

1 GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2  
3 REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

4  
5 WEBINAR

6  
7 January 25, 2022

8  
9 **VOTING MEMBERS**

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

26  
27 **NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

- 28 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 29 LTJG Adam Peterson.....USCG

30  
31 **STAFF**

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

45  
46 **OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

- 47 Peter Hood.....NMFS
- 48 Michael Larkin.....NMFS
- 49 Kerry Marhefka.....SAFMC

1 Jim Nance.....GMFMC SSC  
2 Kelli O'Donnell.....NOAA  
3 Clay Porch.....SEFSC  
4 Ed Walker.....  
5 Katherine Zamboni.....NOAA GC

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TABLE OF MOTIONS

1  
2  
3 [PAGE 20](#): Motion in Action 1 to add an Alternative 4.  
4 Alternative 4 is to set the ACL at 75 percent of the ABC (5.45  
5 million pounds whole weight) monitored in MRIP- FES. [The motion](#)  
6 [carried on page 26](#).

7  
8 [PAGE 27](#): Motion in Action 1 to make Alternative 3 the  
9 preferred. [The motion failed on page 32](#).

10  
11 [PAGE 39](#): Motion to request that the SEFSC compile and present  
12 discard data (including dead discards) by species and sector and  
13 year for red grouper, gag grouper, greater amberjack, and red  
14 snapper in the Gulf. Commercial data should be broken down by  
15 gear type (longline, vertical line) and recreational sector data  
16 should be broken down by subsector (charter for-hire, headboat,  
17 private angler plus shore), as feasible. Include data sources  
18 where available. [The motion carried on page 42](#).

19  
20 [PAGE 43](#): Motion to direct staff to revise the current greater  
21 amberjack rebuilding plan by adopting F rebuild, as recommended  
22 by the SSC, for the current sector allocation. [The motion was](#)  
23 [withdrawn on page 48](#).

24  
25 [PAGE 50](#): Motion request that the Southeast Fisheries Science  
26 Center produce estimates of the historical annual ACLs/quotas,  
27 using MRIP-FES numbers for the greater amberjack fishery. [The](#)  
28 [motion was withdrawn on page 50](#).

29  
30 [PAGE 63](#): Motion that the council direct staff to begin work on  
31 a plan amendment to establish a rebuilding plan for gag grouper  
32 to end overfishing of the stock. Actions in this plan amendment  
33 should include revising the FMSY proxy, catch limits,  
34 accountability measures, and other management measures. [The](#)  
35 [motion carried on page 65](#).

36  
37 [PAGE 71](#): Motion to recommend that the council recommend that  
38 NMFS implement an emergency rule for gag grouper starting on  
39 January 1, 2023, based on the yield stream corresponding to F 30  
40 percent SPR and the medium red tide severity determination, in  
41 keeping with the SSC's recommendations from SEDAR 72 and using  
42 the current sector allocation. Further, the council recommends  
43 that the catch limits for this emergency rule for gag grouper be  
44 based on the rebuilding timeline of T<sub>min</sub> times two, to ensure  
45 the council is able to end overfishing while it works to develop  
46 a comprehensive rebuilding plan. [The motion carried on page 74](#).

47  
48 [PAGE 77](#): Motion that the council requests that the calibration

1 of the Florida State Reef Fish Survey with MRIP-FES for gag  
2 grouper be a priority for NMFS and all associated parties to  
3 that process. [The motion carried on page 81.](#)

4  
5 [PAGE 104](#): Motion to suspend work on this amendment and request  
6 that Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission conduct  
7 an update to the assessment to incorporate three additional  
8 years of data and a constant catch projection to set the ABC.  
9 [The motion carried on page 105.](#)

10  
11  
12

- - -

1 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery  
2 Management Council convened on Tuesday morning, January 25,  
3 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Tom Frazer.

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

9 **CHAIRMAN TOM FRAZER:** We've got a pretty packed agenda today,  
10 and I will do my best to try to keep us on time, and so I would  
11 like to remind folks, again, that the Reef Fish Committee is a  
12 committee-of-the-whole, and so we'll jump right into the agenda,  
13 and so the first item in your briefing materials is Tab B,  
14 Number 1, and that is the Adoption of the Agenda. Are there any  
15 additions or modifications to the agenda?  
16

17 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Mr. Chair, I have my hand up.  
18

19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Fire away, J.D.  
20

21 **MR. DUGAS:** Mr. Chair, it may be -- My questions may be -- I  
22 wanted to bring this up before you started, and it may be  
23 directed towards the new Chair, Mr. Diaz, but I noticed that,  
24 yesterday, there were several emails that came through from  
25 staff regarding committee minutes, reef fish landings, CMP  
26 landings, and, even further, an email from Mara regarding  
27 National Standard 6, and we requested some of this information  
28 back in August.  
29

30 I am fumbling for words, but, you know, our timeline here to  
31 review these documents, in less than twenty-four hours, is  
32 pretty extreme, and I am not trying to pick on the staff, but, I  
33 mean, we've got to work on this, and we need more time, as  
34 council members, to study some of these items, and I would just  
35 like some clarification, and maybe another council member has  
36 some ideas, and I don't know, but it's a lot. We already have a  
37 lot on our plates, and we're waiting until the very last minute  
38 to get some documents that is very important, and so I just  
39 wanted to put that out there on the record. Thank you for the  
40 time.  
41

42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, J.D., for the comments, and I would  
43 just weigh-in pretty quickly, and so, again, some of those  
44 presentations, you will see today, are provided as background  
45 material, and the reports themselves are not for this committee  
46 today that you received, but I will certainly let Dr. Simmons  
47 weigh-in with regard to the materials that were provided and how  
48 they might influence today's agenda.

1  
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Dugas,  
3 you make a good point. We are trying to do our best to get the  
4 materials posted as soon as we can. I believe the minutes  
5 you're referring to were for Data Collection, which is tomorrow,  
6 and it is a tight timeline, and the other minutes, I believe,  
7 were for SEDAR, and I don't think we have a SEDAR -- Well, I  
8 know we don't have a SEDAR Committee during this January council  
9 meeting.

10  
11 Regarding the letter, I received that letter from Ms. Levy  
12 yesterday morning, and I distributed it to the council, and it  
13 just happened to be during the council meeting, as quickly as I  
14 could, and, as you mentioned, I think that was a request in the  
15 fall that the council had asked for some clarification on  
16 National Standard 6. Thank you.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Simmons, and so,  
19 J.D., does that answer the questions and the nature of the  
20 correspondence?  
21

22 **MR. DUGAS:** Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Dr.  
23 Simmons.  
24

25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, J.D. It looks like we  
26 have Kevin Anson and then Andy Strelcheck.  
27

28 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to add, to  
29 Other Business, a topic for the timeline of a decision on the  
30 framework action for red snapper recreational data calibration.  
31

32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Noted. We will add that to Other  
33 Business. Thank you, Kevin.  
34

35 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you.  
36

37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Strelcheck.  
38

39 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to  
40 add, under Other Business, a brief discussion of a settlement  
41 that we reached with the State of Texas with regard to private  
42 red snapper landings.  
43

44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Andy. We'll provide  
45 some time for an update at the end of the session for that one  
46 as well. Okay. Are there any other business items to be added  
47 to the agenda? I am not seeing any hands up, and so, with those  
48 additions in the Other Business category, is there any

1 opposition to approving the agenda as prepared? I am not seeing  
2 any objection to that, and so we will consider the agenda  
3 adopted.

4  
5 The next item on this agenda is the Approval of the October 2021  
6 Minutes, and that would be Tab B, Number 2 in your briefing  
7 materials. Are there any edits or modifications to the minutes?  
8 I am not seeing any. Is there any opposition to approving the  
9 minutes as distributed? Hearing or seeing no opposition, we  
10 will consider the October 2021 minutes approved.

