

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2  
3 OUTREACH AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

4  
5 Hyatt Centric New Orleans, Louisiana

6  
7 January 30-31, 2024

8  
9 **VOTING MEMBERS**

10 Anthony Overton.....Alabama  
11 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana  
12 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana  
13 Lt. Carl Fuhs.....USCG  
14 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas  
15 Bob Gill.....Florida  
16 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi  
17 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS  
18 Ed Walker.....Florida

19  
20 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

21 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama  
22 Kesley Banks.....Texas  
23 Susan Boggs.....Alabama  
24 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi  
25 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC  
26 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana  
27 Tom Frazer.....Florida  
28 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi  
29 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana  
30 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida  
31 Troy Williamson.....Texas

32  
33 **STAFF**

34 Max Birdsong.....Social Scientist  
35 Assane Diagne.....Economist  
36 Matt Freeman.....Economist  
37 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director  
38 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer  
39 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist  
40 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel  
41 Natasha Mendez-Ferrer.....Fishery Biologist  
42 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer  
43 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison  
44 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager  
45 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director  
46 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant  
47 Carly Somerset.....Fisheries Outreach Specialist

48  
49 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

1 Dylan Hubbard.....FL  
2 Kerry Marhefka.....SAFMC  
3 John Walter.....SEFSC

4  
5  
6

- - -

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1  
2  
3 Table of Contents.....3  
4  
5 Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes and Action Guide and  
6 Next Steps.....4  
7  
8 2023 Communications Improvement Plan Progress and 2023 Analytics.5  
9  
10 2024 Communications Improvement Plan.....15  
11  
12 2023 In-Person Event Outreach Progress and 2024 Plan.....20  
13  
14 Communications Guidelines Book Review.....27  
15  
16 Fishery Ecosystem Plan Outreach.....31  
17  
18 Coastal Migratory Pelagics Stakeholder Engagement.....41  
19  
20 Management Timeline Review Tool.....46  
21  
22 Return 'Em Right Best Practices Manual Update.....53  
23  
24 Other Items from the O&E Technical Committee Summary.....55  
25  
26 Adjournment.....58

27  
28 - - -  
29  
30

1 The Outreach & Education Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery  
2 Management Council convened at The Hyatt Centric, French Quarter  
3 in New Orleans, Louisiana on Tuesday afternoon, January 30,  
4 2024, and was called to order by Vice Chairman Anthony Overton.

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

10 **VICE CHAIRMAN ANTHONY OVERTON:** We're going to move forward with  
11 the Outreach and Education Committee. The agenda is presented  
12 to you as follows, and are there any amendments to the agenda,  
13 as presented? If there are none, if we could make a motion to  
14 accept the agenda as presented. I will entertain a motion to  
15 accept the O&E Committee agenda as presented.

16  
17 **MR. BOB GILL:** So moved, Mr. Chairman.

18  
19 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. It's so moved by Bob, and is  
20 there a second? We have a second. Any opposition? None, and  
21 we will proceed as printed with the agenda. Additionally, the  
22 minutes from January 2023 are presented as well, and hopefully  
23 you had a chance to look at those.

24  
25 I do want to back up, because I forgot to at least acknowledge  
26 the members of the committee, which include Dugas, myself,  
27 Broussard, Fuhs, Gill, Geeslin, Burris and Spraggins,  
28 Strelcheck, and Walker. I just wanted to acknowledge those  
29 members.

30  
31 Moving back on the schedule, the minutes are presented. Are  
32 there any changes, or any suggestions, to the minutes as  
33 presented? If there are none, I will entertain a motion to  
34 accept the minutes as printed.

35  
36 **MR. GILL:** So moved, Mr. Chairman.

37  
38 **MR. ED WALKER:** So moved.

39  
40 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** It's so moved by Ed, and it's seconded  
41 by Bob. It's properly seconded, and is there any objection to  
42 the minutes, as presented? Hearing none, we will continue  
43 forward. Okay. Next is the action guide that is presented, and  
44 I'm going to pass the floor to Emily.

45  
46 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Mr. Vice Chair, if you don't mind, I  
47 would like to go item-by-item, and so, if we can skip to the  
48 next agenda item, I will start with the action item, and then

1 we'll go right into the --

2  
3 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Okay. How about if you move at your  
4 pleasure?

5  
6 **2023 COMMUNICATIONS IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS AND 2023 ANALYTICS**

7  
8 **MR. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Let's do it, and so our first item that  
9 we're going to approach today is our 2023 communications  
10 improvement plan, and our analytics from last year as well, and  
11 so I'm just going to go through a brief presentation on our  
12 communication analytics, and I'm also going to share our  
13 progress on our 2023 communications plan, which this body  
14 approved for us last January, and we've been working on that  
15 throughout the year, and I just would like any feedback, or  
16 thoughts, about 2023 from the committee, as appropriate.

17  
18 Just FYI, our next agenda item is our 2024 communications  
19 improvement plan, and so that is going to be the appropriate  
20 place to suggest what we should be doing this year, as I present  
21 that to you, and so, Bernie, if you can bring up our  
22 presentation in Tab O, Number 4, please, and I think we can just  
23 roll right into it.

24  
25 I am just going to briefly go over, as I mentioned, our 2023  
26 communication improvement plan, and our progress on that plan,  
27 as well as the analytics for our communications department.  
28 We'll start with discussing our website, and so a couple of the  
29 things that we had committed to doing to improve our website  
30 last year was to add more information on our AP and SSC webpages  
31 to describe the commitment and process of serving, and we didn't  
32 really have any good standalone like job descriptions for those,  
33 and so we added those.

34  
35 We also updated our homepage slide show with a lot more helpful  
36 resources on a regular basis, and I don't know if you guys  
37 noticed, but, when you open up that Gulf Council page, there's a  
38 slide show that should be updated with whatever is really  
39 important at the time.

40  
41 Next was to create a one-stop shop for angler resources, and so  
42 we did develop a webpage that, you know, has helpful things like  
43 quota monitoring, permit information, all of the things that we  
44 thought that anglers might be looking for and just needed one  
45 place to go for it. We did add mobile user analytics, and we  
46 painstakingly, and, when I say we, this was Camilla, went  
47 through the entire website to make sure that it was mobile  
48 friendly, and so she looked at every page, and she altered the

1 pages to make sure that they were responsive and looked right  
2 online, so that they were more useful.

3  
4 We also worked to improve our calendar widget on our homepage,  
5 and that's still sort of something that we are working to do,  
6 and then one big thing, that we didn't have in our plan, but  
7 made it into our workload, was to integrate the Fish Rules API  
8 onto our regulations pages, and you guys might remember that we  
9 were hosting our fishing regulations separately from hosting  
10 them on Fish Rules, and so, when we had a regulation change, we  
11 had to update it in multiple places.

12  
13 Well, we rebuilt our regulations pages, and this was actually at  
14 the inspiration of the South Atlantic Council, so that, now,  
15 when a regulation changes, all we have to do is to go into the  
16 backend of the Fish Rules app, and we change the regulation in  
17 one place, and it automatically populates, and updates, across  
18 our website, as well as across the different Fish Rules apps.

19  
20 We were not able to add a fishery-independent page to our  
21 fisheries science page. That's something that the O&E had asked  
22 for, but we're still a little bit hesitant to do that, because  
23 it's kind of a big lift, and, you know, as you guys know, we are  
24 not really the curators of those programs, and so that's  
25 something that, you know, we're just kind of pending.

26  
27 The next thing that we have not been able to do yet, but has  
28 made it onto our 2024 plan, is to get a web contractor to help  
29 us modernize the aesthetic, and the theme, of our website. I  
30 think everybody really likes the way that our website navigates,  
31 and sort of the logic stream that it follows, and so we're not  
32 planning to mess with that, and we're not going to totally  
33 overhaul, but we just want to make it pretty.

34  
35 I am going to start this conversation about our analytics with  
36 the asterisk, and so you will see there is a red asterisk here,  
37 and that is because we track our website analytics using Google  
38 Analytics, and I will just preface this whole conversation with,  
39 across all platforms that use Google Analytics, people lost  
40 their analytics from the first quarter when they transitioned  
41 over to the new platform.

42  
43 There is also sort of a global decline of about 30 percent that  
44 is seen across all websites that use Google Analytics for their  
45 analytics tracking, and so it's not just us, and it's anybody,  
46 right, and it could be -- I think like Dylan Hubbard is on our  
47 O&E, and he mentioned that that happened to his website and  
48 things, and so anybody that uses Google Analytics has seen a 30

1 percent drop, and so it's really hard to look at last year's  
2 analytics and see whether or not they actually, you know, fit  
3 the growth curve that we're used to.

4  
5 What I will say is, if you look at our annual sessions, and our  
6 annual page views, if we're using 30 percent as that benchmark,  
7 we're actually doing better, with the anticipated drop of 30  
8 percent, and so, again, these analytics are tainted by both the  
9 loss of our first-quarter analytics as well as this weird drop  
10 across all Google Analytics, but there is still some useful  
11 information that we can share here.

12  
13 This table on the left side here shows our website usage by  
14 page, and so what that's going to do is show you the most  
15 popular ten pages of our website. Clearly, the homepage is  
16 always very popular. Federal fishing regulations are now, and  
17 have always been, one of the most popular things on our website.  
18 Council meetings, and council meeting materials, are always very  
19 popular, and red snapper regulations are up there, and that's  
20 not abnormal either.

21  
22 What you will see, interestingly, is this press release from  
23 2021 that shows us our commercial -- It was about our launch of  
24 Commercial Fish Rules, and it ended up being one of the top ten  
25 webpages visited in 2023, and I don't have any explanation for  
26 that. We also did a couple of blog posts, and one was on red  
27 snapper ID, and it was the other red snappers, and not just the  
28 one that we talk about ad nauseum sometimes, but also an ID blog  
29 on the different jacks, and those two things sort of bubbled up  
30 to the top, and so I think it's interesting that those ID blogs  
31 did get so much press.

32  
33 The next thing that I want to point out is this 87,000 unique  
34 users this year, and, again, that's a number that is going to be  
35 artificially low, because of those two things that I mentioned,  
36 but, also, it's really interesting to see this bar graph that  
37 shows where traffic from our website is coming from, and so a  
38 vast majority of people are organically searching for our  
39 website, and they're finding it.

40  
41 There is also direct reference, and so that would be if they see  
42 it in an email, or somehow get a link to our website from  
43 somewhere else, and they're directly going to it, and then  
44 there's this organic social and referral, and so, you know,  
45 you'll see that most people are getting to our site, you know,  
46 on their own accord.

47  
48 Okay, and so, next, we'll talk about our endeavors to make

1 videos, and to publish them, and so the first thing that we did  
2 was redo our AP orientation video. That was on our plan, and we  
3 got it done. Another thing that we started doing, that was not  
4 on our plan for 2023, was to create these shorts, and these  
5 reels, and so what we've started doing is creating them to  
6 announce in-season closures, to give some meeting highlights, to  
7 tell the public when there is a comment opportunity, and to  
8 share good news.

9  
10 Like, when we get a stock assessment that says everything is  
11 hunky-dory, we try and do a short on that. I will tell you  
12 that, when you look at our social media -- When we go into our  
13 social media analytics, you will see that these shorts have been  
14 really, really nice. You know, those short video formats --  
15 It's a really good return on investment, because it doesn't take  
16 very long to create one, but it does get a lot of play.

17  
18 We did originally endeavor to shoot, and to edit, some blogs,  
19 some longer-former blog videos, and we just didn't have the  
20 bandwidth to do that this year, and we also did not livestream  
21 any of our content, even though that was something that that O&E  
22 had suggested that we do.

23  
24 Let's just talk about our analytics from YouTube specifically.  
25 As you will see, our total views -- You know, over time, we sort  
26 of continue this upward trend. However, in 2023, we did have a  
27 lot less total videos used than we did in 2022. 2022 must have  
28 been just a very popular year for watching YouTube.

29  
30 Our video views, and so what this is is you will see the bottom  
31 line here is the number of videos that we produced and  
32 published, long-format videos that we produced and published, on  
33 the YouTube platform, and then those video views are the views  
34 associated with just those videos that we published this year,  
35 and so that's different than our total views, right, and like a  
36 total view would be somebody could watch a video that we  
37 published in 2016, and it would count there, and so we did have,  
38 you know, 2,400 views of the seven videos that we produced  
39 within the year.

40  
41 We did make a couple of social media improvements. We decided  
42 that we really wanted to regularly post nudges to join our email  
43 subscriber list, to regularly post helpful content that drives  
44 people to council materials, and so that would be things like  
45 our recreational fishing season calendar, or our Fishermen  
46 Feedback reports, right, and so this is trying to direct people  
47 to some of those like really neat resources that we put time and  
48 effort into, and drive people there, and we've been doing a lot



1 of that.

2  
3 We've been trying to post reoccurring helpful content, including  
4 highlighting some different fisheries, and some fisheries facts,  
5 and we've been doing some of that, you know, happy holiday type  
6 of content that a lot of companies engage in, and we did aim to  
7 create some interactive content on difficult regulations, and we  
8 decided, this year, that we probably don't need to create extra  
9 controversy, and so we shied away from that, although it was  
10 initially a goal, at the start of the year.

11  
12 Then we also did manage to update our Instagram campsite with  
13 relevant links. If you're familiar with social media, in  
14 Facebook, you can just post a link right on your post, and  
15 people can drive right to it. Instagram is not that friendly  
16 for that, and you would have to post an Instagram post and then  
17 tell people to go to the link in your bio, and so we have to  
18 update the bio with those links, and so it's a little bit of an  
19 extra step for both the user as well as the host of that  
20 platform.

21  
22 These are our Facebook analytics, and what you will see is we  
23 have increased followers steadily, and we're up to fourteen-and-  
24 a-half thousand followers. I do always tell people that they  
25 don't have to like us to like us, and we -- Our engagements, as  
26 you will see, are up. I think, you know, we had a pretty good  
27 engagement year, as well as our reach. We reached almost a  
28 million people this year, which, you know, ends up being one of  
29 the more higher-performing years that we've had. You will also  
30 see the quarterly Facebook engagements over the last couple of  
31 years, and the quarterly Facebook reach, in those graphs below.

32  
33 Instagram is a reasonably new platform for us, and we started in  
34 2021, and we are up to total of 363 followers this year, and so  
35 you will see that our analytics on Instagram are not necessarily  
36 as large as our ones on Facebook, but the good news is, because  
37 they share sort of hosting platform, it's not a whole lot of  
38 extra effort for us to do this, but we continue to sort of see  
39 some upward growth, and we're happy about that.

