that, while Florida fishermen may be seeing a decline, there is no such issue off the Louisiana coast. We heard that divers are seeing plenty of large schools of cobia. We also heard that there is no need to manage cobia with lower limits if the population hasn’t declined.

Next, we heard that cobia fishing is cyclical and that there are good years and that there are bad years, and we heard that there are more small fish around than there have been in previous years. We heard a suggestion to close the fishery entirely in 2019, to allow the stock to recover.

We heard that management changes should not be made without science to prove the stock is in decline. We heard that the decline in landings for 2017 may be due to reduced effort, because of overregulation of other species, and that the recreational sector needs accountability, through mandatory call-in reporting prior to landings, before regulation changes
are made.

We also heard that cobia is one of the few fish that isn’t overregulated, and so it should be left alone, and we heard that changing regulations through the commercial sector will yield results and that commercial harvest should be stopped entirely. We heard that the council should require a large net for boating cobia, to discourage gaffing and allow for less mortality of undersized fish.

We heard that the council should consider a season limit of five fish per person per year, and we heard that there should not be tournament fishing for cobia, and that concludes my report of the public comment we heard on this document.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Emily. Any questions about the public comment report? Dr. Mickle.

DR. PAUL MICKLE: Thank you, Kevin, for recognizing me. I’m not on the committee, but I just wanted to give some kudos to Emily. I pulled the video up on the website, and it was right on the front of the website, and it was very clear, and I would love to see that pushed further with other types of management decisions we make.

It looks like -- I want to ask, when was it posted, and it sounds like you had a lot of input, from the comments and the number that you posted of comments that you received, and so what is that timeframe that they had to comment?

MS. MUEHLSTEIN: Well, I’m going to have to open it up, so I can tell you. It was posted a number of weeks ago, three weeks ago, and so it was up for three weeks, and it had 528 views in that time. It was a very popular posting on our Facebook page as well, and it definitely garnered a lot of discussion, and so that is actually a result of our new office space. We were allowed to build a new studio, and so we’re trying to up our game, and thank you for recognizing the effort.

DR. MICKLE: Just real quick, thank you, and, if you pull up the page, her expression of her face on the first frame -- I had to click on and watch it, because that was some intense passion right there.

MS. MUEHLSTEIN: So I can’t choose it, and I think Ryan called me and was crying laughing so hard when he saw what expression it chose, but, when iFrames in there, I don’t get to select the moment that it freezes me. That one is actually pretty
flattering, if you have ever edited video of yourself.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Mara.

MS. MARA LEVY: Just a comment. You changed the wording of the alternative, right, and so it’s not like we added a new alternative. To the extent that that passes at Full Council, I would just ask that there be some discussion in the document about what the prior alternative said and why it got changed to what it is, because then we have no -- We’re just going to have a document that has a different preferred alternative with different wording without really a discussion about how that happened.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Roy.

DR. CRABTREE: The rationale, from my perspective, is, one, I think trying to enforce the vessel limit on a daily basis is not practicable, because it’s very difficult to know if the vessel has already been out in the day.

With for-hire vessels, if they’re going to do two trips, they’re going to take a different group of people out on the two trips, and we let individuals have a bag limit, and so it seems to me that they should be able to have the same trip limit.

In terms of the analysis, our ability to analyze that thing is not very good, based on what I have seen with all of the variables involved, and I don’t think there’s much difference between the two, and so it just seems, from a practical standpoint, to be much more enforceable and make sense to do it that way, and then there’s a fairness issue about having a different individual go out on the second trip of the day, but not be able to catch fish, because somebody on an earlier trip caught a fish, and that’s my reasons for why I think it’s an appropriate change.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for the comments, Roy. Before we wrap up Amendment 7, I want to go back to, Emily, your summary from the public comments. You mentioned there were forty-two folks, as I recall, that commented on the Amendment 7 and then the general comments.