11  
12 That leads us to Action Guide and Next Steps, and, as I  
13 indicated before, we have a fairly lengthy agenda, and I will  
14 probably let Mr. Rindone tackle those items as they come up, but  
15 go ahead, Ryan, if you want, and introduce the committee to the  
16 Action Guide and Next Steps.

17  
18 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The first thing up is  
19 Review of Reef Fish and IFQ Landings, and this is just for the  
20 committee's information, and then just to note, with these  
21 landings data, we try to turn these into you guys as being as  
22 up-to-date as possible, which explains the lateness of their  
23 submission sometimes, and we certainly can back that up a little  
24 bit though, if it's the committee's preference.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so we'll jump right in, I guess, to  
27 the IFQ landings, and that would be Mr. Hood from SERO, or is  
28 Kelly going to do this this morning?

29  
30 **MS. KELLI O'DONNELL:** Yes, it's me who is doing it this morning.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It's a pleasure to have you.

33  
34 **REVIEW OF REEF FISH AND INDIVIDUAL FISHING QUOTA (IFQ) LANDINGS**

35  
36 **MS. O'DONNELL:** Thank you. Okay, and so we're going to start  
37 out with the reef fish landings, and we were able to get  
38 landings through December 27, and, again, I apologize that, as  
39 Ryan mentioned, they were later than normal, but we were looking  
40 at we wanted to get the data breakout as we present these  
41 slides, and we figured the council would rather see updated  
42 landings than the same landings that they saw at the October  
43 meeting.

44  
45 We do have additional slides of the jacks complex and the  
46 midwater snapper, as was requested by the council in October,  
47 and recreational landings for those will go through Wave 4, and  
48 the commercial landings for those just go through the end of

1 November.

2

3 As with the CMP landings yesterday, our average that we started  
4 with was the -- The average that we're presenting is 2017 to  
5 2019, because we're not quite sure what was going on still  
6 starting in the 2020 fishing year, and most likely some reduced  
7 landings, due to COVID, and I wanted to show an average that was  
8 probably more in tune to what was going on in those previous  
9 years before COVID, and so, by looking at that, we can see that  
10 there has been a steady decline in the gray triggerfish  
11 commercial landings since 2019, and we have not had a closure in  
12 2020 or 2021, and you can see, from the dotted lines up there,  
13 what the previous ACL and ACT were and the new and current ACL  
14 and ACT.

15

16 We're seeing the same trend with greater amberjack commercial  
17 landings, that they have been steadily decreasing the past  
18 couple of years, compared to what they were at the average of  
19 the three years before that, and the same thing, and they did  
20 not have a closure in 2020, or 2021, nor did they reach the  
21 trigger to reduce the trip limit down to 250 pounds.

22

23 Gray snapper was a little bit less than what it had been for an  
24 average, but not that much from what it has been, and we will  
25 see what happens this year. It does seem that there was a  
26 little uptick in landings at the end of 2021, and, like I said,  
27 we'll see what happens this year, if they end up kind of getting  
28 back to average.

29

30 Lane snapper was a little bit lower than what they were for  
31 their average, and we can see that little uptick in 2021, and  
32 this was one of the stocks that we were able to get a projection  
33 done that showed that a closure wasn't going to be needed for  
34 about a month after we got that projection done, and so I'm  
35 thinking that little uptick in the landings there, closer to the  
36 end, right before that closure occurred, was probably just some  
37 increase in landings, with people expecting that closure to  
38 come.

39

40 Vermilion, again, has been slowly decreasing these past couple  
41 of years, compared to the average, and yellowtail has really  
42 been declining in recent years, compared to the average, and we  
43 did see a pretty large jump at the end of November into the end  
44 of December, and we will see if that trend continues throughout  
45 the rest of their fishing year, and maybe they're getting back  
46 up on track to what their average landings have been as well.

47

48 Cubera is not one that we normally put in here, but we wanted to

1 bring it to your attention, that this is a stock that has a  
2 pretty low ACL, only 5,065 pounds, and, last year, the stock did  
3 exceed its ACL, and so their accountability measure will have a  
4 projection for this stock this year, to see if a closure is  
5 needed, and we can see their landings are kind of all over the  
6 place in the past recent years, and so we will see what happens,  
7 but we can see that commercial has routinely landed close to  
8 about 2,000 pounds of that total ACL, and we just had an uptick  
9 in recreational landings last year, which put them over that  
10 stock ACL.

11  
12 Midwater snapper, we can see it's mainly commercial landings for  
13 these, and, as requested by the council, we broke out what  
14 species in this midwater snapper complex were landed between the  
15 commercial and recreational sectors, and we can see, again,  
16 because this one did exceed their ACL last year, they will also  
17 have a projection, to see if a closure is needed this year.

18  
19 Looking at commercial landings, as we heard from some fishermen,  
20 there has been a pretty big increase in wenchman landings in the  
21 past couple of years, and, if that fishing continues on as it  
22 has been the past few years, then I would expect that a closure  
23 would end up being needed again this year, and we'll do a  
24 projection later, as we get some more recreational landings as  
25 well, to see if that needs to happen.

26  
27 Now, for the recreational sector, we can see that the landings  
28 have been pretty much queen or silk snapper, and there's very  
29 little wenchman or blackfin snapper.

30  
31 The same for the jacks complex, and the council requested a  
32 breakout. We can see the majority of the landings are from the  
33 recreational sector, and, again, because the stock exceeded  
34 their ACL last year, they will also have a projection this year,  
35 to see if a closure is needed. For the commercial sector,  
36 landings are mainly almaco jack, with some banded rudderfish,  
37 whereas, with the recreational sector, it kind of flip-flops  
38 back and forth between if it's more banded rudderfish or more  
39 almaco jack. That's the last one for that, and I'm going to  
40 stop there, Mr. Chair, and see if there's any questions on  
41 these, before I go to the IFQ landings.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. O'Donnell. Is there any  
44 questions from the committee with regard to these reef fish  
45 landings? Ms. Boggs.

46  
47 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Kelli, on your slide  
48 for the jacks complex, and I guess it says, at the bottom of it,

1 and I'm trying to look to see which slide it is, but it states  
2 the fishing year is January 1 through December 31, but this  
3 doesn't conclude -- Wait. I'm looking at the wrong slide. I'm  
4 sorry. I'm looking at your slides and my slides, and I believe  
5 it's Slide 12, maybe.

6  
7 Is this the greater amberjack included in this, because it says  
8 the fishing year is January 1 through December 31, which it  
9 changed for the greater amberjack, but I see in your notes that  
10 it does not include it, and so I apologize. Thank you.

11  
12 **MS. O'DONNELL:** Yes, that is correct. The jacks complex is only  
13 almaco jack, banded rudderfish, and lesser amberjack, and, to  
14 clarify, for greater amberjack, the commercial fishing year is  
15 still January 1 to December 31, and it's the recreational  
16 fishing year that changed from August 1 to July 31.

17  
18 **MS. BOGGS:** Yes, ma'am. I'm sorry. I just didn't read quick  
19 enough what I was -- Thank you very much.

20  
21 **MS. O'DONNELL:** No problem.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Ms. O'Donnell, for that  
24 clarification. I am not seeing any other hands at the moment,  
25 and so, if you -- Mr. Anson.

26  
27 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Looking at the note, the  
28 footnote there, on the graph, in this particular graph, and it's  
29 elsewhere as well in the presentation, but that is through  
30 December 31, because usually my recollection is that the Wave 6,  
31 which is the November/December time period, that data isn't  
32 available until mid-February, at the earliest, and so I'm just  
33 confirming if that is in fact -- If includes November and  
34 December.

35  
36 **MS. O'DONNELL:** The note that's on the bottom of most of the  
37 slides is showing when the fishing year is, and the actual  
38 landings themselves was on Slide 1, and, for commercial, it's  
39 through December 27, and recreational is only through Wave 4,  
40 and so there's anticipated to be more landings from the  
41 recreational sector that may come into all of our stock  
42 landings.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Again, thank you, Ms. O'Donnell.  
45 Kevin, did you want to go back to that slide, or is that enough  
46 information for you? Okay. I am not seeing any other hands at  
47 the moment, and so, Ms. O'Donnell, if you want to continue.