40  
41 Next, we'll jump to our blogs, and so, in 2023, we did publish  
42 eight blog articles and two digests, and I do want to just call  
43 out, because you're not going to see this in our analytics,  
44 those digests were sent out through our Constant Contact, to our  
45 listserv, and we got just an incredible amount of positive  
46 feedback from those digests, because it's serving helpful  
47 content to people's inboxes. You know, you might be shocked  
48 that most of the responses we get to the emails that we sent out

1 to our listserv are not terribly friendly, and we're optimistic,  
2 and this was different. People really did enjoy getting this  
3 type of content.

4  
5 We also started a new blog theme highlighting stakeholder  
6 engagement and success. You know, we often hear, from people,  
7 that the council doesn't listen, and engaging in the council  
8 process is a waste of time, and so we've started a new theme  
9 that's going to be highlighting when public comment does make a  
10 difference at the council table, and that's just a way for us to  
11 try and encourage folks, through examples of this actually  
12 working.

13  
14 We also started to write this how to get engaged in the council  
15 process series, and so this is just trying to make it easier for  
16 people to reach us and know what to do, and we also added a  
17 "share" button to our blog articles, and so, if you read the  
18 blog, and you think it's really great, you can post it on our  
19 own socials and those things.

20  
21 We did hope to create more of those dynamic StoryMap posts, and  
22 we weren't able to do that, and we just didn't have the  
23 bandwidth this year, and we also did not work with our web  
24 developer to -- We did not, until the end of the year, figure  
25 out some kinks we had with tracking the analytics of our blog.

26  
27 As I mentioned, we've been having trouble tracking our blog,  
28 and, back in 2019, we were using an external platform, and we  
29 were using Blogger, and we decided to transfer it over to our  
30 website. When we did that, we lost the ability to look at blog  
31 views over time, and so I'm going to see if I can explain this  
32 in the proper way.

33  
34 When I showed you the website, you saw that two of the most  
35 popular ten pages were blog posts. However, because those blog  
36 posts were not written in 2023, we didn't have any way to grab  
37 the analytics and show that those blog posts, even though they  
38 weren't posted in the same year, were actually getting reads  
39 year over year over year, and so we didn't get that information,  
40 or that kink worked out, until I think November of this year,  
41 and so suffice it say the blog page analytics will be much  
42 improved for 2024.

43  
44 We kind of lost some things, and, you know, it was because we  
45 transferred platforms, and, you know, strangely, our website  
46 didn't have a way for us to cumulatively get those views in our  
47 Google Analytics, and so we figured it out, and we'll do better  
48 next time, I promise.

1  
2 Okay, and so let's talk about our email listserv, and so this is  
3 where we put out our press releases. What you will notice is we  
4 have an increase in subscribers, year over year over year, and  
5 so we're up to a little over 7,000 subscribers to our listserv.  
6 We did publish ninety-one press releases, but one of the things  
7 that I really, really want to point out, that I think is really  
8 important, is our open rate is 46.5 percent, and that is  
9 incredible.

10  
11 If you look at statistics for not-for-profit organizations that  
12 do email blasts, their average open rate is somewhere in the 23  
13 percent range, or, you know, the 23 to 30 percent range,  
14 depending on the type of organization we're talking about. A  
15 46.5 percent open rate is almost unprecedented, and it's  
16 something I think that we can be really proud of.

17  
18 What that shows us is the content that we're serving, and the  
19 way that we have allowed our users to select the type of content  
20 that they get, is working, right, and people are getting things  
21 to their inbox that they want to read, and they're reading it,  
22 you know, sort of based on industry standards.

23  
24 All right, and let's talk about Fish Rules. We have two Fish  
25 Rules platforms. We use Recreational Fish Rules, and, if you  
26 will remember, a couple of years ago, we worked with the South  
27 Atlantic Council to develop Commercial Fish Rules as well.  
28 Recreational Fish Rules, and Commercial Fish Rules combined, are  
29 always the largest user base, the largest contact with our user  
30 base, that we get, and so these analytics are usually pretty  
31 impressive.

32  
33 We had half-a-million unique users to the Fish Rules  
34 recreational apps, and each one of those recreational users had  
35 an average of six sessions, and so people aren't just  
36 downloading it and using it once and forgetting about it, and  
37 those people are actively engaging, and so, if that's the  
38 average, you know, there's a lot of people that are on there all  
39 the time, and the average engagement time is about two-and-a-  
40 half minutes per user, and you will see that there was 245,000  
41 views of our Gulf federal regulations in 2023, and so that's  
42 something, I think, to be pretty proud of.

43  
44 You will also see the top species views in our region, and so it  
45 starts with red drum, and gag grouper is next, and then red  
46 snapper is next, and then greater amberjack, flounder, red  
47 grouper, and spotted seatrout, and so I think that's kind of an  
48 interesting thing to look at as well.

1  
2 Commercial Fish Rules is not as successful as Recreational Fish  
3 Rules, and I think that can be expected, because there is much  
4 less commercial fishermen in the Gulf, and we had 2,700 users,  
5 unique users, in 2023. I will tell you, with the number of  
6 active permits that we have out there, 2,700 far exceeds that,  
7 and I think that's something to be proud of. It means that not  
8 just owner-operators, but crew, and, you know, various people,  
9 probably multiple people per boat, are looking at those  
10 regulations in our Commercial Fish Rules app. There is an  
11 average of five-ish sessions per user, and folks are on there  
12 for about two minutes apiece.

13  
14 One thing that you will see is that these are the average -- Or  
15 the users by city, the most popular cities, and I didn't  
16 understand this at first, but it turns out the way that this is  
17 tracked is not terribly accurate, and so Orlando probably isn't  
18 actually Orlando, and it's going to be the central-west coast of  
19 Florida. Miami is probably south Florida, right, and so just  
20 the way that they track these cities is not actually accurate to  
21 where the city is, and you just sort of have to give yourself a  
22 broader user base.

23  
24 There's a couple of extra things that we decided to do this year  
25 that didn't fit into a neat little category, and the first one  
26 deals with Fishermen Feedback. We created a communications  
27 guideline document for our Fishermen Feedback tool, and we also  
28 created a fact sheet that explains the tool and its utility, so  
29 that, you know, we can kind of continue to serve content on that  
30 and let people know what it is and why we're doing it, because  
31 it's something that we are going to continue to do.

32  
33 We also made sure that our public comment database is archived  
34 properly. You know, we have been taking online public comment  
35 for over ten years now, and our database of comments is  
36 gigantic, and so we worked with our web developer to make sure  
37 that we were properly archiving those comments, so that they're  
38 in a vault, and they are there forever.

39  
40 We also looked into, and were not able, to get the recreational  
41 quota monitoring on the Recreational Fish Rules app. You know,  
42 one of the most important features of the Commercial Fish Rules  
43 app is that we track the quotas, and we have talked to Fish  
44 Rules, a number of times, and asked them to work with us to  
45 maybe consider this for the recreational quotas, and we haven't  
46 made a lot of headway there yet, but I'm not giving up.

47  
48 We also hope to cultivate our Fish Brain page a little bit more,

1 and we have not yet done that, and then we are currently in the  
2 process of working with the folks over at Fish Brain, and Fish  
3 Rules, to get some of their catch information that's logged,  
4 because Fish Brain is a catch-logging platform, and so we're  
5 looking to get some of their catch information, to see if it's  
6 useful for informing management.

7  
8 I know we had that discussion when we were talking about  
9 misidentification of gag and black grouper, and so one of the  
10 things that we're talking to them about is, if they will give us  
11 all of their catch logs in a certain geographic area, a certain  
12 temporal range, and we will look to see how many times black and  
13 gag are actually misidentified with one another.

14  
15 One of the cool things with them is they said that, if we went  
16 through that database, and we ended up doing that for them,  
17 we're going to end up flagging the things that are misidentified  
18 for Fish Brain and training their AI to be able to do a better  
19 job of recognizing things, and so it's sort of a mutually-  
20 beneficial endeavor, and so we're there, and we have a contract,  
21 and we're kind of working out the logistics, to make sure that  
22 data sharing is all, you know, neat and tidy.

23  
24 Then just some extra things, and we were able to beef-up our  
25 position descriptions for AP and SSC members and their chairmen,  
26 just so that people understand a little bit more publicly about  
27 what the role is that you're committing to, and we have also  
28 worked on our species timeline project, which is on our agenda  
29 for this committee, and so I will share that with you, and I'm  
30 very excited to share that with you, and then we also finalized  
31 our communications guidelines focus here, and so, with that,  
32 next slide, and I will take any questions, or feedback, or  
33 suggestions on what we did and where we're at for 2023.

34  
35 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Any questions for Emily? Ed.

36  
37 **MR. WALKER:** Not a question, really, but the Commercial Fish  
38 Rules app is awesome, because, you know, people call me all the  
39 time and say, hey, how much kingfish quota is left in the thing,  
40 and I'm supposed to know it every day, apparently, because I'm  
41 on the Gulf Council, and so that thing has updates, to the  
42 pound, day-to-day, on how close the quota is, or if triggerfish  
43 is open today, or, you know, it's fantastic. They're both  
44 fantastic, but the commercial one -- I just recently found out  
45 about it, and it's great.

46  
47 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thanks, Ed. Any other questions? With  
48 none, the floor is still yours.

1  
2 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Are you ready for our next agenda item? Do we  
3 have --

4  
5 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** We're at 4:51, and, again, I want to try to  
6 keep us on schedule and close at 5:00, and so would it be best,  
7 Emily, to maybe bring that up tomorrow, the 2024? Okay.

8  
9 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Sounds good to me. Dinner always wins.

10  
11 **MR. ANSON:** All right. Well, great. We appreciate you getting  
12 through at least the first few -- Do you want to talk about  
13 that, as far as logistics for it? Go ahead and talk about the  
14 Q&A then.

15  
16 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Switching gears, two things happening  
17 tonight. First, we have a Q&A. That question-and-answer  
18 session, if you are joining us virtually, you will have to  
19 switch away from the council meeting webinar. There is a  
20 separate link, and so go to the meetings material webpage, to  
21 our agenda, and you will find the separate link to participate  
22 in that Q&A.

23  
24 If you are here in-person for that Q&A, go ahead and find some  
25 space in the back, and we are going to try and figure out how we  
26 can make it formally informal, so that we can accommodate our  
27 folks that are virtual, but also accommodate everybody in the  
28 room, and so we're going to do the best we can. We'll probably  
29 get that started just a little bit after five o'clock, and then  
30 there is also -- For those of you, and you should have gotten an  
31 email, and there is a social tonight at Felix's after that Q&A,  
32 and so ask me if you have any questions about that.

33  
34 **MR. ANSON:** I don't see any questions from anyone, and so, yes,  
35 as soon as we can kind of get the back tables organized, and  
36 online, and get that going, we will go ahead and start with the  
37 Q&A, and so thank you, everyone. I will see everybody else,  
38 that won't be attending the Q&A, tomorrow at 8:30 in the  
39 morning.

40  
41 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed on January 30, 2024.)

42  
43 - - -

44  
45 January 31, 2024

46  
47 WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48

The Outreach & Education Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council reconvened at The Hyatt Centric, French Quarter in New Orleans, Louisiana on Wednesday morning, January 31, 2024, and was called to order by Vice Chairman Anthony Overton.

**VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Good morning. We're going to continue through the agenda where we left off yesterday afternoon, and, Emily, I'm going to pass the floor back to you.

**2024 COMMUNICATIONS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

**MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Good morning, everyone, and so I think what we'll do is we'll start with the action guide for our next agenda item, which is the 2024 Communications Improvement Plan, and so I will present the proposed 2024 Communications Improvement Plan, which includes recommendations from our Outreach and Education Technical Committee, which met last December, and I would like you all to review the plan, suggest any improvements, and, if you guys think it's good to go, then, you know, potentially make a recommendation that, you know, that it's ready, and so, Bernie, if you can open Tab O, Number 5, we'll just briefly go over our communications plan.

As we get this up, one thing that I would like to tell you guys is you've seen these in past years. This year, this communication plan specifically is kind of -- It's sort of our ambient duties, but what we're trying to do is do things a little bit better every year. What you're going to notice is that it's not a terribly ambitious plan this year, and that's for good reason.

We have just committed to starting the recreational initiative that's going to take quite a bit of bandwidth from our department, and we also, today, are going to show you our fishery ecosystem outreach plan, which is a pretty big endeavor, as well as a coastal migratory pelagic outreach plan, and so this sort of general communications improvement plan might look a little anemic, and that is so that we can make sure that we have enough space that we commit to doing.

First, we'll talk about our blog, and we endeavor to publish at least eight blog articles this year. We would like to write another article about getting engaged, and we would like to make sure that we get our meet-the-council blogs out. We have not yet introduced Anthony and Kesley, and so we want to make sure

1 that we get that one next, and then, whoever comes onboard in  
2 August, we're going to want to introduce, and then we also want  
3 to rework the why commercial and recreational regulations are so  
4 different blog post.

5  
6 That's a really popular post that we use all the time, because,  
7 as you know, the sort of public perception is that different  
8 equals unfair, and so we really like to -- You know, I want to  
9 rework that post, so that we make sure that we explain that  
10 things are different for a reason, and that equal and equitable  
11 are, you know, different concepts sometimes.

12  
13 We would like to publish at least two of those blog digests that  
14 I mentioned last year, and I think we've got a couple of themed  
15 posts. Regulations rationale, we've got a couple of articles  
16 already that discuss why regulations are set the way they are,  
17 like why we set seasons the way they are, or minimum size  
18 limits, and so we'll do one of those digests, as well as a meet-  
19 the-council digest, and so hopefully pull together all of the  
20 articles, of all of the council members that are at the table,  
21 and put those in a digest. We would also like to make sure that  
22 we continue to highlight those new blogs on our slide show on  
23 our homepage.

24  
25 Moving on to social media, we plan to post at least once a week.  
26 We haven't really had trouble with that, and I think most  
27 businesses post more than that, but I don't want to overload  
28 people with, you know, council regulatory shenanigans, and so we  
29 aim to post at least once a week.

30  
31 I want to keep doing those helpful positive content posts, you  
32 know, sending people to our staff, details about meetings,  
33 helpful council resources, things like that, and we want to keep  
34 creating those reels, and those short videos, to announce things  
35 like final action and describing stock assessment results,  
36 things like that, and then we would also like to look into  
37 expanding the use of our Fish Brain platform. That was  
38 something that was on the docket for 2023 that we didn't get to,  
39 but we still think that that's a valuable thing.

40  
41 Moving on to our website, we would like to add a little bit more  
42 information on the SSC. You know, the roles of the SSC are  
43 pretty well-defined, but I think they're only well-defined to  
44 those of us that are sort of in the know, and so I want to make  
45 sure that we really put some information out there for the  
46 public, so that they understand the role that the SSC plays and  
47 sort of the regulatory position that they are in.

48



1 We also want to get a web contractor to help us modernize the  
2 aesthetic, and the theme, of the website, and I mentioned this  
3 yesterday as something that was on our list of things to do in  
4 2023, but we did not get around to it. We would like to update,  
5 and improve, our calendar widget a little bit more, rework our  
6 fisheries science pages, and that fisheries science section, if  
7 you've seen it, is managed in tabs on our website, and it is a  
8 lot of stuff, and so we want to make it a little bit more easily  
9 digestible, because, right now, you could just get lost in  
10 there.