There were a lot of comments and a lot of opinions, at least for the two action items, and were all of the general comments -- Did they come strictly from those that commented on the amendment, or did they come in through -- I don’t know if you’ve got the comment page open for YouTube or not, but did those
forty-two folks come up with all of those different ideas and such in the general comments section?

MS. MUEHLSTEIN: Yes, they did, and so those forty-two comments were the comments that I collected through our Google Docs comment form on cobia specifically. That all came from that one very direct area.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Okay. Thank you. Yes, sir.

MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE: Thanks for recognizing me. I know we’re not on this committee also, but I would like to just take a second to make a comment. Louisiana conducted a survey of 387 individuals with Louisiana charter boat or headboat licenses who hold a valid ROLP, which is our recreational offshore landing permit.

That was right prior to this meeting, and our results came in just before this meeting, and I would like to just kind of run down the list. All the questions were not pertaining to cobia, but some of them were, and I would like to give you the kind of results that we had for this.

Our sample size was 382. Of those 382 that we proposed the questions to, we had 143 responses. One of the most surprising answers to one of the questions, for me, was, out of those 143 responses, 56 percent answered yes to the question of do you specifically target cobia when operating charter fishing trips. I was not aware that targeting cobia was that big in Louisiana. 42 percent said no.

When it came to the changes here, it said which of the following options for the minimum size limit for cobia do you prefer, and thirty-six preferred no change, to keep the thirty-three-inch fork length size limit. However, 32 percent, very close, said increase the size limit to thirty-six. Only 16 percent preferred the increase to thirty-nine, and 2 percent to 42, and it went down very quickly.

Would you prefer keeping the current possession limit or lowering it to one cobia per day, 56 percent said no change, to keep the current possession limit. 36 percent said lower the possession limit to one per person per day.

If you had the following options for a vessel permit, which would you prefer, no change, no vessel limit, 34 percent. Set a vessel limit of two cobia per vessel per day, that was only 12 percent. Set a vessel limit of four per day per vessel, that
was 20 percent. Vessel limit of six per vessel per day, that
was 24 percent.

If the Gulf Council opts to establish a vessel limit, which of
the following would you prefer, both a vessel limit and a
possession limit, 42 percent. A vessel limit, but no possession
limit, 24 percent. Then 32 percent were undecided on that
question. That’s all I have, and I just wanted to let everybody
know what Louisiana charter/for-hire and federally-permitted
boats’ opinion was. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you. We have discussed both
action items in Amendment 7. Ryan, do we need to still talk
about the codified text? I know Mara just mentioned something
about it, and do we need to bring it up now?

MR. RINDONE: With this change in Action 2’s alternatives, we
will need to update the proposed changes in the codified text, but,
generally speaking, this is probably among the easier bits
of codified text that you guys have had to review in recent
history, because we just haven’t done that much historically
with cobia, and so it’s a short bit of text. If you have any
questions about that, it’s Tab C, Number 5(d), and we can answer
those questions now, if you have any.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mara, did you want to cover anything about the
codified text?

MS. LEVY: No, and I guess it depends whether, as a committee,
are you going to recommend final action now, or are you just
going to wait until Full Council, when you have the updated
codified, or when you’ve had more of a chance to consider the
change? I mean, I guess it’s up to you, but it is what it is,
and you know that the one related to this action is going to
change, and hopefully you will have that for Full Council.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: My preference would be that we wait until the
final edits are made and do that at Full Council. Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: Just one last thing. I told you guys that I had
reached out to some of the AP members that weren’t able to make
it, and there were seven of them. I was able to talk with four
of them, and three of them agreed with what the AP had
recommended, and one of them only agreed with the one-fish per
person possession limit, but opposed the other two measures.
That was just the final bit of info that I had.

Then I guess, at this point, if you guys want to wait for the
summary, for me to put that table in there, so you can look at
that, that’s fine, or, if you feel comfortable recommending
final action to the Full Council, you could do that now as well.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Leann.