48

1 **MS. O'DONNELL:** Okay, and so I'll just wait until the IFQ  
2 landings slides are brought up. I do have a presentation for  
3 it, the same way, and I'm not sure if you have that one  
4 available and up.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Hold on real quick, Kelli. Let's make sure  
7 that we can get the appropriate presentation squared up.

8  
9 **MS. O'DONNELL:** Okay.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It looks like we've identified the location of  
12 the file, Kelli, and so just give us one second.

13  
14 **MS. O'DONNELL:** Okay.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, Ms. O'Donnell. It looks like we  
17 are squared away, and I apologize for the delay.

18  
19 **MS. O'DONNELL:** That's okay. For the IFQ landings, typically,  
20 we just show this table, but, for the end of the year, we  
21 actually put together similar slides to what the reef fish  
22 landings were, but I just wanted to start out with this table,  
23 so that you can see a direct comparison of 2020 to 2021  
24 landings, and the 2021 ones are finishing up, but still  
25 considered preliminary, and we can see that there was a slight  
26 increase for red snapper, but more of an increase for gag and  
27 red grouper.

28  
29 For red snapper, they tended to be landing more fish starting  
30 earlier in the year, but, at the end of the year, again,  
31 overall, they only landed 0.3 percent more than what they did  
32 last year.

33  
34 Red grouper was landing a lot more fish last year, which  
35 coincides with what we were hearing from the industry in both  
36 sectors, that they were seeing more red grouper out there, and  
37 were able to land more as well. In gag, we didn't really see  
38 too much of a shift from what the average historic landings have  
39 been for this, and it tended to still be, even for the past  
40 three years, or couple of years, landings pretty much on par to  
41 what they had been with the average. That's it for that one.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Ms. O'Donnell. Are  
44 there any questions from the committee with regard to the IFQ  
45 landings summary? We're going to wait just a minute, to make  
46 sure that we don't have any hands. Okay. I am not seeing any,  
47 and we're going to continue to move forward with Agenda Item V,  
48 and that is Final Action on a Framework Action for Modification

1 of Gulf of Mexico Vermilion Snapper Catch Limits, and, Ryan, if  
2 you want to go through the action guide.  
3  
4 **MR. RINDONE:** Sure thing, Mr. Chair.  
5  
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ryan, real quick, sorry. Ms. Bosarge with a  
7 late hand. Leann, do you have a question?  
8  
9 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** Yes, sir. Thank you.  
10  
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead.  
12  
13 **MS. BOSARGE:** Maybe this is further on in the agenda, and I just  
14 missed it, but I didn't see recreational red snapper landings,  
15 except for the for-hire. Are we going to get that somewhere  
16 else?  
17  
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone.  
19  
20 **MR. RINDONE:** Ms. O'Donnell or Mr. Hood?  
21  
22 **MS. O'DONNELL:** I know that we have not put that together. I  
23 think, at the last council meeting, it was decided that that  
24 should be presented by the states themselves, and I think the  
25 states were the ones that did those presentations, and I'm not  
26 sure if they were requested to do it again at this meeting.  
27  
28 **MS. BOSARGE:** Okay. Well, I guess I will ask the states then.  
29 Have you all submitted your final numbers for 2020 and 2021  
30 final/preliminary numbers? I mean, I feel like most of -- With  
31 the exception maybe of Texas and Florida, and I know at least  
32 the other three states get their numbers in a fairly quick  
33 fashion, after fishing has stopped for the week or for the  
34 month, and Florida has to wait until the end of a wave, but I'm  
35 thinking they ought to have most of their numbers, and then I'm  
36 really not sure what Texas is doing at this point and about when  
37 they're submitting the red snapper numbers.  
38  
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, Leann, and it looks like we have Dr.  
40 Larkin. Mike, do you want to weigh-in?  
41  
42 **DR. MICHAEL LARKIN:** At this point, I would say what Kelli said,  
43 and the states have got their own thing going on there,  
44 obviously, but the for-hire landings are on the website, and so,  
45 you know, the part of the sector, the recreational sector, that  
46 NOAA manages is the for-hire part, and you can go to our website  
47 and see the landings there. They have been updated on our SERO  
48 website for red snapper.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you for that information. Mr.  
3 Strelcheck.

4  
5 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Just to add to that, that, Leann, you're  
6 correct that Texas does not provide landings until a little bit  
7 later in the year, and we have good coordination with the other  
8 states, in terms of them providing landings at various points in  
9 time, and so we can check on that, but our preference is that  
10 this is information that's presented to the council by the  
11 states, rather than the agency, because they're the states'  
12 landings, and they're responsible, obviously, for aggregating  
13 all that information together, and we certainly have that data,  
14 but I think it would be good to either, at every January council  
15 meeting, or April council meeting, have a presentation on the  
16 private red snapper landings from each state.

17  
18 **MS. BOSARGE:** Mr. Chairman, a follow-up, if I may?

19  
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Leann.

21  
22 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks, and so, you know, with today's technology,  
23 we can send out one of these Google docs, and it will have a  
24 line for each state in it, and they can fill in their landings,  
25 and that needs to go in our briefing book for like -- I think,  
26 like Andy said, March or April, at the very latest, and we  
27 should have at least had 2020 in this briefing book, you know,  
28 to be presented, and so, for the next meeting, I would like to  
29 see that table either in with this landings report or as a  
30 supplemental, right after this landings report, that we get at  
31 every meeting, and it should have all the states' landings and a  
32 total at the bottom.

33  
34 You can make it add automatically, and then I will let staff get  
35 with the states to figure out who is going to actually walk us  
36 through that, if each state will walk line-by-line or one state  
37 gets designated to kind of present it, and that rotates from  
38 year-to-year, or how that's going to work, but we have to have  
39 that information, I mean, and I know we have it, and we're just  
40 not being presented it, and I think it's just a logistical  
41 issue, and so, if we could, I would like that worked out and  
42 presented at our March/April meeting, and, really, it should be  
43 presented at every meeting, just like we get these reef fish  
44 landings at every meeting, and it gets updated, and we should  
45 get red snapper, which is the elephant in the room, and it's  
46 what we spend most of our time on, at every meeting, updated for  
47 private anglers, just like it is for the others. Thank you.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Leann. Andy.  
2

3 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just real quick, in response to that, we do  
4 have a page on our website with the 2018, 2019, and 2020 red  
5 snapper landings for the private sector, and so one of my team  
6 could share that with council staff, and we could at least get  
7 that distributed to you at this meeting, and that's already  
8 readily available. Thanks.  
9

10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so, again, I appreciate this  
11 discussion and where we're headed, and so we will endeavor, at  
12 our next meeting, to include, in the Reef Fish Committee, a more  
13 detailed look at the red snapper landings, and so there's a  
14 number of potential pathways to provide that information, and so  
15 certainly we'll work with staff here to make that happen, Leann.  
16

17 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, sir.  
18

19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** You betcha. Okay, and so we're going to go  
20 back now and pick up on Agenda Item V with the action guide and  
21 Mr. Rindone.  
22

23 **FRAMEWORK ACTION: FRAMEWORK ACTION: MODIFICATIONS OF VERMILION**  
24 **SNAPPER CATCH LIMITS**  
25

26 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Dr. Diagne is going to go  
27 through the management alternatives considered in the framework  
28 action looking at modification of Gulf vermilion snapper catch  
29 limits. This framework action follows the SSC's recommendations  
30 for updated catch advice for vermilion, and we'll also talk to  
31 you guys about the Reef Fish AP's comments, and Ms. Muehlstein  
32 will go through the written public comments that have been  
33 received, and the Southeast Regional Office will talk to you  
34 guys about the codified text, and so you guys should review the  
35 information, and, if you deem it appropriate, you can recommend  
36 that the council take final action.  
37

38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Rindone, and so, after  
39 talking with Ms. Muehlstein and Assane, what we've decided to do  
40 here is go ahead and review the public comments that were  
41 received first, as a precursor to the presentation, and so that  
42 will be Tab B, Item 5(c). Ms. Muehlstein.  
43

44 **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED**  
45

46 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Since this is a  
47 framework action, we did produce a public hearing video and  
48 gather comments online and written comments. We had 155 views

1 to the public hearing video that was produced, and we received  
2 eleven comments in response, and so I have sort of broken them  
3 down here.