11  
12 We would also like to improve the way that we host our  
13 regulatory areas. One of the things that has bothered me, for  
14 years and years, is that we have all -- Like we kind of  
15 basically have this stream of maps that will show you Madison-  
16 Swanson, and then the Edges, and the Lumps, and the Flower  
17 Gardens, and so everything is sort of just a bunch of PDF maps,  
18 and I think that that is completely not a user-friendly way to  
19 host those regulatory areas, and so I would like to use an  
20 interactive map tool to convert all of our fishing regulations.

21  
22 If you are an end-user, if you're the fisherman, you can say,  
23 hey, I'm trying to go out for reef fish, and I'm going to use  
24 hook-and-line gear, and where can't I go, right, so that you can  
25 kind of use it from a more friendly perspective, and so that's a  
26 really big undertaking, but I think that's something that we can  
27 really start to chip away at this year.

28  
29 Moving on to Fishermen Feedback, we have talked, internally, for  
30 a number of years that we would like to draft a scientific paper  
31 that outlines the merits of the process and the tool. Just to  
32 give you an update, we are still awaiting our Paperwork  
33 Reduction Act clearance for that tool, but I think that tool is  
34 something that is really valuable, not only in fisheries  
35 management, but it could be really valuable in natural resource  
36 management in general, and so we would like to formalize our use  
37 of the tool, basically, by publishing a paper about it.

38  
39 Then we also want to make sure that we can develop a database  
40 that is a composite of all the responses to the tool that we've  
41 gotten over time, because I think there is some interesting  
42 things that we can do with the data if we all have it in one  
43 central repository.

44  
45 Next, moving on to videos, I just need to redo the Scientific  
46 and Statistical Committee orientation video. For our public  
47 comment, and public hearings, we need to -- I think what I'm  
48 going to start doing now is sending press releases to promote

1 public comment opportunities for framework actions. You will  
2 note that, for framework actions, we typically just make a  
3 video, and we share that video across social media. We put it  
4 on our website.

5  
6 What we haven't done is sent out an official press release that  
7 says, hey, we're in the public hearing stage for this framework  
8 action, and here's the video, and here's how you comment.

9  
10 Now, when we do a full plan amendment, we usually have public  
11 hearings, and there is a press release associated with the  
12 public hearings that announces the opportunity for the public to  
13 comment, and so I think we might be able to get a little more  
14 interest in those framework actions if we send out a press  
15 release, and I say this because I've noticed, in the last couple  
16 of years, we do these big plan amendments about changing sort of  
17 things that are a little bit more nebulous to the public, right,  
18 the catch limits and stuff like that.

19  
20 When we go out to hearings, and, often, we're in the situation  
21 where we have to change the catch limits, and so that public  
22 comment opportunity is a little bit stunted, and then in  
23 framework actions is where we address these big issues that  
24 really impact the end user, things like bag limits and season  
25 changes, and so I really want to get more credibility, and get  
26 more visibility, I guess is the word, to those framework  
27 actions, so that we can get public comment from them, because  
28 they do seem to be the ones that are actually meaningful to our  
29 fishermen.

30  
31 Then I would like to audit and improve the way that we do those  
32 public hearings guides, those sort of trifolds that you've seen  
33 when we are in public comment, and it also occurs to me, based  
34 on the last couple of days, that we've got this major influx of  
35 comments coming in about the recreational data collection  
36 program, and they're kind of coming into our email box, into all  
37 of the different public comment repositories that we have, and,  
38 in the backend, we are scrambling to get all the comments out of  
39 different places, and put them into the right place, and so it  
40 occurs to me that maybe what we'll do, after this meeting, is  
41 add a third bullet here, which is really to streamline the way  
42 that our public comments come in and out, and so I do think  
43 there's some backend improvements, and that's a lesson that  
44 we've learned in the last like two or three days.

45  
46 Then, finally, we will present to you, during this session, our  
47 history of management timeline tool, and we have piloted that  
48 tool for greater amberjack and gag grouper, and so we would like

1 to get that tool approved, and published, and then we would like  
2 to expand it by adding species, and one of things you will  
3 notice is, today, we're going to ask you to review that tool,  
4 and also suggest what species that we should do next.

5  
6 We would also like to develop a StoryMap that advertises the  
7 availability of the tool and highlights, sort of each of the  
8 species we do, their completed species histories.

9  
10 We will then move on to new things, and you guys might remember  
11 that booklet, the navigating the council process booklet, and  
12 we've had it for years, and we've redone it a little bit, and we  
13 would like to rewrite, and redesign, that booklet this year with  
14 some -- You know, there's some infographics in there that I  
15 think we can rework, and really modernize, about the council  
16 process, and then, also, I would like to flesh out the council  
17 member and the council chair roles and responsibilities.

18  
19 Much like we've been endeavoring to make sure that we explain to  
20 the public what the APs and the SSCs are supposed to do, I think  
21 it would be really helpful to put out some guidance documents on  
22 what actual council members are expected to do and what the role  
23 of the chair is, and how that works, and so I'm thinking about  
24 putting something together there, and that sort of sits nicely  
25 into this redo of the navigating the council process.

26  
27 Next, you know, we use our Gulf Council PowerPoint template, and  
28 we've had it for a very long time, and I think it's time for us  
29 to modernize that template. You know, every presentation you  
30 see that comes from council staff sort of has the same look, and  
31 so we're ready to break up with the old look and figure out if  
32 there's something better.

33  
34 Then one of the other things that we've been working on, piece-  
35 wise, and I really just want to put it down on paper, is I want  
36 to improve the repository of images that we use across our  
37 publications. We do have a great database that we've gotten  
38 anglers to submit photos, and give us permission, and we buy  
39 photos off of iStock sometimes, and we take them from the  
40 different state agencies, and through NOAA, but I really want to  
41 get some very high-quality photos of the different fisheries,  
42 and fish, throughout the Gulf of Mexico, so we can just continue  
43 to improve, and professionalize, the way that our products look.  
44 With that, I can go ahead and turn it back to you, Dr. Overton,  
45 and we'll see if there's any feedback or suggestions or --

46  
47 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Thank you. Any questions  
48 for Emily? Hearing and seeing none, we'll continue on.

1  
2           **2023 IN-PERSON OUTREACH EVENTS PROGRESS AND 2024 PLAN**  
3

4 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. So I'm going to take the no questions to  
5 be a sort of silent approval of what we're planning to do, and I  
6 guess that means that we can move on to our next item, which is  
7 our progress on our in-person outreach plan for 2023 and then  
8 our plan for 2024. Carly is going to present a summary of the  
9 2023 in-person outreach events that she went to, along with a  
10 proposed plan for outreach events in this 2024 calendar year.  
11

12 I would like you all to review the analytics from our recent  
13 years, and the feedback that we got from our O&E Technical  
14 Committee, and then look over our proposed plan for 2024 and  
15 give us any feedback on improvements, and so, with that, I'm  
16 going to turn it over to Carly.  
17

18 **MS. CARLY SOMERSET:** Thanks, Emily. Okay, and so I will just  
19 review 2023, what we did for the in-person outreach, before  
20 going over our outline for the 2024 plan, and so 2023 -- The  
21 Outreach and Education Technical Committee meets at the end of -  
22 - I believe in December, at the end of each year, and so the  
23 feedback for what we did -- It's already almost February, but  
24 that we did for 2023 came from late 2022, and so that was kind  
25 of ramping up, again, after coming out of the COVID cave, and so  
26 we were excited about what we could do in 2023.  
27

28 For this previous year, the O&E suggested to try to find at  
29 least one event in each state and, beyond that, to attempt to  
30 find events that engage with each sector, which I think is  
31 really important, and so recreational and commercial, and we've  
32 also gone to events that may have more interactions just with  
33 the general public, and so, you know, that's usually people that  
34 may not be familiar with the council process at all. I've  
35 definitely gone to events where people had no idea what the  
36 council is, and so I think that's good to let people know who  
37 the council is, how the process works.  
38

39 The O&E also discussed tournaments, and we may want to focus our  
40 efforts elsewhere, when possible, because I think they brought  
41 up some good points about that some anglers at tournaments might  
42 -- You know, they could be tired from fishing all day, wanting  
43 to watch the weigh-in, and so our individual engagements could  
44 be lower if we had a table and trying to interact with anglers  
45 with there.  
46

47 Then, generally speaking, the O&E acknowledged that our goals,  
48 and our target audience, often depend on the type of event, and,

1 you know, being aware that we're trying to coordinate  
2 appropriate events in each state, while also trying to avoid  
3 conflicts with other meetings, and so there's lots of moving  
4 parts to come together, but we're always, you know, cognizant of  
5 thinking about what events we choose, the type of audience it's  
6 going to have, and then tailor our approach, and what outreach  
7 materials we bring, to best reach the audience.

8  
9 The 2023 plan was constructed based on all of that feedback, and  
10 we targeted smaller engagements, like fishing clubs, and we  
11 wanted to do more speaking events, if possible, and so we asked  
12 if we could provide presentations and then facilitate -- That  
13 would facilitate discussion on really whatever the anglers, or  
14 that club -- You know, whatever topic they wanted, we would try  
15 to present on that, and so there was a less of a focus on table  
16 events, and waiting for people to come to us, and more  
17 engagement of anglers through presentations and then Q&A  
18 afterward.

19  
20 All right, and so 2023 in-person engagement, and so this is just  
21 a list of what we were able to do last year, and so we did try  
22 to attend one event in each state. Some of these were new to  
23 us, and we, you know, had no way of knowing, until we got there,  
24 how it would turn out, more or less, and, you know, actually,  
25 some of these were suggested, but, until we got there and set  
26 up, how many people we would engage, and not that that's a bad  
27 thing, because it provides us with information for the future,  
28 if we want to return, or try to find something else, and so I'll  
29 just give some background on these, quickly.

30  
31 The Louisiana Charter Boat Association had two meetings, and it  
32 worked out that we were able to do these along with the  
33 Fisheries Forward Summit, and so those were put on by Richard  
34 Fischer and Josh Ellender, and so it was very helpful that they  
35 worked with us to let everyone, all the charter captains in  
36 Louisiana, know that we wanted to do this.

37  
38 The main things that they wanted to discuss were the SEFHIER  
39 reporting and then regional or state management of greater  
40 amberjack, which has come up a couple of times recently, and  
41 then management using zones, and so, after the presentation, we  
42 discussed all of those.

43  
44 The Fisheries Forward Summit was excellent, because it's more a  
45 focus on the commercial sector, and so we're really happy that  
46 we were able to do that. It was a lot of -- I spoke to  
47 shrimpers, oyster aquaculture, and, you know, I talked about the  
48 role of the council, commercial shrimping, commercial

1 regulations, and, for all of those, Billy Broussard was able to  
2 attend, and I think that was very valuable. He took the time to  
3 answer questions and be at all of those meetings, and I think  
4 the anglers in Louisiana really appreciated that.

5  
6 Then we did the Mississippi Gulf Fishing Banks meeting, and that  
7 was a group of anglers that are more offshore oriented in  
8 Biloxi, and so they also wanted to discuss the SEFHIER  
9 reporting, greater amberjack, red snapper season, general  
10 regulations, the shift from CHTS to FES, and so I think that  
11 went really well, and there was a lot of engagement there.

12  
13 Then we did attend ICAST, and we were able to present at the  
14 conservation summit within ICAST, which was put on by the  
15 Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and that included a  
16 panel discussion and then a seminar series, and so Nick Haddad,  
17 with Return 'Em Right, was also able to present, and so, for us,  
18 that was an explanation of the council process, how to get  
19 involved, and there was a lot of NMFS staff, and also a couple  
20 of council members there, and so I think that was great.

21  
22 Then I already mentioned the Fisheries Forward Summit in  
23 Louisiana, and so that was a really good one to do, to focus on  
24 the commercial sector, and we were trying to get to Alabama and  
25 Texas events, but we weren't able to coordinate that for 2023,  
26 and so we're definitely focusing on making sure that happens  
27 this year.

28  
29 I won't go into all of these, but I just wanted to show that we  
30 were able to do some events in 2022, and they were slightly  
31 different than what we saw in 2023, except for ICAST, and so we  
32 have been going to ICAST, but we do not table currently, and we  
33 walk around and engage with individuals, and that's really great  
34 for discussing -- Or just, you know, speaking with industry  
35 members, because it is -- It's an event that's not open to the  
36 public, but a lot of industry members, from all over, attend  
37 every year, and so I think that is beneficial.

38  
39 Some feedback, again, for just consideration or if you have any  
40 suggestions for 2024, and the O&E did provide some specific  
41 event suggestions in some of the states, and please, if you have  
42 any other ideas, either here or if you think of anything later  
43 on, and you can always email me, and I would be happy to take  
44 those, and I think that's always good for us to have, actually  
45 working on a list of everything in each state that would be good  
46 for in-person outreach.

47  
48 The O&E was also agreeable to returning to certain events that

1 are niche events, and so the example I would give would be the  
2 Fisheries Forward Summit in Louisiana, because it's more  
3 commercially focused, and there are a lot of events that are  
4 general public and recreationally focused, and so I think that's  
5 one that is important to attend, just so that we can engage all  
6 the sectors as much as possible.

7  
8 Also, balance events with large numbers of people to those with  
9 more one-on-one participation, and so that goes back to, you  
10 know, how do we measure how well in-person events -- How  
11 beneficial they are, and, if we talk to two or three people, and  
12 have really good, quality conversations, or, if we talk to fifty  
13 people, and it may be for only a few minutes, but, you know, is  
14 it the number?

15  
16 We're looking at qualitative and quantitative metrics, to try to  
17 determine which engagements are best suited for us to attend,  
18 and, obviously, we want to go to events where people want us to  
19 attend and that want to engage, ask the hard questions,  
20 anything, and I think it's all -- The process is good, whether  
21 it's good feedback or bad feedback, and that's not necessarily a  
22 bad thing in itself. That kind of leads to, you know,  
23 continuing to track analytics.

24  
25 An O&E member did suggest maybe using a minimum number of  
26 attendees to choose events, and I think that differs depending  
27 on the state and the type of groups, but, you know, I will just  
28 -- As an example, she mentioned that maybe, if you have -- If  
29 you table an event, if you have the event hosts more than, you  
30 know, 500 people, if you get 100 engagements from that, that  
31 might be a good way to measure whether that's useful.