MS. LEANN BOSARGE: Well, if somebody wants to recommend final
action, I will defer, because that was not what my comment was
about. All right. I just had an observation, and I was
thinking about the upcoming assessment and thinking about what I
saw at the SSC meeting when they reviewed some of the data that
we had on cobia, to try and give us some sort of interim
recommendations, and we really couldn’t get much out of it.

If staff could scroll to PDF page 21, paper copy page 11, in the
document, I was looking at this Figure 2.1.3, and, Ryan, you
said that this, on average, is somewhere northward of 90 percent
recreational, as far as the landings for cobia, and the
commercial landings are very minimal.

If you scroll up just a little more, I was looking at the N, the
number of fish, up there in your legend, and so this is a
recreationally-dominated fishery, and yet we have sampled 384
commercial fish, and it’s mainly a private boat fishery, if you
look at the percentages, and we have less private boat fish than
we have commercial, and it’s less than 10 percent commercial,
probably less than 5 percent commercial, and I’m just thinking
about things we can do to make sure that -- Maybe not for this
assessment, but I would venture to guess that the subject is not
going away.

My crystal ball would say there will probably be a decent amount
of unknowns in that assessment, or at least uncertainty, and we
have cobia shootouts, which you have lots of private anglers in
those cobia shootouts, and maybe we can just try and sample a
few more of those fish, the biological aspects of it, and get
some better catch-at-age, get that N number up a little bit on
the recreational side, so that, the next time we have a stock
assessment, maybe we’ll have a little more data at our
fingertips, and that’s just my observation.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: We can certainly make that recommendation, and
just a point of clarification on the sample sizes provided by
fleet for Figure 2.1.3. That’s not representative of the total
landings. It’s just that’s representative of the number of
samples of trips that were used in the analysis that targeted
cobia and breaking down the percent of fish across all of those samples by fork length.

Please don’t take that to be an indication of what the landings actually are. The table with the landings is -- It’s in the background, I believe. Commercial landings for 2001 to 2017 are in Table 1.1.1, and, just to snapshot it for you, for the Gulf portion of it for the last few years, it has ranged between 68,000 and 82,000 pounds. Then the recreational landings are Table 1.12, and that is all recreational landings, and they have ranged from about 1.1 million in 2013 down to last year, which was 678,000. The take-away is that the recreational sector lands better than 90 percent of the fish.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Schieble.

MR. SCHIEBLE: Thank you. Again, I’m not on the committee, but I just have a question, I guess, and I’m kind of new at this, but can anyone explain to me why the South Atlantic Council is not considering taking action on changes to size and possession limits on the same stock of fish?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Martha.

MS. GUYAS: Tim, you might want to speak to this, and you probably can better than me, but my understanding is, at their last meeting, they discussed that, and they may do something, I think.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I mean, the assessment -- They’re having an assessment done as well, are they not, the South Atlantic, and so, I mean, they’re kind of in the same boat we are. I think they have heard some folks, and they may have done some more management, as far as the Georgia/Florida line type of thing, but they’re kind of in the same boat we are.

MS. GUYAS: Correct, yes, and so remember the east coast of Florida is considered the Gulf stock, and that’s what I am specifically talking about, but, yes, they have just made a bunch of changes for north of there, the Atlantic stock, as well.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Crabtree.

DR. CRABTREE: Well, remember that we’re doing this in response to the public comment that we’ve gotten, and we haven’t heard that same sort of public comment off the east coast of Florida, and so I know it’s, in theory, all one stock, but I don’t recall
hearing a concerted group of fishermen come in and tell us that they’re seeing declines.

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ryan.

**MR. RINDONE:** Not to pile on, but if the South Atlantic decided that they wanted to just take this document and change some of the language in it to make it suit the Florida east coast portion of the Gulf stock, and if you’re curious as to the actual boundary of that, that is in Figure 1.1.1, and they very well could do so, and we would be happy to help with that.

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Frazer.

**DR. FRAZER:** This may be a question for Tim, but, the last time that we had a discussion about this, I thought that the South Atlantic had adopted a thirty-six-inch limit for cobia already.