4  
5 We heard support for Alternative 1, which is the no action  
6 alternative, and the rationale that was provided for support for  
7 no action was that vermilion catch limits don't need to be  
8 increased. The commercial sector has not caught the annual  
9 catch limit in recent years.

10  
11 The decline in commercial landings should indicate that there is  
12 no need to increase the catch limit, that the population may not  
13 be healthy enough for an increase, due to recreational  
14 overfishing, the oil spill, and the dead zone, and that the  
15 current annual catch limit should be met two to three years in a  
16 row before any sort of increase is considered.

17  
18 We also heard some support for Preferred Alternative 2, and the  
19 rationale provided was that increased -- That we should increase  
20 catch limits because vermilion is one of the few fish that can  
21 be harvested year-round by private anglers.

22  
23 We also heard some other comments that were related to  
24 vermilion. Specifically, we heard that the ten-per-person  
25 recreational limit is rarely met, and it does not need to be  
26 modified, and we heard that the ten-per-person limit is enough,  
27 and increasing the bag limit beyond that is wasteful. Then we  
28 heard that modifications to red grouper allocations and catch  
29 limits would cause commercial fishermen to shift effort towards  
30 non-IFQ species, like vermilion and mangrove snapper.

31  
32 Finally, we heard some extra comments that were not related to  
33 vermilion, and we heard that we should open the gray triggerfish  
34 season for longer, and we heard that we should increase the gray  
35 triggerfish bag limit and decrease the size limit to minimize  
36 discards, and we also heard that the cost of red grouper  
37 allocation is forcing small business owners out of their  
38 livelihoods, and we heard that the IFQ program needs to be  
39 reformed.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Emily. Are there any questions or  
42 comments from the committee with regard to the public comments  
43 that were received? Okay. I am not seeing any, and so we'll  
44 move into the presentation, and that would be Tab B, Number  
45 5(a). Dr. Diagne.

46  
47 **DR. ASSANE DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before we go over the  
48 presentation, I will give Mr. Rindone a few minutes to summarize

1 the AP comments, and then we will start with the presentation.  
2 Thank you.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. I'm good with that. Ryan.

5

6

#### REEF FISH AP SUMMARY

7

8 **MR. RINDONE:** Sure. Thank you, Dr. Diagne. The AP discussed  
9 the vermillion snapper assessment and the recommended catch  
10 advice from the SSC at its January meeting, and, ultimately,  
11 they recommended adding an alternative to Action 1, and this  
12 would create an Alternative 4 to set the ACL at 75 percent of  
13 the ABC, or about 5.45 million pounds whole weight, to be  
14 monitored in MRIP-FES, and the AP felt that this would provide a  
15 suitable buffer between what they've been catching and what they  
16 are expected to catch under MRIP-FES, while not opening the door  
17 all the way to the ABC, and, Mr. Chair, I think Captain Ed  
18 Walker, who is the Chair of the Reef Fish AP, is on, if anyone  
19 has any questions or wants more information about the AP's  
20 rationale.

21

22 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Mr. Walker, I  
23 would provide you an opportunity, if you want to provide any  
24 rationale from the AP's perspective.

25

26 **MR. ED WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think Ryan summed it up  
27 pretty well. I would mention that our discussion on vermilion -  
28 - There was some real questions, and I would say confusion,  
29 among the panel members on past landings and going forward with  
30 one being in FES and the other not.

31

32 We looked at -- On paper, it was a three-million-and-change  
33 previous, going to an FES of six million, and so it kind of  
34 looked like a doubling of the ACL, although it wasn't, because  
35 of the currency exchange, and so I think we batted around the  
36 currency exchange, and we consulted with Dr. Diagne about that,  
37 to try and get it clear how much of an increase we were actually  
38 talking about, but, overall, I think the panel supported a  
39 modest increase, without going too far, and it was brought up --  
40 Red grouper was brought up, where we gave a large increase a few  
41 years back, and that ended up kind of collapsing on us, shortly  
42 thereafter, and so the AP recommended a cautious, but increased,  
43 ACL.

44

45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Captain Walker. Are  
46 there any questions before we get into the presentation? All  
47 right. I am not seeing any hands. Dr. Diagne.

48



1 control rule and determined that that would correspond to a 9  
2 percent buffer. Therefore, we discounted the ABC by 9 percent  
3 to get to the ACL considered in Alternative 3, and that ACL  
4 would be 6.6 million pounds, and so these are the three  
5 alternatives that are considered in the document.

6  
7 As Mr. Rindone and Mr. Walker mentioned, the AP did recommend  
8 that the council consider a slightly lower ACL, which would be  
9 5.45 million pounds, or 75 percent of the ABC recommended in the  
10 catch advice from the SSC. This concludes this presentation,  
11 and I will try to answer questions. Thank you.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne. We will see if we have  
14 any hands up. Dr. Stunz.

15  
16 **DR. GREG STUNZ:** Dr. Diagne, I have a question about what  
17 Captain Walker just brought up and what you just mentioned at  
18 the very end there regarding their recommendation to lower this  
19 somewhat, to 75 percent or whatever, and sorry that I can't  
20 remember exactly what you said, but my real question revolves  
21 around -- He said it isn't as big -- This looks like a big jump,  
22 but he was mentioning that it wasn't as big of a jump, because  
23 of the currency exchange issues, and so I'm trying to get a feel  
24 for -- Is it really that big of a jump, from where we're at to  
25 the six million pounds, or whatever it is in the -- Sorry, and  
26 I'm looking at -- I need to go back to Alternative 2 on the  
27 slide, but I am trying to get a feel, and my gut feeling is  
28 that's a big jump, and I am trying to make sure that I really  
29 understand it, and I don't right now.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** To that point, Mr. Rindone?

32  
33 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Dr. Stunz, there's two  
34 things that are at play here, and there's the increase in the  
35 catch limit inherent to the conversion in data currency from  
36 CHTS to FES, and then there is also banner recruitment for  
37 vermilion snapper. The 2015 and 2016 data points for  
38 recruitment are the best ever recorded for the stock, and so the  
39 model is taking into account this exceptional recruitment,  
40 especially compared to the long-term average, when generating  
41 these projections.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Ms. Boggs.

44  
45 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to make a  
46 motion, and I sent it to staff, but I need to expound on it just  
47 a little bit, and it goes back to -- I am navigating so many  
48 things right now, but it's on Slide -- Where it shows the

1 comparisons in FES plus the commercial landings and gave you the  
2 new totals, if you will, and, for some reason, I have closed it  
3 out of my screen, and so I think it was maybe the third or  
4 fourth slide in Assane's presentation, but I will make the  
5 motion, and then I can expound on it a little bit more, if you  
6 would like.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Let's go ahead and get the motion up on the  
9 board, so everybody knows what we're going to discuss, and so I  
10 will wait for Bernie to do that.

11  
12 **MS. BOGGS:** All right, and I need to add to it, but my computer,  
13 all of a sudden, is not wanting to cooperate, and so, while she  
14 gets that up, I will try to -- I've got it.