32  
33 If you're speaking at a smaller club, if there's fifty or more  
34 members who show up, then that might be a metric to use to  
35 determine whether those events would be lucrative for us to  
36 attend, and so just something to think about. Again, we want to  
37 engage a broad cross-section of stakeholders, and partner with  
38 other state agencies, when possible, because I think that's  
39 always a good thing, to foster communication between state and  
40 federal agencies, and then, ideally, have a council member  
41 attend the event, and I know that's not always possible, but,  
42 based on the feedback I've heard, I think the anglers really  
43 enjoy having direct contact with all of you, when possible, to  
44 ask questions and just to, you know, have a discussion.

45  
46 Just quickly, some other O&E suggestions, and so we use our  
47 favorite Jamboard tool to put these suggestions up on a board,  
48 so that everyone can look at them and engage actively during the

1 meeting, and so it was suggested to try to schedule council  
2 meetings to save costs, or, you know, generally to try and  
3 coordinate with other meetings, when possible, for travel, and  
4 also to get a booth at ICAST this year, rather than walking  
5 around as individuals. Then work with state agencies, Sea  
6 Grant, other groups, such as charter boat associations and CCA,  
7 but just to combine efforts, when possible.

8  
9 All right, and so, getting into the 2024 plan, and so this isn't  
10 set in stone, but we just wanted to provide you all an outline,  
11 and I would love some feedback, if you have any, again, and so  
12 we're planning to attend at least one event in each state, and  
13 then, if we attend ICAST, that would be six events total  
14 throughout this year.

15  
16 Again, we want to attend events that outreach to as many  
17 sectors, various stakeholder groups, as much as possible, and  
18 then, in the next slide, when I bring that up, that's -- You  
19 will see that there is more than one potential event in each  
20 state that's been identified, because of possible issues with  
21 timing, and sometimes they overlap with each other, and  
22 sometimes they overlap with SSC meetings, or other council  
23 events, and so we're just trying to get all of that worked out.

24  
25 Oftentimes, there's approval that's required from, you know,  
26 leadership of the group, and then I also want to try and  
27 coordinate with all of you all, so that you can attend those  
28 outreach events in-person, when possible.

29  
30 All right, and so this is the list of potential events, and,  
31 again, you will notice that there are several for each state.  
32 The first one is our primary -- Well, I should say the event  
33 that we're targeting currently, and that's in bold, and then the  
34 anticipated date and the audience, and ICAST is in there just as  
35 a potential additional event, possibly, you know, whether we  
36 walk around as individuals and engage with industry leaders, or  
37 if we table the event, but it does have some logistics to work  
38 out, if we do that.

39  
40 Again, I'm open to any suggestions on these, and I believe,  
41 Bernie, if you go one more slide, that is the last one, and I  
42 will take any -- I would love any questions or feedback.

43  
44 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Ed.

45  
46 **MR. WALKER:** So a couple of suggestions. If you're going to do  
47 tournaments, don't do them at the weigh-in. Do them at the  
48 captains meeting, or maybe you already know that, or maybe you



1 already figured that out, but definitely you're going to have  
2 not as quality input from a bunch of guys drinking beer and  
3 fishing all day, but a lot of them -- I can think of a couple in  
4 our area where they have a real nice setup, with booths, and  
5 people casually walking around and talking about fishing, while  
6 they sign-up for tournament, and I think you would have much  
7 better interaction there than trying to deal with people at a  
8 weigh-in. Sometimes those get out of hand.

9  
10 Also, I went over to the ICAST thing in Orlando this year, and  
11 it was good, and I think a booth is a good idea over there,  
12 because then people can -- People know, if they want to come  
13 talk to the council, they're over on Aisle 3, and you can go  
14 over there and talk to them, rather than hoping to run into one  
15 of us walking around, or hanging around at the FWC booth or  
16 wherever we might be, and so those would be my suggestions.

17  
18 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you. Any other questions? Dakus.

19  
20 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Carly. I am  
21 encouraged to see Texas on the list, and Alabama also, which was  
22 notably absent from your 2022 and 2023 tours. I think it helps  
23 us to have a better understanding of those, and we face this  
24 internally at the department, and there's a return on  
25 investment, right, as we think about our three strategies and  
26 where we send -- We have a dedicated -- A couple of staff  
27 dedicated to education and outreach events, just within coastal  
28 fisheries, and that's something I think we could better partner  
29 on, and identify those areas, and help you kind of narrow-in on  
30 where those areas are, what time of year where we get that  
31 biggest bang for the buck, you know, to really achieve some of  
32 that return on investment and meet those metrics you're looking  
33 for, and so I look forward to that and formally invite you to  
34 Texas.

35  
36 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Mr. Gill.

37  
38 **MR. BOB GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so I thoroughly  
39 applaud the proactive outreach approach, and what is is now,  
40 three years, or four years, and I think that getting out there,  
41 as opposed to letting folks just do it generically, whether they  
42 come to meetings or not, and so I think the effort is there,  
43 and, to the extent that we can continue it, and expand it, that  
44 would be great.

45  
46 My sense, from your report on the 2023, given the revised  
47 approach from 2022, is that, overall, you would view it as  
48 successful, and is that correct? In a measure, if it was yes,

1 if it worked out well for what we planned to do.

2  
3 **MS. SOMERSET:** Yes, I think so, Bob. I think we get, you know,  
4 a little better every year, and there was -- You know, Emily did  
5 a lot before, and COVID just kind of put a stop to everything,  
6 and so 2022 is when we were getting back into it, and a lot of  
7 events were ramping-up again, and so there's already a really  
8 good base, prior to when I started with council staff, for in-  
9 person outreach, and so we're just trying to, you know, get back  
10 to that, and I think it's been successful. I have really  
11 enjoyed the interactions, when I attend in-person events, and I  
12 really enjoy it, and so it's a success in my book.

13  
14 **MR. GILL:** Keep it up.

15  
16 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** General.

17  
18 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** I noticed that you have Blessing of the  
19 Fleet as our number-one, and, you know, our Blessing of the  
20 Fleet is getting less and less every day, and I tell you that  
21 it's really changed a lot, and I would like to see that moved to  
22 maybe the MDMR Marine Discovery Day, and that's in Jackson, and  
23 it's a big deal, but it's a lot of people, and I think you could  
24 get a lot more outreach out of the way, and so if you could  
25 consider maybe moving that.

26  
27 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Chris.

28  
29 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Carly. I appreciate that, and  
30 Emily as well, and the outreach that you did this past year with  
31 us, especially with the Fisheries Forward Summit. I think that  
32 really worked out well, and I thank Billy for attending that on  
33 both days and doing a great job with the public with a lot of  
34 the questions that they had. I think that's a really good  
35 public interaction, that meeting, and I think it's every other  
36 year, correct, and so, this year, you won't be able to do it,  
37 but I encourage you to try to do it the subsequent year, if you  
38 can, again, if it's scheduled around a time that works.

39  
40 Also, you guys do a great job of working with our outreach  
41 staff, and Danica and Heather do an outstanding job, with a lot  
42 of a workload, and I know they work with you guys directly on  
43 this stuff, and so I encourage you to, you know, come up with  
44 different venues, and locations, as they may pop up, and that  
45 could be higher on the radar, I guess, also, depending on how  
46 some of these tournaments get scheduled out, if they don't fit  
47 your schedule, and they may come up with some better options for  
48 you guys, too.

1  
2 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Joe and Chris, for the info.  
3 Andy.

4  
5 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Carly, for the presentation, and  
6 it's very encouraging, obviously, with the amount of outreach  
7 that's going on with you and Emily and the rest of the council.  
8 A couple of things. One, I would say use as a partner. Sean  
9 Meehan is our recreational coordinator, and he does a lot of  
10 outreach events, obviously, for the recreational fishing  
11 community, and so what I will encourage him to do is also pass  
12 along events that he might be going to, if there's  
13 opportunities, and interest, if you participating in those.

14  
15 The other thing, which has been mentioned, is just kind of  
16 assessing metrics and the kind of value input, right, and so I  
17 see in-person meetings as highly valuable, but can be, you know,  
18 cost prohibitive, just because of the amount of people you  
19 reach, and so we've been attempting a variety of different ways  
20 to communicate with the public, from radio shows to Facebook  
21 Live to actual in-person meetings, and we're still kind of  
22 assessing what's kind of reaching -- You know, has the farthest  
23 reach, but I think there's some opportunities there as well to  
24 expand.

25  
26 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Andy. Any other questions?  
27 Okay. Thank you, and we'll move forward with the agenda. Back  
28 to you, Emily.

29  
30 **COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES BOOK REVIEW**

31  
32 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** All right. Thank you. We are going to move on  
33 to our Communications Guidelines Book Review. I am going to  
34 give you guys, in a minute, a finalized Communications  
35 Guidelines Book. We think it's finalized, and we would like to  
36 sort of get your input before we decide it is.

37  
38 Our technical committee has already reviewed all of the  
39 individual guidelines within the book, and they looked at the  
40 book itself, and they've sort of given us their feedback, and  
41 we've incorporated that feedback into the version that you are  
42 going to see today.

43  
44 You may remember that you have seen some of these communication  
45 guidelines over the years, and we were kind of doing them piece-  
46 wise. Half of the guidelines that are in the book you have  
47 already reviewed and approved, and the other half you have not,  
48 and so what I will do is I will just walk you through the book,

1 chapter-by-chapter, and let you know if you have approved it or  
2 not.

3  
4 Just so I give you a little bit of context, we developed this  
5 Communications Guidelines Book, and my predecessor and I used to  
6 joke that, you know, if one of us got hit by a bus, nobody would  
7 know how to do some of the things that we do, and so what we've  
8 been trying to do, over the years, is really formalize our hit-  
9 by-the-bus list, meaning not only should internal staff be able  
10 to look at this book and understand sort of the communication  
11 guidelines, but it is a useful tool both for the council as well  
12 as for the public.

13  
14 In a lot of ways, these guidelines outline not only what our  
15 council protocols are, but, you know, what we're hoping the  
16 public will understand about our processes as well, things like  
17 our guidelines on our public comment. You know, it very well  
18 spells out that like, if you email me a bunch of comments, I  
19 don't email it to the council members, and that's something that  
20 somebody would have to do on their own, and so there's just a  
21 bunch of little communications nuances that we've been doing as  
22 standard practice, but we never really had in writing, and so  
23 now we have this completed book, that hopefully covers the array  
24 of sort of communications protocols that we've been practicing,  
25 but just wanted to put, you know, in stone.

26  
27 Bernie, if you can go to Tab O, Number 7, and I guess we'll just  
28 go into the table of contents first, and I will go through each  
29 one of these guidelines and let the council -- You know, let you  
30 guys know whether or not you've already approved them or not.

31  
32 The first one that is up is our use of council products, and so  
33 those are guidelines that talk about using our logo, our images,  
34 our council documents and products, and this is a really good  
35 forward-facing guideline document, because, you know, if you  
36 were a tournament director, and you wanted to use our logo, but  
37 you didn't know, you know, are we federal, or are we not, and  
38 how does that work, this spells that out, not only for us, and  
39 for our council members, but also for external folks, and like  
40 how do you cite our data, how do you -- You know, can you use  
41 the pictures that we have, those kinds of things.

42  
43 You all have not yet reviewed these guidelines, and so hopefully  
44 you did your homework and might have looked at sort of what  
45 we're spelling out as our guidelines. A lot of them are  
46 following the federal guidelines, because we are a publicly-  
47 funded organization, and so, generally, what I will say is that  
48 pretty much everything that we do is open for the public to use

1 and abuse, except we do ask that our logo is not used, without  
2 permission, to endorse any sort of product or for any sort of  
3 financial gain.

4  
5 Our next guidelines are our media guidelines, and these spell  
6 out sort of how we respond to media inquiries, and we kind of  
7 have an internal process that is a system of checks-and-balances  
8 to make sure that the things that we are saying that we are  
9 saying on behalf of the council itself, you know, kind of who in  
10 the organization can go ahead and speak to the media freely, and  
11 it does outline that, you as council members, are individual  
12 human beings, and you can speak on your own behalf, but, if you  
13 are going to speak on behalf of the council as a whole to the  
14 media, that you should be sort of running that by myself, the  
15 Public Information Officer, as well as our executive staff. You  
16 have already reviewed these, and you have already sent them  
17 forward and said that they're ready to go.

18  
19 Next are our press release guidelines, and these are very  
20 internal in nature, just basically saying who has the  
21 responsibilities of doing the guidelines, or, I'm sorry, the  
22 press releases, and what kind of press releases are being put  
23 out, what the editing process is, and what the publishing  
24 process is. You have already looked at these, and they are  
25 done. They are ready to go.

26  
27 Next are our public comment guidelines, and so are both forward-  
28 facing and for internal use. These talk about the different  
29 ways that we gather public comment, sort of the different  
30 practices that we have in like sharing emails with each other,  
31 or putting the comments in the comment repositories, and so this  
32 really just spells that out. You have already looked at these  
33 and given us your blessing for moving forward.

34  
35 The next guidelines are guidelines in how we host our fishing  
36 regulations, and this just talks about our process. In, you  
37 know, hosting fishing regulations, we do have a caveat, on every  
38 one of our regulations, that does say that, you know, this is  
39 just a summary of regulations, and it's not legally binding. If  
40 you want the legally-binding regulations, you have to go to the  
41 CFRs, and nobody wants to read those. You need a translator,  
42 and so we are translating, but hosting those regulations is a  
43 huge commitment, because we do not want to have those  
44 regulations be inaccurate, and so we have set up some guidelines  
45 for how we make sure that we are producing the most high-  
46 quality, most up-to-date product that we can.

47  
48 You have not looked at these regulations yet, and so, you know,

1 you might want to take a minute and sort of -- Or I'm sorry, or  
2 these guidelines yet, and so you might want to take a minute and  
3 look at those.

4  
5 Next, we move on to our social media guidelines, and these are  
6 the first ones that we created. You looked at these a number of  
7 years ago, and one thing that I can tell you is that, since  
8 these were created, a number of folks have told us that they  
9 have found them useful for their own organization, and I know  
10 the South Atlantic Council has looked through them, and I know  
11 that FWC has appreciated them, and I think some of the other  
12 state agencies have seen them, at the technical committee level,  
13 and they have really enjoyed the use of those, and so these ones  
14 you've already looked at, and they seem like they might be ready  
15 to roll.

16  
17 Next, we move on to our communication analytics guidelines, and  
18 you guys have not looked over these yet, and this just talks  
19 about the process, and intervals, in which we track our  
20 analytics and share them with you, you know, just basically  
21 spelling out that all of our communications -- We try and track  
22 analytics, so that we can do better next time.

23  
24 Next, we move on to our Fishermen Feedback guidelines, and this  
25 is just sort of a process document that lays out how that  
26 Fishermen Feedback tool is used, who gets to use it, how we  
27 share the data that are provided through that tool, and you have  
28 not looked over these ones officially, and then, finally, we  
29 have a new set of guidelines for in-person outreach events.

30  
31 This just spells out, you know, who is -- What the purpose of  
32 these things are, how we're going to go about collecting  
33 analytics, and it also discusses the fact that we think it's  
34 very useful to have council members at those events, and so,  
35 with that, I will give you guys a little bit of space to either  
36 discuss the booklet as a whole or any of the individual  
37 guidelines.