**MR. TIM GRINER:** Yes, we do have it for the recreational sector. For our commercial sector, we’re still at thirty-three.

**DR. FRAZER:** Okay. I got it, and so it’s not off of Florida. That is what Martha is saying. I’ve got it. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Will we have that discussion one day, about sending this to the -- If we make changes that are not -- That don’t match what is currently being done by the South Atlantic Council for our fish, Gulf cobia, that they manage on that side, can we send this to them and have them take a look at it?

I am just wondering how much feedback they’re getting from their anglers at this point, because they don’t manage cobia, Atlantic cobia, anymore in the South Atlantic Council. They handed that over to the commission, but they’re still managing our cobia over there.

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ryan.

**MR. RINDONE:** We can send it to them, but we’re not required to, per our framework procedures, because this is affecting the Gulf jurisdictional area. If you look at the inset there that looks at the Gulf group, which is the green part, and the inset is below that, what we’re codifying as the Gulf zone is the Gulf Council’s jurisdictional area within which it manages the Gulf migratory group of cobia.
The Florida East Coast Zone is the South Atlantic Council’s jurisdictional area, within which they manage Gulf migratory group cobia, and so this just applies to the Gulf zone, and, because of that, and it’s only affecting the Gulf area, we don’t have to send it to the South Atlantic Council for approval, but that doesn’t mean that we wouldn’t share anything with them.

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Just for clarification, I don’t want to hold this up. I want to hopefully take final action on this at Full Council, and, once it’s had its final action and its blessing, then maybe we could send them a letter and say, hey, by the way, this is what we’ve done over here, and would you all kind of consider taking a look at this and seeing if you want to do the same thing on your side with our fish.

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Maybe we can do that as a council, and maybe both councils can wait on the assessments and make a decision at that point, or one council could maybe offer something, based on the assessment, to help kind of push them over the edge, so to speak, but, if they’re not committal to do anything, but I think we will maybe cross that bridge -- In my opinion, we’ll cross that bridge when we get a little further down the road. All right. Anybody else? Mr. Boyd.

**MR. DOUG BOYD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I’m not on the committee, but a question on the SEDAR schedule. I was looking at it, and I know that’s coming up later on, but I don’t see cobia on the SEDAR schedule, and my understanding was that it was set for 2019. Is it on there?

**DR. FRAZER:** Yes, Doug, it’s on the schedule.

**MR. BOYD:** Is it going to start in 2019 or be completed in 2019?

**MR. RINDONE:** It starts in Q3 of 2019, and it ends in Q1 of 2020, and we’ve tried to just use quarters, as opposed to exact months, to provide a little flexibility.

The reason why it’s just an update is because we don’t have any new life history information or any new contributory surveys or any new data or anything like that for the Gulf migratory group, and we made that data discovery, if you will, during the stock ID process that we just did for cobia for the South Atlantic’s assessment.

**CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Tim, did you have a comment?
MR. GRINER: We have been really focused on our northern cobia and getting that off of our plate, but, going back to the Gulf stock, during our discussions with the northern stock, it became very apparent that a lot of our six-pack charters are a makeup charter of different groups of individuals, and so, for us, it was very important that we stayed to a six per vessel limit. It’s one per person and six per vessel, and I think you would have a lot of blowback from our recreational guys if you were to try to drop that down for our side.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Any other discussion on Amendment 7? All right. There was no other business brought up. Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: If I could, I would just like to make a general comment. I realize that when this AP was convened that it was just prior to a hurricane, and hurricanes obviously affect almost every state, or all of the states in the Gulf, and it’s a tricky thing, right, to make sure that people are represented in these discussions, and I would like to really thank Ryan for making the effort to reach out to those folks that weren’t able to attend, as a consequence of trying to prepare for that storm, and it’s something that I think that we should always try to do, is make sure that we prioritize where people put their efforts and not exclude them from the process and make every effort to get their input and opinions, when we can, and so I just wanted to thank Ryan for making the extra effort to do that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Good point. There being no other business for the committee, the Mackerel Committee is done.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 22, 2018.)