15  
16 What I think I need to do is add, to the motion, and so it would  
17 be to modify the OFL and the ABC for vermilion snapper based on  
18 the recommendations of the SSC, and I'm thinking a period there,  
19 and I'm sorry, Tom, and I've lost my screen, and I can't bring  
20 it back up. To add, in Action 1, an Alternative 4 that sets the  
21 ACL, and so, Bernie, what I want to do is start my motion with  
22 that and then add about the Action 1, Alternative 4, and I do  
23 apologize that I've lost the screen that had all my information  
24 on there. I am trying to pull it back up, but I hope the  
25 council gets the intent.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Boggs, I think we get the message here,  
28 and I am --

29  
30 **MS. BOGGS:** I'm sorry, Tom. Like I said, my screen just totally  
31 went away, and I'm trying to bring it back up now, so I can be a  
32 little more professional, so to speak, about this.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think we have enough information to guide  
35 you through this one, and so, really, the motion speaks to the  
36 recommendation that was coming from the AP.

37  
38 **MS. BOGGS:** Right.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** The motion, I think, is expressed in the  
41 second sentence that's on the board now, and I think that will  
42 be sufficient.

43  
44 **MS. BOGGS:** Okay.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That part of your motion would read: To add,  
47 in Action 1, an Alternative 4 to set the ACL at 75 percent of  
48 the ABC, or 5.45 million pounds whole weight, monitored in MRIP-

1 **FES** currency, and so I think that's what you want, and so,  
2 **Bernie**, I think we can strike the first sentence there.  
3  
4 **MS. BOGGS:** So we don't need to include about modifying it based  
5 on the SSC's recommendations?  
6  
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** The way -- I think that that's already in the  
8 background material.  
9  
10 **MS. BOGGS:** Okay. Well, I just wanted to make sure that it was  
11 clear, and so thank you for that.  
12  
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** No problem. We have a motion on the board.  
14 Is there a second for this motion?  
15  
16 **DR. STUNZ:** Tom, I will second that for discussion, and I do  
17 have a question for Susan, regarding that.  
18  
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, Greg, and so we have a second, and so we  
20 have a number of hands up, but, before we get to those hands,  
21 perhaps, Susan, you can provide some rationale for the motion.  
22  
23 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you. In looking at this, and, again, going  
24 back to the FES numbers and how they are so extreme from where  
25 we are to now, and, if you look at Slide 4 that Assane had,  
26 where it compared -- It has the recreational MRIP-FES and the  
27 commercial landings and the total, and we have never exceeded  
28 the -- The 75 percent would be 5.4 million pounds, and we have  
29 never exceeded that in the conversion, and I just -- With these  
30 FES numbers, everything is so new to this council, and they just  
31 seem to swing in such extreme numbers that I am looking at a  
32 more conservative approach, so that we don't do something that  
33 will harm the fishery, and, ultimately, we're back to trying to  
34 lower the ACLs in time to save the fishery, and I am just trying  
35 to be more conservative with what we do, until we learn a little  
36 bit more about FES. Thank you.  
37  
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Boggs, for the  
39 background there. We have several hands, and I will first go to  
40 Mr. Gill and then Dr. Stunz.  
41  
42 **MR. BOB GILL:** Mr. Chairman, my hand was up for a different  
43 issue, and so I will pass on this round, and I will put it back  
44 up after we're done dispensing with the motion.  
45  
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Gill. We will circle  
47 back. Dr. Stunz.  
48

1 **DR. STUNZ:** Susan, just to be clear, and I thought that's where  
2 you were going with the motion, and I agree about being a little  
3 bit conservative, especially in the light of this being new, and  
4 then especially if we have some off-the-charts recruitment and  
5 getting a few more years to realize if that was real or it was  
6 an outlier or something, rather than just pushing it up as far  
7 as we could go, but my question to you, Susan, or maybe others,  
8 is so this would, or Ryan maybe, but this would be more in line  
9 with what the AP recommended, I think. If that's the case, I  
10 mean, I definitely support the motion, but I wanted to verify,  
11 because I wasn't quite clear where the AP landed on this.

12

13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone.

14

15 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Dr. Stunz, and this is  
16 exactly what the AP had recommended at their January meeting.

17

18 **DR. STUNZ:** Okay. Thank you, Ryan.

19

20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Mr. Strelcheck.

21

22 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I would speak in favor of  
23 the motion. I think it's a fairly rare instance where the  
24 fishing industry is coming to us and letting us know that things  
25 might not be as good as we're estimating, and I think this would  
26 be a positive step, which, as Susan points out, would still be  
27 above the catch levels that we've seen historically for this  
28 fishery.

29

30 I would note that, if this is included, and if it ultimately  
31 becomes our preferred, that we would likely want to wait another  
32 meeting to take final action, just to give the council and the  
33 public some time to do the analysis of the new alternative and  
34 understand it, and so I just wanted to note that.

35

36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Andy, for those comments. I  
37 am not seeing any other hands relative to this motion, and so I  
38 will go ahead and ask the -- Ms. Boggs, excuse me. I didn't see  
39 your hand.

40

41 **MS. BOGGS:** Not to interrupt you, but just a quick question. Do  
42 we need to vote on this motion and then I make another motion to  
43 make it preferred, or can I go ahead and ask to make this the  
44 preferred?

45

46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** You could go either way. To be honest with  
47 you, I would suggest that, just to keep the process moving  
48 forward, that this be the initial course of action, and we can

1 always have a little bit more discussion of whether or not it  
2 needs to be the preferred, but at least this keeps us on track.

3

4 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you.

5

6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Dugas.

7

8 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am hearing comments about  
9 being conservative, and just to throw out there a question, and  
10 the most conservative approach would be status quo, I mean, and  
11 do we have the option to bring this back in a year, maybe, to  
12 give us some time to maybe look at more specifics, and I don't  
13 know, but just to push it off a little bit.

14

15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** J.D., just for clarification, status quo is  
16 Alternative 1, and it was determined to be a non-viable option,  
17 moving forward, and so I just want to make sure that's what  
18 you're asking.

19

20 **MR. DUGAS:** Okay. I did not realize that. Thank you for the  
21 clarification, Mr. Chair.

22

23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** No problem. Thank you, J.D. We have this  
24 motion on the board, and, as I indicated before, we can  
25 certainly move forward with a subsequent motion to make it a  
26 preferred, and we can do that in the committee, or we can think  
27 about it in Full Council. We are going to take a vote on this  
28 motion, but, before I get there, I will give Kevin Anson an  
29 opportunity to weigh-in here.

30

31 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I don't really have  
32 any opposition to the motion, but just a general comment to, I  
33 guess, kind of the purpose, as Susan stated, for this motion is  
34 kind of some unease with the recreational data, and just a  
35 general comment to the applicability of that and that it meets  
36 our best scientific information threshold, and it goes through  
37 the assessment process, and then the assessment produces an OFL  
38 and the best science advice, and the ABC is created based on  
39 that, with the SSC input, and then we're able to determine what  
40 the ACLs are.

41

42 I guess, certainly, it's good to have our finger on the pulse,  
43 so to speak, with what's coming in off the water, and I guess  
44 I'm just, you know -- Again, in this particular case, it doesn't  
45 look like, if catches remain the same, albeit any increases,  
46 substantial increases, in recruitment could cause us to get  
47 there, but I'm just a little concerned, I guess, generally,  
48 about the approach, when we have the information go through and

1 the science comes out.

2  
3 The second is Andy has already commented on, or at least had an  
4 opportunity to comment on, and I just want to confirm that there  
5 isn't anything that would cause us any issues, due to the delay  
6 that this will cause now in the approval and implementation of  
7 the framework action, relative to this fishing year, and I just  
8 want to confirm that there won't be an unforeseen issues, I  
9 guess.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Anson. Maybe I can  
12 interject a few things. I don't anticipate that, as we go  
13 through the rulemaking process, that anything wouldn't go into  
14 effect until 2023, and we certainly wouldn't get this until late  
15 2022, and I will defer to Dr. Simmons, or Mr. Strelcheck, about  
16 whether or not we take final action at this meeting or in April,  
17 if that will negatively impact the timeframe, moving forward. I  
18 will let Dr. Simmons go first, and then I will ask Andy.