38  
39 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Emily, for presenting those  
40 guidelines and outlining the information. Are there questions,  
41 or comments? Yes, Ed.

42  
43 **MR. WALKER:** It's about one of the things in this booklet, if we  
44 can go over that. You know, I've been asked to respond to a  
45 magazine about some current issues going on with the grouper  
46 fishery, and, in reading through this -- You know, I'm looking  
47 at quotes, and it says that quotes should come from executive  
48 staff, mostly, but, if a guy asks me, you know, what do you

1 think about this or that -- Can you give me a little  
2 clarification there?

3  
4 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** 100 percent, and so those are in the media  
5 guidelines, right, is what we're discussing specifically, and  
6 so, as a council member, right, as an individual council member,  
7 you are allowed to respond on your own behalf, and so, if you  
8 are making it clear that me, as Ed Walker, the human who sits at  
9 the council table -- You can give quotes, you can give opinions,  
10 you can go off the rails as Ed Walker. However, these  
11 guidelines are specific to -- Sorry. I just gave Carrie a mini-  
12 heart attack, but --

13  
14 **MR. WALKER:** So green light. I got it.

15  
16 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** At any point, if you are asked to represent the  
17 council, the council itself should be represented as what we  
18 call a unified voice, meaning what you all vote on, whether it's  
19 a split vote on not, that final vote is the unified opinion of  
20 the council itself, and so, when you are asked to speak on  
21 behalf of the council, that is when these media guidelines, and  
22 it should spell that out in here, and I'm hoping that it's clear  
23 enough in there, but that is when getting the executive staff,  
24 which includes Carrie, the chairman, and myself, to help, you  
25 know, with the crafting of the council unified voice. I think  
26 that's the easiest way that I know how to explain that. Does  
27 that clarify it a little bit?

28  
29 **MR. WALKER:** Yes. Very good. Thank you.

30  
31 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Ed. Any other comments, or  
32 questions? Seeing none, Emily, I think the floor is still  
33 yours.

34  
35 **FISHERY ECOSYSTEM PLAN OUTREACH**

36  
37 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Well, I think then we can move on from  
38 our guidelines book, and we are just trucking today, to our --  
39 Okay. Here we go. Fishery Ecosystem Plan Outreach is our next  
40 issue.

41  
42 I'm going to give you guys a draft of our Fishery Ecosystem Plan  
43 and Red Tide Fishery Ecosystem Issue Communications Plan  
44 outline, and so what I would like from you is recommendations on  
45 how to modify this plan to engage and inform stakeholders  
46 before, during, and after the council initiates work on fishery  
47 ecosystem issues and focuses its effort on the pilot fishery  
48 ecosystem issue of red tide.

1  
2 We talked with our O&E at length about this, right, because, if  
3 you remember, the Ecosystem Technical Committee has asked the  
4 O&E to be a very active participant in building and executing  
5 the outreach portion of our Fishery Ecosystem Plan, and so --  
6 Let me find it in my book, so I'm in the right place. There we  
7 go.

8  
9 We put together this document that sort of generally spells out  
10 what we, as staff, and what the Outreach and Education Technical  
11 Committee, as well as the Ecosystem Technical Committee, has  
12 sort of suggested over the last two years of meetings, when  
13 they've been discussing how to communicate the FEP and the red  
14 tide fishery ecosystem issue specifically.

15  
16 Bernie, if you can scroll down to the top of the second page,  
17 this is just sort of a brief introduction, a reminder of the  
18 Fishery Ecosystem Plan, but, when we get to the second page  
19 here, we sort of start to break down our communications  
20 responsibilities into some neat little sections, and so the  
21 first thing that we recognize is there is a need to communicate  
22 the Fishery Ecosystem Plan, and, if you remember, the Fishery  
23 Ecosystem Plan is sort of this big process, and then we have  
24 these fishery ecosystem issues, which are little, smaller issues  
25 that we are going to be working through in this wider process.

26  
27 We recognize that most of our stakeholder engagement efforts are  
28 going to be concentrated around those individual fishery  
29 ecosystem issues. However, there is still a need to communicate  
30 broadly about our Fishery Ecosystem Plan and what the heck we're  
31 doing, what our objectives are, why we're actually endeavoring  
32 to do this, right, and so the first sort of action item we have,  
33 in order to broadly communicate this Fishery Ecosystem Plan and  
34 the process, is that we would like to redesign and maintain our  
35 fishery ecosystem management webpage.

36  
37 We have one right now, and we haven't done much with it, and  
38 it's just sort of been on our page as like -- Honestly, as a  
39 repository for the documents and things, and so what we would  
40 like to do is really put out a flashy product that has  
41 infographics that work with showing objectives and sort of the  
42 high-level process of this Fishery Ecosystem Plan in general.

43  
44 We want to make sure that we include language that tempers  
45 expectations, and we want to make sure that the public  
46 understands that this Fishery Ecosystem Plan is not a regular  
47 fisheries management plan, right, that, based on our timelines,  
48 our funding, you know, the outcome of the Fishery Ecosystem Plan



1 process is not a neat little package that's tied up in a bow,  
2 like the other fisheries management plans that we deal with, and  
3 so we really want to try and tackle that in this webpage as  
4 well.

5  
6 I guess I will just stop here, and are there any thoughts, or  
7 feedback, about how we're going to communicate broadly about the  
8 Fishery Ecosystem Plan? Yes, Bob.

9  
10 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Emily, and so I think that the broad  
11 design is good, but, from my perspective, the ecosystem plan is  
12 going to be a slow-developing process, and, similarly, the  
13 communication will be structured to follow that flow, and so  
14 some of these actions that you have in here are down the road a  
15 little bit, right, and you don't have to build the whole system  
16 all at once, because this system -- We're going to be talking  
17 about this years from now, and that gets to your workload thing  
18 that you addressed at the very beginning of this morning's  
19 discussion, and so sequencing, and prioritizing, the ones that  
20 are needed upfront, to ensure that we've got the important stuff  
21 going in, and keeping pace, if you will, with the ETC. Thank  
22 you.

23  
24 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Mr. Gill. Any other  
25 questions?

26  
27 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay, and so I do think that's a good idea, and  
28 I think what we can do is sort of develop a timeline of what we  
29 -- You know, of deliverables, as we begin to develop this, that  
30 will sort of ride along with the process.

31  
32 Okay, and so we're going to move on to gathering and ranking  
33 fishery ecosystem issues, and so it was made very clear that --  
34 You know, we, at the council table, did discuss how we are going  
35 to rank our fishery ecosystem issues. The Ecosystem Technical  
36 Committee spent a considerable amount of time trying to come up  
37 with a metric to do this, and one of the things that was  
38 identified by the Ecosystem Technical Committee is that the  
39 public is really well positioned to help us identify fishery  
40 ecosystem issues, and also potentially to play a role in ranking  
41 their priority.

42  
43 In other words, if we want to understand the depth of impact  
44 that a fishery ecosystem might have, or the geographic scope of  
45 impact that a fishery ecosystem might have, relying on the  
46 public to help us do that could be a useful exercise, and so, in  
47 recognition of that, we have a couple of action items here.

48

1 The first one is we want to develop a fishery ecosystem issue  
2 identification tool, and so this is going to be really simple,  
3 and it's going to be a Google Doc, probably, and it is going to  
4 be online, on that website that we just discussed, and it is  
5 going to allow the public to identify fishery ecosystem issues  
6 that should be addressed, right, and we imagine that this tool  
7 is going to be open continuously for responses, and that, as the  
8 council goes to review the FEI ideas, and select new FEIs, we  
9 can then report-out to the council like, since the last time we  
10 did this, here are the -- You know, the number of ideas that  
11 have been brought to us from the public, and we can also then do  
12 sort of a very rough ranking and say, actually, this one issue  
13 has come up from the public 700 times, right, and so there might  
14 be a way for us to then, at the council table, rank things by  
15 understanding how much -- You know, how much interest the public  
16 has in each issue.

17  
18 We also think that we would, you know, be advertising this  
19 opportunity closer to the period when the fishery ecosystem list  
20 will be ranked by the council, and so, while it will be  
21 continuously open, we'll definitely do some media pushes and  
22 things when we are really getting ready to review the suggested  
23 FEIs.

24  
25 Next, we would find a way to rank the FEIs that are suggested,  
26 and so we think that we could use our online tool to allow  
27 stakeholders the opportunity to rank the potential fishery  
28 ecosystem issues, and it should allow users to provide  
29 qualitative feedback, or a qualitative measure, of how much  
30 impact a potential fishery management issue, or a fishery  
31 ecosystem issue, would have on the fishing community, or the  
32 community at-large, and so, again, once we get a list of  
33 potential fishery ecosystem issues, we will go back to the  
34 public and say here's the list of issues we have, and let's run  
35 this exercise and figure out what you guys -- You know, what  
36 bubbles to the top as the most impactful issue that we can take  
37 on.

38  
39 I will stop here and see if there is any feedback, or questions,  
40 about our intentions for this part of things, and this is just  
41 the identification and ranking of potential fishery ecosystem  
42 issues by the public.

43  
44 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Mr. Gill.

45  
46 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All I want to say is spot-  
47 on.

48

1 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. That's helpful. All right. We'll move  
2 on then. Okay. You remember that we will be operationalizing  
3 the Fishery Ecosystem Plan through these general -- Through  
4 these ecosystem issues, and so we see two things happening here.  
5 First, what I'm about to discuss is there is a need to generally  
6 communicate these FEIs, right, and so, once we select a fishery  
7 ecosystem issue, stakeholders are going to play a really  
8 important role in identifying the fact that that specific issue  
9 has on fishermen and their associated communities.

10  
11 We want to make sure that we produce communication materials  
12 that both draw awareness to the council's work on that specific  
13 issue and then materials that define what the fishery issue is,  
14 and so, you know, we actually need to put out some relevant  
15 information about what we already know about the fishery issue,  
16 but we also need to gather more information from the public on  
17 that specific issue, right, and so this is -- It's a little bit  
18 confusing, but, generally, our fishery ecosystem issue outreach  
19 approach is going to be slightly standardized, and then you will  
20 see, in the next section, that, when we select an issue, we  
21 actually have to have a specific communication plan to that  
22 issue as well.

23  
24 This is kind of the general way that we're going to approach  
25 things, and so our action items here are, for each fishery  
26 ecosystem issue we choose, we are going to create a dedicated  
27 webpage for that issue, and so let's say we chose Spanish  
28 mackerel as our issue, and so we are going to create a Spanish  
29 mackerel fishery ecosystem webpage.

30  
31 On that webpage, we hope to outline the issue, what we  
32 understand the issue to be, and we are going to make sure that  
33 we get that all linked into our new fishery ecosystem management  
34 webpage and just make sure that that page outlines all the  
35 relevant information that we have on the issue, and also  
36 communicate a timeline of working through the fishery ecosystem  
37 issue and its deliverables.

38  
39 Next, we think we would like to, for each specific fishery  
40 ecosystem issue, curate a list of important stakeholders, of  
41 involved stakeholders. Each issue is going to have a different  
42 list of folks. Now, the unfortunate thing is those lists of  
43 people tend to change. You know, people change jobs, or people  
44 change interests, but, for each issue, as we work through that  
45 issue, we want to cultivate a list of involved people who care  
46 about that specific issue.

47  
48 In order to do that, we are going to sort of do a call, and

1 like, basically, we're going to sign you up for a specific  
2 listserv list, so that we know that you are into Spanish  
3 mackerel, and that's your thing. You're going to get on our  
4 list, and we're going to continue to communicate with you  
5 throughout the fishery ecosystem issue process, right, if that's  
6 what we're choosing.

7  
8 This is also going to include what we're calling extra-  
9 jurisdictional agencies, right, and so, in some cases, there are  
10 folks that are not the council, or not the states, that are  
11 still involved in this issue, because a lot of these fishery  
12 ecosystems are bigger than what we handle at this table, and so  
13 we're going to curate a list of those agencies, or those certain  
14 taskforces or groups, that might be impacted by the specific  
15 issue.

16  
17 Next, we are going to measure stakeholder sentiment, and so we  
18 are going to develop an online tool for each fishery ecosystem  
19 issue, and we're going to gather general feedback relative to  
20 that fishery ecosystem issue, and then we're going to take  
21 responses from that pool, analyze them for sentiment, and  
22 compare -- Basically compare responses by fishing sector and  
23 location, and so very similar to the analyses that we do on our  
24 Fishermen Feedback tool, but we're going to kind of adapt it for  
25 it makes sense for our fishery ecosystem plan and fishery  
26 ecosystem issues.

27  
28 I will stop here, and I know that this is a lot. This fishery  
29 ecosystem stuff is always a lot, and so I will give you guys a  
30 little space, if there's any questions, or clarifications, or  
31 thoughts about where we're at here. What I just did was outline  
32 the general process we're going to use for communicating FEIs,  
33 the fishery ecosystem issues.

34  
35 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Any feedback?

36  
37 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** So I've either succeeded in totally confusing  
38 you or being perfect. I know which one is more likely.

39  
40 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** I'm not on your committee, but it is very  
41 informative, and you've done a great job.

42  
43 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you. Okay. Good, and so maybe that  
44 alludes to the second one. Okay. Then we'll move on to red  
45 tide, and so, if you remember, in a recent council meeting, we  
46 decided that maybe red tide was an appropriate pilot issue to  
47 run through this fishery ecosystem issue process, and I'm just  
48 going to sort of remind you that the reason that we selected a

1 pilot is because this fishery ecosystem plan, and this whole  
2 process, is not completely worked out yet, and it is a bit  
3 confusing, and so we decided to run a pilot issue, so that we  
4 can kind of work out the process, and develop the process, as we  
5 go through an issue.

6  
7 Interestingly, red tide specifically is not an issue that can  
8 effectively be controlled by direct council regulatory action,  
9 right, and you guys cannot regulate people into not creating red  
10 tide. We cannot regulate nutrient upwelling, and we cannot  
11 regulate, you know, lawn fertilizing, or whatever it is, right,  
12 and so we need to find a way to communicate what the council is  
13 doing, because, in the event that the council can't do anything  
14 about the fishery ecosystem issue that it has brought up,  
15 there's a good chance that the communications are going to be  
16 the most useful way to incite a positive outcome from the  
17 fishery ecosystem issue.

18  
19 In the case of red tide, if the council had their hands tied,  
20 then it becomes the responsibility of council communications to  
21 drive effective change, which is a little bit terrifying, but we  
22 can do it.

23  
24 In the case of red tide, since it's not an issue that we can  
25 solve with fishing regulations directly, what we think would be  
26 useful for this specific fishery ecosystem issue, since it's not  
27 going to follow the regulatory feedback loop, is come together  
28 and try and host some sort of red tide symposium.

29  
30 What we've imagined here is that this symposium is going to  
31 bring together a range of affected stakeholders, so our fishery  
32 stakeholders, as well as a number of those what I was calling  
33 extra-jurisdictional agencies and partners. You know, there is  
34 a red tide taskforce, and there is tons of county-level groups  
35 that are dealing with red tide in the State of Florida, and so  
36 we hope to get all of those people together in the same room,  
37 with our offshore fishermen and the folks that are impacted by  
38 what is literally potentially the downstream impacts of red  
39 tide, in order to get all those folks that have a stake in this  
40 together and collaboratively address the issue in a more  
41 holistic manner, right, and I think what happens is a lot of us  
42 that work on these little issues just know how it impacts us in  
43 our own backyard.

44  
45 The idea is, if we host a symposium, it would be something that  
46 would allow for effective communication between all of these  
47 different organizations, so that we can find a way, maybe, to  
48 tackle this holistically.

1  
2 The next thing that we would like to do with the red tide  
3 fishery ecosystem specifically is in recognizing that there are  
4 so many agencies, and so many different groups, that are already  
5 addressing red tide, that are worried about it, that are talking  
6 about it, that are thinking about it, and we want to develop a  
7 federal fisheries red tide report, which would basically be a  
8 report about the impacts that red tide has on our stakeholders  
9 specifically, on our managed species specifically, and be able  
10 to take the information that we have on that downstream effect  
11 of red tide and share it with those organizations that deal with  
12 red tide, because then, when they're thinking about making  
13 changes, or making recommendations, they have a better  
14 understanding of how red tide is impacting us socially and  
15 economically and biologically in our federal fisheries. With  
16 that, I will pause and see if we have any feedback on that  
17 approach for red tide, the red tide fishery ecosystem issue.

18  
19 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Bob and then Dakus.

20  
21 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so the red tide  
22 symposium -- My reaction to that is a number of things. One is  
23 it has the potential for being yearly, and so managing where  
24 that's going is really important, which says that establishing  
25 the goal of what you're trying to achieve there is important,  
26 and I noticed that you don't mention, and I'm assuming that you  
27 included, at least mentally, the science side.

28  
29 I'm not sure that's more aspirational than helpful, because of  
30 these issues, and, as you mentioned, a million people, and  
31 organizations, are already involved in that, and so I think we  
32 need to think very carefully about what are we going to get out  
33 of this that is helpful, and useful, and how do we manage not  
34 only the numbers, but the expectations, of such a meeting.  
35 Conceptually, it's interesting to think about, and I don't know  
36 whether I see it being successful, at the end of the day.

37  
38 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Bob. Dakus.

39  
40 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To that point, and then I  
41 had another point, we've hosted something like this in Texas,  
42 many years ago, and it was incredibly beneficial, just to gain a  
43 better understanding of the far-reaching impacts of red tide.  
44 You know, red tide is not a big deal until it's a huge deal, and  
45 you end up with more fish kills than you've ever seen, or  
46 experienced, along the coast, and that's what we've experienced  
47 in Texas, especially in our nearshore waters, and so I applaud  
48 you all for thinking how to, you know, better communicate the

1 impacts and what we can do, as managers, as anglers, and the  
2 concerned public.

3  
4 To that point, Emily, I will offer up state coordination again,  
5 and we've done some extensive kind of, you know, frequently-  
6 asked questions for the public, and we've gathered our experts  
7 within the state, and we've put together some, you know, kind of  
8 white paper and easily digestible, you know, material out there  
9 for red tide.

10  
11 I will say that, you know, since the 1970s, our largest fish  
12 kill -- We always get concerns about freeze events, but they  
13 pale in comparison to red tide events, as far as, you know,  
14 localized fishing goes, and so, again, I will offer up kind of  
15 some state assistance and resource help there.

16  
17 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you. Any other feedback, or  
18 questions? Yes.

19  
20 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** I mean, I'm just pondering this a bit, and I'm  
21 with Bob. I'm not sure the symposium is going to be all that  
22 helpful. We can talk about it later, but there's a lot of those  
23 types of things. What I do think would be really helpful is the  
24 production of this report, right, and I guess even -- I would  
25 think about even broadening it out and talk about the effects of  
26 degraded water quality, or harmful algal blooms, more broadly on  
27 fisheries and its stakeholders.

28  
29 I mean, to Dakus's point, I mean, we have a lot of red tide  
30 issues, obviously, in our backyard, right, and we've got brown  
31 tides, and other types of things that go on in Texas, or, you  
32 know, we've got blue-green algae blooms in Mississippi waters,  
33 coastal waters, and south Florida, but why it's valuable is  
34 because the people that want to make changes, right, or affect  
35 change, can use that information to justify that work, right,  
36 and it's hard to do that, because it's not compiled and put in  
37 one place, and I think that would be incredibly valuable to do  
38 that.

39  
40 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Tom. Clay.

41  
42 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Thank you, Chair. I did want to say that we  
43 ought to be a little bit careful about being so black-and-white  
44 with saying that -- You know, that the council can't take any  
45 real actions in response to the red tide. Yes, we can't control  
46 the dinoflagellate, but the council can -- If red tides are  
47 increasing, we can put buffers in place to account for that, and  
48 we can include those, as we have, in stock assessments, so it's

1 clear that it may not be overfishing that caused the stock to  
2 achieve an overfished status, and it got depleted from red tide.

3  
4 We could -- The council could put in regulations to shift  
5 effort, maybe take some equity considerations into account, and  
6 so I think there's a lot of things that the council can do,  
7 especially if we improve our predictive and measurement capacity  
8 for red tide and what the impacts are.

9  
10 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Clay. Tom.

11  
12 **DR. FRAZER:** I mean, I think those are great comments by Clay,  
13 and that puts a new spin on what the kind of the flavor of that  
14 symposium might look like, right, and what can the fisheries  
15 management community do, right, in response to a harmful algal  
16 bloom, or red tide, in this case.

17  
18 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay, and I think that is really valuable,  
19 because I think what I was talking about is we can't regulate  
20 red tide, but what Clay brought up is that we can react to it,  
21 right, and so maybe there is a good interest in having a  
22 discussion about how we can react to red tide. I understand.  
23 Okay.

24  
25 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Yes, Carrie.

26  
27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we do  
28 have a proposed symposium, or a summit, in our proposal for the  
29 climate -- For the Inflation Reduction Act climate-ready  
30 fisheries, and so I think some of the points that were brought  
31 up here -- We alluded that red tide could be a possible summit  
32 topic, but we don't nail down which one we would move forward  
33 with yet for the council, but I think there was a lot good  
34 points that were brought up that we can try to integrate before  
35 we submit that.

36  
37 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you.

38  
39 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Just to add to what Carrie said, I think, based  
40 on Clay's comments, and based on sort of how we were thinking  
41 about this symposium, I think it can do both, right, and I think  
42 the symposium can actually help us inform this report that we  
43 plan to deliver, by gathering more information on our social,  
44 economic, and biological impacts, right, and so I was kind of  
45 envisioning that symposium to be feeding that report in some  
46 ways, or at least feeding the development of that report, as  
47 well as sort of looking into what Clay noted, which is how the  
48 council itself can react.



1  
2 All right, and so let's just move on to the final portion of  
3 this Fishery Ecosystem Plan, the outreach plan, which is the  
4 evaluation portion, and so, after we complete a fishery  
5 ecosystem issue, we think it's really valuable for us to  
6 actually go back to our stakeholders and ask for feedback on how  
7 we performed in both our communications and just in general, and  
8 like we would like to understand if people are thinking that  
9 this is a valuable endeavor.

10  
11 One of the things that we would like to do is I talked about  
12 cultivating a list of sort of deeply-engaged stakeholders issue,  
13 and I would like to just circle back with them after each issue  
14 is completed and ask them for their own feedback, but also ask  
15 them to ask their constituents, right, and so understanding that  
16 we might have somebody who leads an NGO that's based on a  
17 fishery ecosystem issue, and so asking that NGO to actually ask  
18 their constituents for feedback to share with us on how we did  
19 throughout our communications, as well as the fishery ecosystem  
20 plan itself, and, with that, that concludes sort of what our  
21 first layout of this fishery ecosystem communications plan is.

22  
23 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Bob.

24  
25 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so, in a word, I like  
26 it, and I think one of the attractive features of this is that  
27 it integrates the public side with what we're trying to do on a  
28 twenty-four-by-seven basis, and it's not just the outcome of a  
29 meeting, or a news burst or something like that, but they can  
30 gauge, to the extent that they want to, continuously, twenty-  
31 four-by-seven, and so, in essence, by setting it up this way,  
32 you've allowed it to feed on itself, so to speak, without  
33 necessarily interaction by you all, and so I think it's a great  
34 plan, and I thoroughly endorse it.

35  
36 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you. All right. Emily, the floor  
37 is still yours.

38  
39 **COASTAL MIGRATORY PELAGICS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

40  
41 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** All right. Well, if there's nothing else on  
42 the FEP Communications Plan, we will move on to the CMP  
43 Communication Plan, and so we're going to move on to the Coastal  
44 Migratory Pelagics Communication Plan.

45  
46 I am going to go over, in a moment, our draft Coastal Migratory  
47 Pelagics Communications Plan. This aims to gather stakeholder  
48 input on king and Spanish mackerel. At the moment, one of the

1 things that I would like from you guys is feedback on whether or  
2 not we want to add cobia to the mix, but we get there when we  
3 get there.

4  
5 This effort, just to remind you, is something that we are  
6 suggesting as a complementary effort to the South Atlantic's  
7 port meeting effort, and so, if you remember, in August, we met  
8 and discussed the South Atlantic's intention to go up the entire  
9 eastern seaboard, and the entire range of king and Spanish  
10 mackerel, and really try and figure out what's happening with  
11 those stocks.

12  
13 They want to revise the objectives of their FMP, which is a  
14 joint FMP with us, and so they asked us to sort of do something  
15 on our coast that can feed into their sort of global  
16 understanding of mackerel. We also know that we've had some  
17 issues with both Spanish and king, and, you know, our stock  
18 assessments are maybe showing one thing, and some of our public  
19 comment lately has been alluding to other things, and so, you  
20 know, we, at the council table, I think recognize that we could  
21 take some time out to really dedicate an effort to getting  
22 feedback on our coastal migratory pelagics.

23  
24 Specifically, the conversation, so far, has been about king and  
25 Spanish, but we might want to include cobia, and that's  
26 something that I will take feedback on once we walk through this  
27 plan, and so, Bernie, if you can open Tab O, Number 9.

28  
29 This plan that I'm about to present to you really aims to gather  
30 input from a broad variety of our stakeholders on king and  
31 Spanish mackerel. We've had declines in landings in both  
32 species in recent years, but the most recent stock assessment  
33 for both species determined that they're not overfishing or --  
34 They're not overfished or undergoing overfishing, right, and so  
35 that's kind of a juxtaposition that we're seeing in this  
36 fishery.

37  
38 Based on that, we've updated ACLs for king mackerel, and we're  
39 considering modifying some Spanish mackerel catch limits as  
40 well, and so I have a three-pronged outreach plan. I think you  
41 might remember our conversation in August talked about the fact  
42 that we have had great in-person engagement in our CMP fisheries  
43 in the past, and so what I would like to do is sort of, rather  
44 than do a road show, which is what the South Atlantic is  
45 proposing, I think that we can accomplish gathering the same  
46 type of feedback through a three-pronged approach.

47  
48 The first one is creating an online tool to gather feedback on,

1 at this point, king and Spanish mackerel, which is modeled after  
2 our existing Fishermen Feedback tool, and it's not going to be  
3 branded as Fishermen Feedback, because the Fishermen Feedback  
4 tool has a very clear niche, and role, and I don't want to  
5 confound that, but it will be an opportunity for us to gather  
6 virtual feedback from folks.

7  
8 It should hopefully target a broad audience and require  
9 relatively minimal stakeholder investment of time and resources,  
10 and what we'll do is we'll take responses that we get from that  
11 tool and summarize them, pull out themes, and share them with  
12 the councils, both the Gulf and the South Atlantic Council.

13  
14 Next is we would like to host some virtual feedback workshops.  
15 We're proposing to host three virtual workshops at different  
16 times of the day, during different parts of the fishing season,  
17 and the South Atlantic effort is going to be running through the  
18 middle of next year, and so we have plenty of time to sort of  
19 space these out, and, during those workshops, we plan to ask a  
20 series of questions to gather feedback from attendees, and so  
21 they're going to be a pretty open-ended meeting.

22  
23 It's not going to be a formal public-hearing-type meeting, and  
24 it's going to be more of a workshop, and then we'll produce  
25 summaries of those meetings, and, again, we'll pull out the  
26 themes that we see across the workshops, as well as, at the end,  
27 when we deliver our final report, we're going to pull together  
28 themes and sort of geographic, or sector, differences that we  
29 see across all of the workshops and all of these efforts.

30  
31 The third part of this proposed outreach plan is to gather  
32 feedback from our APs, and so, throughout this year, this 2024  
33 year, we're going to host a variety of advisory panel meetings,  
34 like always, right, and we've got our CMP Advisory Panel, which  
35 is scheduled for February 13, and we already have a couple of  
36 hours blocked to do this exercise.

37  
38 What we're thinking is this might be something that we want to  
39 do through all of our APs, knowing that the Coastal Migratory  
40 Pelagic AP -- They are going to be a rich source of information  
41 for this, but our reef fish guys are also going to have opinions  
42 about CMP, and our data collection guys might also have -- So  
43 we're going to see, as the year progresses, which APs we're  
44 going to host, and we're going to do this workshop with each of  
45 the APs that seem like they have a relevant audience.

46  
47 What that is going to look like is, again, it's going to look a  
48 lot like what I just described for those virtual sessions. I've

1 got a series of questions that we actually are modeling based  
2 off of the South Atlantic's fishery performance reports, and so  
3 they do this exercise with their APs right now, and so I looked  
4 at what they were doing, and we have modified the questions to  
5 sort of suit our needs, and to be specific to these CMP  
6 fisheries, and we'll gather feedback from our AP members.

7  
8 Again, we're going to generate a report from that effort, and we  
9 will pull out sort of themes that we're seeing, and trends in  
10 sector, or geographic trends that we're understanding, and so,  
11 once we grab all three -- Or we perform all three of those  
12 efforts, what we envision is that we will have individual  
13 reports from each effort, but then we'll have sort of a full  
14 document that pulls out summaries and themes that we've received  
15 from the effort in general, and so hopefully, by getting  
16 feedback from our online tool, our virtual meeting, and our APs,  
17 we'll kind of cover some broad bases there.