19  
20 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the  
21 council, if they so chose, could go forward with final action at  
22 this meeting. If you felt that we needed more time, to get more  
23 comments, we could. I think the SSC made the recommendation  
24 starting in 2021, and we kind of hadn't addressed this, and so  
25 we were trying to move quickly with changing the catch levels,  
26 and so we had some other things on the docket to look at for  
27 vermilion, such as bag limits with triggerfish, and a lot of  
28 outstanding issues that we need to address, and so we were  
29 trying to get this as a low-hanging fruit.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Mr. Strelcheck.

32  
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Kevin, in terms of timing,  
34 once the council takes final action and submits it to the  
35 agency, which it's not necessarily immediately after the council  
36 meeting, and I would say it's going to take us probably five or  
37 six months to get this implemented, and so you could, in both  
38 instances, potentially, have a rule in place by the very tail-  
39 end of 2022.

40  
41 Keep in mind that that would then change the units of measure  
42 that we would also be monitoring the quota in, toward the end of  
43 the year, but the earlier, obviously, that it's implemented, the  
44 better. Ideally, kind of transition time would be to do it  
45 seamlessly between the 2022 and 2023 fishing years, and I will  
46 let Kate talk about taking final action.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Ms. Zamboni.

1  
2 **MS. KATE ZAMBONI:** Thank you. On the issue of whether or not to  
3 take final action today, there has been a fair amount of public  
4 interest and comment on this action, and I think it would be  
5 preferable to give the public another opportunity to comment on  
6 the new alternative, and this was a pretty recent recommendation  
7 from the Reef Fish AP, and I don't think it would delay things  
8 too much, in terms of just waiting for the next council meeting  
9 to take the final action.

10  
11 As Andy discussed, there is still the rulemaking process that  
12 would occur, and so that would be my recommendation, is to bring  
13 this back to the Full Council, with a full analysis of the  
14 effects of Alternative 4, and give the public another chance to  
15 take a look at it.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Ms. Zamboni. Ms. Boggs.

18  
19 **MS. BOGGS:** Ms. Zamboni addressed my question. Thank you.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so, again, a couple of things that I  
22 heard in there, and then we're going to try to wrap this up, and  
23 I just want to remind everybody that it's the SSC that actually  
24 provides the recommendations with regard to the OFL and the ABC,  
25 and it's the council's prerogative to set the ACL relative to  
26 the ABC as they see fit.

27  
28 With regard to the time that the staff might require to input an  
29 alternative into the document, then, given where it sits, and I  
30 will defer to staff and ask the question, but I don't think it  
31 will have any unnecessary influence on the economic or  
32 socioeconomic side of things, Dr. Diagne, and is that true?

33  
34 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, Mr. Chair. That would be true.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so that's a relatively simple fix,  
37 from that perspective, and then, with regard to public comment,  
38 again, it's certainly the prerogative of the council to seek  
39 that input, but I would note that we will have a public comment  
40 period on Wednesday, and so that's an opportunity to receive  
41 some input there, and so all of that by way of context, I guess,  
42 that we will go ahead and think about this a little bit, but we  
43 will certainly vote on this motion here, and I will start  
44 simply. **Is there any opposition to the motion?** Okay. **I am not**  
45 **seeing any opposition, and we'll consider the motion adopted.**

46  
47 I will let people -- Again, I want to try to keep us on track,  
48 and we've got a pretty full agenda today, and we can certainly

1 bring this up in Full Council, and people can think whether or  
2 not they would like to make this as a preferred or not and  
3 whether or not they would like to approve the document, or move  
4 it forward as a final action item, at that point.

5  
6 In anticipation of that, we will go ahead and provide a review  
7 of the codified text, as it exists now, and that would be Tab B,  
8 Item 5(d), and I'm not sure if Ms. Levy or Ms. Zamboni is going  
9 to do that.

10  
11 **MR. GILL:** Mr. Chairman, a point of order.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Gill.

14  
15 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, sir. My hand is up, and my comments and  
16 issue necessarily precede the codified text.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Gill.

19  
20 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I had thought about this,  
21 in preparation for this meeting, and we currently have, as you  
22 know, the preferred, where the ACL equals the recommended ABC  
23 from the SSC, and we heard considerable public testimony, at our  
24 last meeting, on this issue, and anecdotal since then, and  
25 clearly the Reef Fish AP has weighed-in.

26  
27 As a result, I am sympathetic to Susan's motion, and I might  
28 even support it as a preferred, but what I do know, at this  
29 stage of the game, is that, by setting the ACL equal to the ABC,  
30 we're effectively saying we've got very little uncertainty on  
31 management actions and resulting behavior, and I don't believe  
32 that's correct at all in this case. We have a fair amount.

33  
34 As a consequence, I would like to offer a motion. Bernie, if  
35 you would pull up my vermilion motion, and that is to change the  
36 preferred to Alternative 3, which was the 9 percent buffer, and  
37 I think, given the motion we just passed, it provides an option  
38 for this committee, and Full Council, to consider which  
39 preferred they like better. I do believe, however, that our  
40 current preferred is incorrect. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. **Great, Bob, and so the motion is simply**  
43 **to make, in Action 1, Alternative 3 the preferred.**

44  
45 **MR. GILL:** Correct.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** You have provided some rationale for why you  
48 might want to do that. Is there a second to this motion?

1  
2 **MR. ANSON:** I will second for discussion.  
3

4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It's seconded by Mr. Anson. Okay. Is there  
5 any further discussion of the motion? I see Dr. Stunz.  
6

7 **DR. STUNZ:** Well, Tom, it's sort of directly to this motion, or  
8 maybe not, and so I will make -- It's just a brief comment  
9 anyway, but it's related to the broader -- Because I would have  
10 to study Bob's, to see how that compares to the motion that  
11 Susan just made, and I'm trying to do that on the fly, real  
12 quick, but this was in regard to J.D.'s motion.  
13

14 I understand why Alternative 1 is not the best science, because  
15 of the conversions and those issues, but there is nothing  
16 preventing us from making another alternative motion reducing  
17 that down, and maybe that's what Bob's does, and I don't know,  
18 but I just wanted to say that, maybe at Full Council, because  
19 we're dragging this on, obviously, but there's nothing  
20 preventing another alternative to be more conservative, because  
21 it sounds like some are concerned that we're kind of pushing the  
22 limit, but I can't think through that on the fly here, of what  
23 Bob's motion is -- Is it more conservative or less conservative  
24 than Susan's, and I'm going to try to figure that out while  
25 we're going through this.  
26

27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Real quick, Greg, I got some quick information  
28 from staff, and so the difference is essentially 600,000 pounds  
29 between the two. Excuse me. It's a little over a million  
30 pounds. Again, we have a lot of things on the plate today, and  
31 I would really urge the committee to sit back and think about  
32 what the various alternatives look like and offer perhaps --  
33 We'll decide where we want to go in Full Council, but, in the  
34 interim, we've got a number of hands, and we have to dispose of  
35 this motion one way or another, and so I want Jessica McCawley  
36 to have an opportunity, and then Ms. Bosarge.  
37

38 **MS. JESSICA MCCAWLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I was  
39 going to try to answer the question that, yes, Alternative 3 is  
40 not as conservative as Alternative 4. I actually am okay with  
41 Alternative 4, the new alternative, being the preferred, and it  
42 is a little bit more conservative, and it does seem to match up  
43 with what the AP is suggesting, and so I would prefer  
44 Alternative 4, but I also agree with Bob Gill that I don't  
45 believe our current preferred of Alternative 2 is conservative  
46 enough, but I might vote against the motion that's on the screen  
47 there, just because I think I would prefer that Alternative 4 be  
48 the preferred.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Ms. McCawley. Ms. Bosarge.