18  
19 We also discussed that, during council meetings, we could  
20 request comment to be included for each meeting announcement,  
21 right, and so, in other words, in each one of our meeting press  
22 releases for our councils -- You know, rather than hosting a  
23 session at a council meeting, because I think people, at the end  
24 of the day don't want to go through one of these big workshops,  
25 and what we could do is do a targeted effort to ask for CMP-  
26 based feedback during public comment, or it's something that we  
27 could do during public comment, if we know somebody that comes  
28 up to the mic and is talking about CMP species, and we can pull  
29 out the comment they say and add that to our body of knowledge  
30 that gather this year, and so, with that, I will take any  
31 feedback on this approach, and I would specifically like to know  
32 if we are including cobia, because it's not part of the South  
33 Atlantic effort, but it might be good for our own, or if we want  
34 to just stick with the mackerels.

35  
36 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you. Ed.

37  
38 **MR. WALKER:** First off, I would say definitely put cobia,  
39 especially if you're already going to have a group of people  
40 that you're going to ask a question to, and it won't be that  
41 much harder, but, where I live, the two migrate by at the same  
42 time, and so it's pretty related, I think, and it is in the CMP  
43 species, and so I would say at least discuss including cobia in  
44 this.

45  
46 I had a question on your virtual feedback workshops, and how  
47 will you select the participants? Will that be open to anyone,  
48 because say king mackerel -- If you have a novice fisherman, who

1 just went out there in his second year in his new boat, and he  
2 catches three kingfish, he may report back to you that it's been  
3 the best year ever, whereas, you know, an experienced guy would  
4 report three fish as a fraction of what he used to catch, and  
5 so, you know, I suppose it has to be open to the public, but,  
6 you know, depending on which person in the public you're talking  
7 about, you might get a different kind of an indication, based on  
8 certain reports.

9  
10 What I've seen lately, I believe the stock has declined a lot,  
11 but I did land on something special, for the first time in a  
12 couple of years, this fall, and I had two really big days, and  
13 then I didn't catch any for like three weeks, and so, if you  
14 were to go based on that day, I might have said, yes, kingfish  
15 are coming back, but, you know, I think it was just a blip,  
16 would be my read on it.

17  
18 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Just to respond to that thought, it's something  
19 that we've considered, right, is the idea that somebody's  
20 experience level, or even maybe their geographic location, might  
21 sway the way that they're feeling, right, and, I mean, I've  
22 heard some of those guys down in the Keys don't think that  
23 there's a problem, right, but some do, and so, presumably, if we  
24 cast a wide enough net -- If we get enough participation through  
25 all three of these different efforts, we are going to be able to  
26 see those themes.

27  
28 If there are a couple of novice guys that do think that king  
29 mackerel is on fire, because they haven't seen that historical  
30 trend, I think that that would be at least balanced, or  
31 outweighed, by the participants that have seen that trend, and  
32 so, presumably, when we give you that report, what we will be  
33 reporting out is we did hear a bunch -- You know, a couple of  
34 folks that said, hey, king mackerel are fine, and we also heard  
35 that, you know, that -- So I think that's something that we'll  
36 be able to tease out, if we have enough participation in this  
37 effort.

38  
39 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** C.J.

40  
41 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, sir. I am not on your committee,  
42 but I just kind of wanted to point out, and I would look to  
43 Kerry over there too, but the South Atlantic was very  
44 prescriptive, in terms of focusing just on the mackerel fishery,  
45 and they will certainly take input on cobia, and things along  
46 those lines, but they specifically were looking for feedback on  
47 the mackerel fisheries themselves. Thanks.

48

1 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I think, when we generate the report to  
2 complement the South Atlantic effort, we can tease -- You know,  
3 we can pull out the cobia information, so that they're just  
4 getting what's relevant to them, but I think the idea here is,  
5 if we're going to undertake this effort, we want it to be useful  
6 for our council table as well, and so that's why I wanted to  
7 give the option of expanding, just, you know, because -- Because  
8 I think that the outcomes of this aren't just going to feed into  
9 the South Atlantic, and they will likely inform us as well.

10  
11 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you. Any other questions, or  
12 comments? Emily.

13  
14 **MANAGEMENT TIMELINE TOOL REVIEW**

15  
16 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** All right. Actually, I think now is the time  
17 that Ms. Lisa is going to come, and I will set you guys up for  
18 what she's about to knock down. We have had -- This is a very  
19 exciting project, this timeline tool.

20  
21 It has been on our radar, and on our list of wants, for about  
22 two years now, and it actually did come from an initial  
23 conversation that I had with Susan on the phone a couple of  
24 years ago, and some of you might recognize this problem, but, if  
25 you are coming to the council table, or if you are a stakeholder  
26 in the council process, you come in, and you can see our  
27 regulations, and you can see our, you know, fishery management  
28 plan, but it's really hard to figure out like, hey, amberjack is  
29 a thirty-six-inch minimum size limit, and like how did we get  
30 there?

31  
32 What we endeavored to do was to create a tool that somebody  
33 could go to that is going to basically be -- You know, in each  
34 one of our documents, we have that history of management, and  
35 it's kind of a narrative. It's only relevant to whatever the  
36 change is going to be in the document, and so what we wanted to  
37 do was to create a history of management tool that a novice user  
38 could show up and say I'm interested in understanding amberjack,  
39 and you can click around and say I'm interested specially in  
40 amberjack size limits, or I'm interested specifically in changes  
41 to catch limits for amberjack over time.

42  
43 What we did is we've created, for both amberjack and gag, and  
44 this is sort of our pilot species, and we've created full  
45 histories of management on this interactive tool that Lisa is  
46 about to show you.

47  
48 What I'm hoping for you -- I will tell you guys that, in this

1 proposal that we're working on for fulfilling the recreational  
2 initiative, this tool should specifically feed into that  
3 recreational initiative, because it's going to help with that  
4 review of where we've been with our recreational management, and  
5 so you can actually toggle-on by sector, and so, when you think  
6 about this tool moving forward today, the list of  
7 recommendations for how we're going to expand the species in  
8 this tool should probably be aligned with the list of the  
9 species that we want to prioritize for this recreational  
10 initiative, because we do see these two things kind of helping  
11 each other out.

12  
13 The tool is going to have broader use, and implications, outside  
14 the recreational initiative, but it would be really helpful if  
15 the species that we expand it to are also species that we're  
16 thinking about addressing with the recreational initiative.

17  
18 With that, I am going to turn it over to Lisa, and she is going  
19 to drive you through the tool, and we would like to hear any  
20 feedback on the functionality on the tool, if you think it's  
21 useful, and not only the species that we want to expand, but the  
22 O&E -- When they looked at this, they were like this is great,  
23 and let's add this, and let's add this, and I think that's a  
24 really valuable thought exercise, but I'm just going to let you  
25 know that it is hard to just get what we have here, and so we'll  
26 focus on the species that we want to expand it to.

27  
28 I would still like to hear your feedback, if there are ways that  
29 we can improve it, by adding other bells and whistles, but I  
30 think we'll just start by letting Lisa walk us through when  
31 she's ready.

32  
33 **DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Emily. Bernie, if you wouldn't  
34 mind just taking the mouse over towards the left panel there,  
35 and just sort of doing a Vanna White, just sort of showcasing  
36 that left panel. There you go. Thank you.

37  
38 Just to orient you all, and I'll talk about this, and then I'll  
39 come back to it. We've got an initial tab that will allow you  
40 to select your species. For example, that would be a drop box,  
41 for anybody that's interested in a particular species, and we're  
42 also going to have a little bit of information there. We'll  
43 have the logo, and email, if anybody has any questions, that we  
44 could then, you know, answer those, as they come through the  
45 tool, that sort of thing, and so that's sort of like a little  
46 informational tab.

47  
48 Potentially we could put, you know, an image of the fish, or

1 those sorts of things, and, just about anything aesthetically  
2 that you can think of, the tool can do, and so maybe just hold  
3 those kind of comments to maybe the end, for when we flesh it  
4 out a little bit, for like I can't stand that color of blue, and  
5 we can definitely fix those sorts of things.

6  
7 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind moving up to the management history  
8 tab, and so this is going to organize the documents just as  
9 they, you know, were published, or made final rule, over the  
10 course of time, and it's going to be reflected in that timeline  
11 down there that's sort of the main portion of the tool  
12 illustrated there, and then, Bernie, if you wouldn't mind  
13 clicking on Amendment 5.

14  
15 When that happens, and let's say that somebody is interested in  
16 Amendment 5, and you will get a summary of the document, and so  
17 it will pop up, these little text boxes here, and we have  
18 bulleted out, you know, a little summary of what was in that  
19 document, you know, what it went over, and, in this case, you'll  
20 see a couple of bullets there dealing with, you know, some gear,  
21 some fish traps, some spatial management, as well as, you know,  
22 a requirement of how the fish is to be landed, right, with heads  
23 and fins attached, those sorts of things.

24  
25 We also have a link to the policy document, and so, if somebody  
26 wants to click a link, it will take you outside of the tool, and  
27 then you can read it there, if you want to read it in its  
28 totality, as well as a link to the Federal Register notice.  
29 That might be interesting for some people, and the idea is,  
30 actually, here, if we could with the tool, to encapsulate like  
31 the sort of, you know, trifecta of, hey, the general public  
32 wants to know some knowledge, some of our agency partners may  
33 want to delve deeper into like the Federal Register notice, or  
34 something like that, as well as council members on the fly.

35  
36 Like the idea that you're in a meeting, and you have a question  
37 about something, and you just want to look up something real  
38 quick, to provide context for your comment, or, you know, if you  
39 have a question about that, that you could do it very quickly,  
40 and so the reason those links exist is, if we put in a PDF of  
41 all of those things, it gets real clunky when it's loaded, and  
42 then, also, just to try to streamline it.

43  
44 A term that I heard recently was portal fatigue, and so this  
45 idea that people -- It's just a bunch of data thrown at you like  
46 a firehose, right, and it just drives people nuts, and so we're  
47 trying to, you know, make this sort of speedy, and as useful as  
48 possible, so we can engage as many users as possible.



1  
2 Keep in mind that Amendment 5 there, and, Bernie, if you  
3 wouldn't mind scrolling up, please, ma'am. If you continue  
4 scrolling up to those to tabs and click on that implementation  
5 timeline, and so, if you remember -- So that was one way to  
6 organize this, is just, hey, over the course of time, here is  
7 all the amendments laid out for gag grouper.

8  
9 This organizes it a little differently, and so, if you will  
10 notice, there is that other, the catch limit, the size limit,  
11 the possession limit, and so it's sort of these categories as  
12 you go through, and Amendment 5 appears in that other category,  
13 and it appears -- So, Bernie, if you don't mind clicking on that  
14 top one.

15  
16 Then, if you scroll down -- In the summary document, that's  
17 where it talked about how the animal was to be landed, right,  
18 with heads and fins, and, again, a link to the policy document  
19 and that sort of thing, and then there's an area closure  
20 associated with it, and so Amendment 5 would appear in that  
21 categorization again, as you went through, and so, if you were  
22 just curious about, hey, I just actually want to know possession  
23 limits for everything, you know, you would see them all sort of  
24 broken in that way.

25  
26 As Emily mentioned, and we haven't gotten there yet, but we can  
27 certainly color-code all of these by what were sort of  
28 recreational or commercial, if they had something for both,  
29 something like that, so that you could toggle. If you're only  
30 interested in the recreational, and so, for example, the  
31 initiative folks, you could toggle on that, and only those  
32 policy documents associated with recreational fishing would pop-  
33 up, and that kind of cleans it up a little bit, and so that's  
34 certainly a next step that we can do.

35  
36 Then, Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going back to that original  
37 tab, and so go all the way to the left, where it selects the  
38 species, and then go ahead and select greater amberjack, and so  
39 this is all for greater amberjack. There was a lot of overlap  
40 between gag and greater amberjack, but, if you will notice, in  
41 the right-hand corner, under catch limit, there is Amendment 54,  
42 for example, and so it would give you all of those, unique to  
43 those species, as you moved through.

44  
45 Now, we've talked, internally, about adding one more tab, a  
46 third tab, that would have some charts, and so here's the  
47 landings during that time period, or here's the change in size  
48 limit, you know, as you went through, and so it gives a visual,

1 and so this is kind of nice, in that it's got the text, and you  
2 can move through it, but visuals are always nice as well, and so  
3 it would give you a little context there, and so that's  
4 something that we could add as well, but, again, we're trying to  
5 avoid sort of that portal fatigue, and everything that's going  
6 on, that sort of thing.

7  
8 That's what we had sort of envisioned. Again, sort of the  
9 skeletal elements for the code is already there, and so, as we  
10 add species, my job is fairly easy. All I have to do is just  
11 upload it. It's a little more difficult for Emily and Carly, as  
12 you can imagine, putting together all of this information and  
13 making sure it's -- It's not necessarily hard, but it just takes  
14 a lot of time, and we want to make sure that all the boxes are  
15 checked and that you've got everything that's out there and  
16 available in a way that's digestible for everyone, and so that's  
17 why we had mentioned that perhaps, if you like the idea of this  
18 tool, and where it's headed, and you would like for us to  
19 continue exploring it, if you have a couple of other species  
20 that you are interested in, you know, just letting us know ahead  
21 of time, and we continue working on that, as we build-out some  
22 of the other aspects of the tool.

23  
24 Like I said, right now, we actually also wanted to get it fit  
25 into the webpage a little bit better. Right now, I'm asking  
26 Bernie to like run up and down with scrolling, and so there's  
27 ways to get around that, and so we'll have to explore that a  
28 little bit as well, but that's general idea.

29  
30 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Thank you, Lisa. Any  
31 questions, or comments, from the floor? Susan.

32  
33 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'm not on your committee,  
34 but thank you, Emily, for taking our conversation, and I told  
35 Emily that, when I sit down and prepare for the council  
36 meetings, it's hard to kind of visualize where we've been and  
37 how we got to where we are, and it's a very busy table that  
38 shows, you know, amberjack, for instance.

39  
40 We've done a lot with amberjack, and we're still trying to  
41 figure out amberjack, but I did want to ask Lisa, and I don't  
42 know if it would be possible, but like, from that table right  
43 there, where you click on Amendment 54, if, when you clicked on  
44 Amendment 54, if it highlighted all the Amendment 54s in that  
45 table, meaning in the different sections, so you would know  
46 where else Amendment 54 fell, and so, if you're doing size  
47 limit, bag limit, seasons, you can quickly see, and it's just a  
48 thought. I mean, hey, this is exceptional, and I'm very pleased

1 with it. Thank you, all.

2

3 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Dakus.

4

5 **MR. GEESLIN:** This is slick. I like it. I appreciate you all  
6 being proactive in thinking about, you know, the pitfalls of  
7 creating one of these dashboards, and just, once you start  
8 bolting on, it could just snowball, and so I hear you, Lisa,  
9 thinking and being very cautious about what all you bolt onto  
10 that, and so what you have here I think shows a lot of  
11 potential, and it gives us a great understanding of where we've  
12 been, how we got here, and I would echo Ms. Boggs' sentiments,  
13 and so thank you all for pursuing this.