3  
4 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate Jessica and  
5 Dr. Frazer helping us out with those numbers, to see which one  
6 is more conservative, and so now I understand that. Bob, will  
7 you maybe repeat your rationale again, now that I am not so  
8 focused on which number is more conservative? I couldn't figure  
9 if your rationale had to do with maybe the way that Alternative  
10 3 is worded, and it speaking more to some uncertainties in this  
11 ABC/ACL/ACT Control Rule, or if you didn't want to be quite as  
12 conservative as what the new Alternative 4 would be, and I  
13 couldn't quite follow you, and could you repeat it?

14  
15 **MR. GILL:** Mr. Chair, if I may?

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** You may.

18  
19 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, sir. Well, it's both, actually, Leann.  
20 What I do know -- Obviously, in the briefing book materials that  
21 we had, we did not have the alternative that Susan just  
22 provided. The AP did suggest it, and I concluded that, while I  
23 might be favorable to it, I wasn't prepared to make that motion,  
24 and so I also recognize that, in my mind, the preferred  
25 alternative, Alternative 2, setting the ACL equal to the ABC,  
26 was not correct, because we were quite uncertain about how this  
27 was going to go forward, and it is a large jump, of some  
28 magnitude, and we don't know how the fishing sectors will react  
29 to that, and so that made sense to me.

30  
31 Having the current motion that was just passed made, I think it  
32 provides an alternative, and, in comparison, I came down to a  
33 slightly opposite position than Jessica, and I think I would  
34 prefer Alternative 3, after all is said and done, because I  
35 think the 75 percent is, A, somewhat arbitrary, but, B, probably  
36 a little lower, because we can't predict that behavior, and so  
37 you're right on all counts.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Gill, for the recap.  
40 Leann, did you want to follow-up with a question?

41  
42 **MS. BOSARGE:** No, sir. That explained it. Thank you.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Mr. Anson.

45  
46 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wasn't opposed to the  
47 previous motion to add a new alternative, but I think, in light  
48 of this discussion, and kind of reevaluating the numbers in the

1 presentation, at least, that Assane provided, I am going to  
2 support this motion, and I will not vote for Alternative 4 at  
3 this point, if it comes up again.

4  
5 We talk about angler behavior and such, and we're not doing  
6 anything to encourage them to change their behavior. We're not  
7 increasing bag limits and such, and we're just opening up more  
8 pounds, and so I don't -- Looking at the history here, at least  
9 in the CHTS, there is only one year where they exceeded the ACL,  
10 and so this kind of is a middle of the road between what the new  
11 Alternative 4 is, as far as conservativeness, versus Alternative  
12 2, which didn't have a buffer from the ABC, and so I will be in  
13 support of this motion.

14  
15 You know, part of the -- It gives me a little bit of pause too  
16 when the rationale, or part of the discussion, is that there's  
17 uncertainty, or at least uncomfortableness, with the FES numbers  
18 and such, and I understand they are relatively new, but it gives  
19 me pause that we would have to incorporate that into all of our  
20 decisions, I guess, related to fisheries with a recreational  
21 component, and so that's all. Thank you.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Anson. Ms. Boggs.

24  
25 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, Kevin, I understand about  
26 changing the fishermen's behavior. My concern is, if you give  
27 them too much leeway, and the fish -- I mean, I just feel like  
28 we need to be conservative with this, and I was at the Reef Fish  
29 AP meeting, and I am looking at the numbers, and the commercial  
30 fishermen were saying the fish aren't there, and the  
31 recreational fishermen -- I was just looking at the comments,  
32 and I looked at them the other day, and I looked at them again  
33 this morning, and the majority of the comments that I read were  
34 don't do anything, and so that's why I just feel like the more  
35 conservative approach, at this time, is the best avenue.

36  
37 The good news, I suppose, here is that, if we see that it's  
38 robust and continues, we can always go back and increase it, but  
39 I am just trying to be conservative, and I just always fear, and  
40 I mentioned this at the AP meeting, the unintended consequences  
41 when we do things like this. Thank you.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Boggs. All right. I am  
44 not seeing any other hands. Mr. Strelcheck.

45  
46 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. A lot of good points have  
47 been made, and I guess, just to add to the discussion,  
48 regardless of whether it's Alternative 3 or Alternative 4 is the

1 preferred, if landings remain kind of consistent with historical  
2 patterns, we're not going to reach either one of these catch  
3 limits, and so neither one of them is going to be constraining,  
4 and, given that we are allowing for then year-round fishing of  
5 vermilion snapper, reducing the catch limit, whether it's a  
6 seven million or six million or five million, will not constrain  
7 harvest.

8  
9 I'm sure you've heard my predecessor, Roy, say this many times,  
10 and I think the broader concern that I would have would be, if  
11 there are problems in the fishery, we may not know about them,  
12 because we're not actually achieving the catch limit, and so  
13 everything appears to be fine, because we're not achieving the  
14 catch limit, but, in reality, especially with recreational  
15 fisheries, and I know this is a stock complex, usually, when  
16 things are good, fishermen are bumping up against the catch  
17 limit, because the availability is there, and so I see both  
18 sides of this argument, and I can see how this could be viewed  
19 as being conservative, and I certainly supported Susan's motion,  
20 but, at the end of the day, I'm not sure that either one of  
21 these will really accomplish anything if landings remain,  
22 obviously, kind of on par with those historical estimates.  
23 Thanks.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. I agree,  
26 and I think that we've had a fair amount of discussion on this  
27 issue, and I realize, based on that discussion, that there may  
28 be a number of different opinions on where we might need to go,  
29 and so we'll vote on this motion as a committee motion, and  
30 we'll certainly have some time to think about it before we bring  
31 it up to the Full Council.

32  
33 As I said before, hopefully we'll get some public comment on  
34 this as well, which we can use that in further deliberations,  
35 but, at this point, because of the various viewpoints that I  
36 have heard, I am just going to ask for names and go through and  
37 tell me whether you're in favor of this or not. I will just  
38 kind of go down my list of folks. Billy Broussard, yes or no?  
39 Mr. Broussard, are you there? Billy, I am going to come back to  
40 you. Ms. Bosarge.

41  
42 **MS. BOSARGE:** No.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Williamson.

45  
46 **MR. TROY WILLIAMSON:** Yes.

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

1  
2 **MR. STRELCHECK:** No.  
3  
4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Stunz.  
5  
6 **DR. STUNZ:** No.  
7  
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Schieble.  
9  
10 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** No.  
11  
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Dugas.  
13  
14 **MR. DUGAS:** No.  
15  
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. McCawley.  
17  
18 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Yes.  
19  
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** General Spraggins.  
21  
22 **MR. RICK BURRIS:** No.  
23  
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Geeslin.  
25  
26 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** No.  
27  
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Gill.  
29  
30 **MR. GILL:** Yes.  
31  
32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Boggs.  
33  
34 **MS. BOGGS:** No.  
35  
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Dyskow.  
37  
38 **MR. PHIL DYSKOW:** No.  
39  
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Anson.  
41  
42 **MR. ANSON:** Yes.  
43  
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. I am going to circle back to Mr.  
45 Broussard. Okay. It doesn't look like we're going to get Billy  
46 in there. **Regardless, the motion fails.** We'll give people some  
47 time to think about where they might want to go, in advance of  
48 our Full Council session later in the week.

1  
2 All right, and so let's go ahead and make sure that we review  
3 the codified text, as it exists, and, again, it looks like Ms.  
4 Levy is going to take care of that.

5  
6 **MS. ZAMBONI:** Actually, I'm going to handle that one.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Excellent. I can't think of anybody more  
9 qualified to do it.