14

15 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Dakus. C.J.

16

17 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, again, I'm not on your  
18 committee, but this is amazing. I mean, I don't consider myself  
19 a new council member anymore, but having this, when I was first  
20 starting out, would have been so incredibly useful. I mean,  
21 there's a lot of information in there, and kind of drinking from  
22 a firehose, but it's kind of needed, and it's kind of what we  
23 do, and so kudos. This looks like it was a ton of work to put  
24 into this, and I just want to say thank you for putting it  
25 together, because this is amazing.

26

27 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** C.J., it's interesting that you say  
28 that, because, as I was at the meeting and going through this,  
29 I'm glad, as a new council member, that I now know what  
30 Amendment 54 really means. Thank you. Mara.

31

32 **MS. MARA LEVY:** I think this is great. We've, for quite a while  
33 in the General Counsel Office, had interns update an Excel  
34 spreadsheet that goes through recent management actions, so that  
35 we have a history of what's going on, and it's just so awesome  
36 that you could put this together, and it's so interactive, and  
37 you can get to the documents, right, if you want to look at the  
38 rule, and I love the part at the bottom, and it just has a  
39 little summary of what is in there, so that you can kind of make  
40 sure that that's what you're looking for, before you start  
41 scrolling through hundreds of pages of documents, and so thanks  
42 a lot.

43

44 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you. Yes.

45

46 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on your  
47 committee, but, yes, kudos to staff for their work, and I guess  
48 I would just -- Speaking on what Dakus had mentioned, you know,

1 any of the stuff that needs to be updated frequently, and like  
2 you're talking about some of the landings history and such, just  
3 for staff time -- I mean, you all kind of know what it will take  
4 to update it, but I would just caution you that it could get a  
5 little cumbersome to try to, you know, update all the species  
6 with the landings stuff, and keep it fresh, and so --

7  
8 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Thank you, Kevin. Any other  
9 questions? J.D.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you. Emily and Lisa, you all  
12 mentioned a list of species to add to the tool, and so my  
13 question is are you looking for that today, by the end of  
14 tomorrow, or what's that timeline?

15  
16 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** The sooner we get the list of species, the  
17 sooner we know where to go next, and so I would appreciate that,  
18 by the end of this week, we can come up with a list of species.  
19 You know, I think it's -- I think we can probably do two or  
20 three this year, to add two or three species to this, and, like  
21 I said, it takes -- I mean, I don't remember how many lines in  
22 the spreadsheet it was for each, but it's hundreds and hundreds  
23 of lines, because of the way that you have to do it, and so I  
24 think, just with our limited staff time -- I would say, like  
25 this year, we could probably add three, and then, next year,  
26 we're going to probably want to add more.

27  
28 What would help is either for you to give me those three that  
29 you know you want, or if we can have a list of like red snapper  
30 must be next, and then, you know, I'm going to guess that like  
31 wenchman is probably not at the top of that list, but, you know,  
32 it might be, and I don't know.

33  
34 One of the things that we did think about is should we be doing  
35 this tool for the next species that we're going to have a  
36 management -- You know, that we're doing management for, and so  
37 some guidance would be very helpful by the end of the week.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** So would you guys like to leave gag grouper and  
40 amberjack and one more, to make it third, or you want to add  
41 three more?

42  
43 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** We're thinking five by the end of 2024, is my  
44 goal.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** By the end of the week.

47  
48 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Susan.

1  
2 **MS. BOGGS:** Again, I'm not on your committee, but it seems to me  
3 like the -- I'm going to name the five, because the top-five  
4 always seem to be red snapper, greater amberjack, red grouper,  
5 gag grouper, and triggerfish, gray triggerfish. I would say red  
6 grouper, gray triggerfish, and red snapper.

7  
8 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Susan. All right. Then we  
9 can continue down the agenda. Thank you, Lisa.

10  
11 **RETURN 'EM RIGHT BEST PRACTICES MANUAL UPDATE**

12  
13 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay, and so, just to tie a bow on that one, I  
14 didn't see any opposition to red snapper, red grouper, and  
15 triggerfish being our goal for the rest of the year, and so,  
16 without that, I'm going to take that as my recommendation,  
17 unless somebody wants to speak now, or forever hold your piece,  
18 at least until Full Council.

19  
20 All right. We will move right along then, and so our next  
21 agenda item is just a quick update on the Return 'Em Right Best  
22 Practices Manual Update. When you sat down this morning, you  
23 should have had this beautiful document, and so I just want to  
24 give you a little bit of update on, first of all, where we're  
25 at, where this came from.

26  
27 A little bit of history of this is you may remember that the  
28 council, a long, long time ago, hosted a release mortality  
29 symposium. We got a bunch of stakeholders, we got a bunch of  
30 fishermen, and we got our O&E together, and we really wanted to  
31 talk about release mortality and what to do about it.

32  
33 The council's Outreach and Education Committee suggested that,  
34 you know, we sort of have some program, knowing that there was  
35 potential oil spill money available, that was not branded as a  
36 NOAA program, not branded as a council program, and was really  
37 hoping to sort of encourage the use of descending devices and  
38 best release practices and sort of, you know, really work  
39 through regular, you know, business model and marketing theory,  
40 in order to get anglers involved in improving the way that they  
41 release fish.

42  
43 Fast-forward to the creation of Return 'Em Right, which is that  
44 sort of third-party unbranded program. It is actually  
45 administered through the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission  
46 and Florida Sea Grant, trying to sort of remain a little bit  
47 more neutral and get that agency stink off of this program.

1 The program did host a symposium, where they brought together  
2 scientists and fishermen, and what we did, through that  
3 symposium, or that workshop, was we went through the different  
4 stages of a fishing trip, and what we tried to do was ask the  
5 scientists what the best thing to do for each stage of the  
6 fishing trip was, in order to improve release mortality, and  
7 then we asked the fishermen what they thought.

8  
9 Sometimes the fishermen and the scientists were right on, and  
10 the things that they said were totally right, and, in some  
11 cases, like let's say fight time, the fishermen were like, well,  
12 you know, you slow roll them up, so they be compressed, whereas  
13 the scientists were like, no, you don't want the lactic acid to  
14 build up, and so sometimes those two groups were sort of -- They  
15 had to find the best solution, right, and so this manual was  
16 created as a result of that second workshop that happened.

17  
18 A couple of things that you're going to notice about this manual  
19 is it is not prescriptive. There is no, you know, check Box A,  
20 check Box B, and check Box C. It is really hard to tell people  
21 exactly what to do in every scenario.

22  
23 Offshore fishing in the Gulf of Mexico varies so greatly. It  
24 varies because we do add some charter practices in here, which  
25 might be different than private recreational practices, and I  
26 can tell you that the way that people fish in one part of the  
27 coast is completely different than the way they fish from  
28 another part of the coast, and so this is very situational, and  
29 the whole goal of this document is not to tell you exactly what  
30 to do in every situation, but is to inform good decision-making.

31  
32 Some of the stuff might seem obvious to some of you guys that  
33 are more experienced anglers, but, if you think about it, there  
34 are millions of fishermen who could use a reminder that they  
35 need to be doing the best they can, and they need to think about  
36 the different factors that could be contributing to survival of  
37 reef fish after a catch-and-release event.

38  
39 You know, discard mortality hurts our entire fishery, and so I  
40 think we all need to be advocates for better release practices.  
41 This manual provides a start for somebody that might not know  
42 what they're doing, or might need a little nudge, to informing  
43 good decision-making in your own unique fishing situation.

44  
45 I just wanted you guys to have that, and it was published I  
46 think in November, is when we finally finished it. It is out  
47 now, and it is online, as you can see in this nice little tool.  
48 The link is in the agenda, and I just wanted you guys to know

1 that this exists, and it's a really good tool to share with your  
2 stakeholder community.

3  
4 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Thank you, Emily. Any questions? Ed.

5  
6 **MR. WALKER:** Where -- Are these passed out to the public at  
7 tackle shops or shows?

8  
9 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** So the online version is broadly advertised.  
10 Return 'Em Right does have a large email list that they, you  
11 know, blast this out to. Return 'Em Right is incredibly visible  
12 on social media, and it's really done a great job of permeating  
13 the fishing community, and so they have mostly been sharing the  
14 online version.

15  
16 We do have a couple of copies in the back of the room, for  
17 anybody that wants them, or anybody can request copies, but, at  
18 this point, you know, we are limiting the printing of this,  
19 because we don't really understand the appetite that people have  
20 for having a paper copy, which isn't to say that you can't get  
21 your hands on a gazillion of them if you wanted them.

22  
23 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** Susan.

24  
25 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you again, Mr. Chair, and I'm not on your  
26 committee, and so Gulf States Marine Fisheries did bring us a  
27 lot of the small brochures, that we do display in our marina  
28 store, and, just talking about the social media and all of that,  
29 the procedures, is this something that we, Susan Boggs at Reel  
30 Surprise Charters and Marina, could have a link on their website  
31 to direct people to the online?

32  
33 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** That's a great question, and so Return 'Em  
34 Right does work very closely with industry partners, and  
35 ambassadors, and we're actually looking at a more fleshed-out  
36 ambassador program, and we're thinking about developing it. At  
37 this point, absolutely. The answer is, if you want to  
38 communicate to your fishing constituency about this program,  
39 please do.

40  
41 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Thank you, Susan. All  
42 right. Moving down the agenda, and we're getting close to the  
43 end, Captain Hubbard is next on the agenda.

44  
45 **OTHER ITEMS FROM THE O&E TECHNICAL COMMITTEE SUMMARY**

46  
47 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay, and so Dylan is the chair of our Outreach  
48 and Education Technical Committee, and he is going to cover some

1 of the things that were discussed during our December Outreach  
2 and Education Technical Committee meeting that we didn't cover  
3 through the agenda items today, and then, if there's any action  
4 items that you want to take from there, that is up to you.

5  
6 **MR. DYLAN HUBBARD:** Well, Emily didn't leave me much to go over,  
7 and so this will be short. As always, she did a great job  
8 outlining it, along with Carly as well. The one thing that I  
9 wanted to mention about the Fishery Ecosystem Plan outreach is  
10 there was some discussion around the symposium, and I did want  
11 to just mention that I feel like the conversation was,  
12 obviously, really good, and, Clay, your points were definitely  
13 interesting, to take that approach of how we could do some ways  
14 on how it affects us, but the idea that I had, moving into that  
15 symposium and kind of what the conversation was at the technical  
16 committee, was more of an approach of communication.

17  
18 As Emily said, you can't really manage the dinoflagellate and  
19 all that good stuff, and so there's not really a big management  
20 action, but I feel like one of the big steps that this FEI could  
21 use -- I know it's kind of a practice FEI that you guys voted  
22 for, to kind of help navigate this FEP process, and I feel like  
23 one of the good outcomes could be that communication, right,  
24 because, so often with red tide, there is a lot of people  
25 talking about it, a lot of different taskforces, and a lot of  
26 different people working in their silos, and I feel like some of  
27 that --

28  
29 A big benefit of what could come out of that symposium, or  
30 proposed symposium, would be breaking down those silos and  
31 causing some of these groups to communicate, which I think is a  
32 really big issue that we face across the Gulf, is people are  
33 doing really good work, but they don't communicate, and I think  
34 this could potentially help that communication, along with that  
35 plan, that federal outreach plan, and that was kind of the  
36 approach that the technical committee had envisioned for this  
37 symposium, but, along with your additions, I think it could be a  
38 very powerful event.

39  
40 The coastal migratory pelagics stakeholder engagement, Emily  
41 covered that really well, and the rest of the stuff was pretty  
42 well covered. The one thing that we didn't go over in the  
43 report that Emily gave was the illegal sale of recreationally-  
44 caught fish. That was in the summary report, and it was  
45 something that the staff presented to the O&E, and basically  
46 gave a background on the council's concern over the illegal sale  
47 of recreationally-caught fish.



1 The council discussion was kind of centered around cobia, but  
2 the O&E's discussion kind of got a little bit more broad.  
3 Specifically, what I run into, myself, and what I commented  
4 about at this meeting, is, often, it's -- Whether it's a  
5 headboat or a charter boat or anybody, and it's these folks that  
6 are coming from out-of-state, who are maybe not familiar with  
7 the regulations in the Gulf of Mexico, and they just assume that  
8 fish can be bought, or tourists walking through a tourist area  
9 see a charter boat coming in, and then they immediately inquire,  
10 hey, can we buy those fish.

11  
12 It's a constant, ongoing battle, and I think that is the crux of  
13 the problem, right, is the outreach need of -- I think having  
14 Fish Rules clarifying that fish, recreational fish, can't be  
15 sold is important, and I think some of the outreach about even  
16 bartering for fish, that consideration rule -- It's kind of like  
17 the illegal charter issue.

18  
19 Any consideration makes it a charter in the CFRs, and I think  
20 that's part of the issue here, with the illegal sale of fish,  
21 that we might face a little bit more broadly in the Gulf, is  
22 people don't realize that bartering fish for the return of a  
23 service is technically illegally selling that fish, and so I  
24 think that was the discussion from the technical committee about  
25 the illegal sale of recreationally-caught fish.

26  
27 The other thing that I wanted to cover was the Other Business  
28 item at the bottom of this report, that we haven't talked about  
29 yet, and that was the outreach and education on the potential  
30 for a new electronic reporting program. The O&E had a  
31 discussion around the original SEFHIER program, and how we had a  
32 lot of heartache across the Gulf, and consternation, surrounding  
33 some of those things, like the multi-hail-out requirements,  
34 hailing-out every time the boat moved, or the economic  
35 reporting, and a lot of that consternation, and issue, I think  
36 you guys were working through at this table.

37  
38 I think it was a little bit of a tough rollout, because of  
39 timing, and that, unfortunately, coincided with the whole COVID  
40 mess, where we couldn't have as much outreach in-person, and I  
41 feel like the O&E should be heavily involved, and that was  
42 essentially the crux of our discussion, is the O&E should be  
43 heavily involved as we move forward with a new electronic  
44 reporting program.

45  
46 Utilize the O&E to help with the outreach. The port ambassador  
47 program was discussed as well, and so using different tools,  
48 whether it's council staff, the O&E, the port ambassador

1 program, potentially, and other methodologies to help make sure  
2 that this next program rolls out with as much outreach and  
3 education as possible, to help, hopefully, improve buy-in and  
4 smooth out that initial implementation plan, because I think  
5 that could really go a long way to preserving and protecting the  
6 improvement of recreational data collection, and that's about  
7 all I had to go over that wasn't already covered.

8  
9 **VICE CHAIRMAN OVERTON:** All right. Thank you, Dylan, and, also,  
10 thank you for the other business. Any questions for Dylan on  
11 the committee, or any additional other business? Seeing none,  
12 Kevin, I pass the floor back to you.

13  
14 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on January 31, 2024.)

15  
16 - - -  
17