10  
11 **REVIEW OF CODIFIED TEXT**

12  
13 **MS. ZAMBONI:** Thank you. The codified text is pretty simple and  
14 in the tab, and it's a modification to 50 CFR Section 622.41,  
15 which spells out the annual catch limits, annual catch targets,  
16 and accountability measures for reef fish in the Gulf of Mexico.  
17 Vermilion snapper is not managed with annual catch targets or  
18 accountability measures, and so the only change is to the last  
19 sentence, as reflected, and it would just change the stock ACL  
20 to whatever the council approves, and, in here, it's reflecting  
21 the Alternative 2 in Action 1, but that would change, obviously,  
22 if the council approves a different alternative.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. Thank you, Ms. Zamboni, and so, again,  
25 a relatively straightforward change to the codified text,  
26 regardless of the alternative that the council might elect to  
27 move forward with, and so I don't anticipate any questions with  
28 regard to this, but I will give people an opportunity to weigh-  
29 in. Okay. I am not seeing any hands. Again, thank you, Ms.  
30 Zamboni, for providing that review of the codified text, and we  
31 will bring this issue up again in Full Council.

32  
33 We are about just a couple of minutes before our scheduled  
34 break, and I am going to ask the Chair if he would like us to  
35 break now for fifteen minutes, before we pick up. Let's go  
36 ahead and take ten minutes.

37  
38 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We are going to move into the greater  
41 amberjack revised projections, and so that would be Agenda Item  
42 Number VI, and, Mr. Rindone, if you want to walk us through the  
43 action plan for that.

44  
45 **PRESENTATION ON SEDAR 70: GREATER AMBERJACK REVISED PROJECTIONS**

46  
47 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Dr. Nance is our SSC  
48 representative again, and he's going to summarize the SSC's

1 deliberations about the revised amberjack projections from the  
2 SEDAR 70 stock assessment, which the SSC first saw at its  
3 January 2021 meeting, and they estimated that the stock was  
4 overfished and undergoing overfishing as of 2018, and the  
5 assessment uses MRIP-FES for the recreational landings and a new  
6 projections code, and, during its November 2021 meeting, the SSC  
7 determined that this stock status was still valid and certified  
8 various allocation scenarios that were proposed by the council,  
9 in their corresponding overfishing limit and acceptable  
10 biological catch yield stream projections, as being in keeping  
11 with the best scientific information available.

12  
13 I will also tell you about the council's Reef Fish AP  
14 recommendations, and Captain Walker is still on the line, and he  
15 can give you some rationale behind those, and so you guys should  
16 consider the information presented and ask questions, as  
17 appropriate, and, generally speaking, unless otherwise directed,  
18 we will plan to bring some draft options to you as early as the  
19 April meeting. Mr. Chair.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. We then will go ahead  
22 and jump into the recommendations coming from the SSC, and that  
23 would be Tab B, Number 6 in your briefing materials, and Dr.  
24 Nance will lead us through that.

25  
26 **REVIEW OF SEDAR 70 REVISED PROJECTIONS METHOD AND SSC**  
27 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

28  
29 **DR. JIM NANCE:** Dr. Frazer, thank you. I appreciate being here  
30 this morning. At our November 2021 meeting, the Southeast  
31 Fisheries Science Center gave an update of the SEDAR 70  
32 projection presentation, and they went over three different  
33 items. First, they highlighted two model corrections, and they  
34 next modified -- They gave us the modified projections based on  
35 the SSC specifications, and, third, we reviewed various council-  
36 requested allocation scenarios.

37  
38 The first one highlighted the two model corrections, and the  
39 Southeast Fisheries Science Center, in their presentation, let  
40 us know that projections presented at the January 2021 SSC  
41 meeting had two misspecifications. First, the spawning stock  
42 biomass, the SSB 30 percent, was used instead of spawning  
43 potential ratio of 30 percent, or SPR 30, as a proxy for the SSB  
44 at maximum sustainable yield. Second, the long-term average of  
45 recruitment was used for benchmarks and projections, instead of  
46 the recent estimated mean.

47  
48 The Southeast Fisheries Science Center then reminded the SSC of

1 the base run projection settings. We used SPR 30 that was used  
2 as the SSB MSY proxy. The spawner-recruit curve was used to  
3 calculate the recruitment for determining management benchmarks.  
4 Third, the low recruitment rate was used for the projection  
5 period, assuming the low recruitment will continue in the short-  
6 term, and, fourth, the overfishing limit and acceptable  
7 biological catch and rebuilding projections were made in order  
8 to rebuild the stock by 2027 to SSB SPR 30 percent.

9  
10 Just a reminder, and I've shown this a couple of times to the  
11 council, and the recent average 2009 through 2018 is the lowest  
12 of the entire time period, 1970 through 2018, and this low  
13 recruitment is assumed into the future, during our projections.

14  
15 The OFL and ABC and updated projections were provided for the  
16 base run, which included a -- It's a 73 percent recreational and  
17 27 percent commercial, and four additional allocation scenarios  
18 requested by the council. These four other scenarios included  
19 one using the years 1981 through 2004, with an allocation of 84  
20 percent recreational and 16 percent commercial.

21  
22 The second is using the years 1993 through 2007, which then  
23 included a 78 percent recreational and 22 percent commercial.  
24 The third was using the years 1993 through 2019, with an 80  
25 percent recreational and 20 percent commercial, and fourth is  
26 keeping the commercial annual catch limit fixed at 484,380  
27 pounds whole weight and calculate OFL, ABC, and the sector  
28 allocation percentages thereafter.

29  
30 It's interesting that the Southeast Fisheries Science Center  
31 showed us that, for each of these allocation scenarios  
32 collectively, it resulted in OFL values that differed from one  
33 another by 5 percent or less. Low ABC and annual catch limits,  
34 in millions of pounds whole weight, resulted across all  
35 allocation scenarios for the rebuilding. Just a note that these  
36 projections are in MRIP-FES data currency.

37  
38 The SSC, after seeing this presentation, made the following  
39 motion. The SSC determined that the projection methods  
40 presented for the SEDAR 70 Gulf greater amberjack stock  
41 represent the best scientific information available and are  
42 appropriate for consideration by the council. Based on these  
43 projection settings, the stock is overfished and is undergoing  
44 overfishing. The motion carried with no opposition.

45  
46 We had a lot of discussion during the meeting, and the SSC  
47 accepted the methodology used to make the projections on the  
48 different allocations. Really, it's the decision to the council

1 to choose the sector allocation based on the scenarios provided.

2  
3 We then had the following motion made. Based on projection  
4 settings accepted by the SSC for the SEDAR 70 operational  
5 assessment, the SSC recommends the following catch level  
6 recommendations for Gulf greater amberjack. First, the OFL be  
7 set as the yield, in millions of pounds whole weight, at F 30  
8 percent SPR, and the ABC at the yield, in millions of pounds  
9 whole weight, at F rebuild through the end of the projected  
10 rebuilding period of 2027. The motion carried with one  
11 abstention and four absent.

12  
13 Mr. Chair, I'm going to ask Ryan to go through the tables on the  
14 next slide, and he's going to go through the various allocation  
15 scenarios with the council at this time. Ryan, I will go ahead  
16 and turn it over to you.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Ryan.

19  
20 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and Dr. Nance. As Dr. Nance  
21 mentioned, the differences in these yields between all these  
22 different scenarios is about 5 percent, and so what you will see  
23 is the recreational and commercial allocations shown at the top  
24 and then the corresponding OFL, ABC, and percentage allocation  
25 on that far-right column, and so this is what you guys were  
26 looking at for our current sector allocations, which are 73  
27 percent recreational and 27 percent commercial, and part of the  
28 reason for the large difference between the overfishing limit  
29 and the acceptable biological catch is that all of these  
30 projections are constrained to continue to rebuild the stock by  
31 2027, in keeping with the current rebuilding plan.

32  
33 I will just casually bounce through these, so that you guys can  
34 see, but, as Dr. Nance stated, these are not all that dissimilar  
35 from one another, and so 84 percent recreational and 16 percent  
36 commercial is shown here, and, generally speaking, as more fish  
37 are allocated towards the recreational sector, it does result in  
38 a modest decrease in the OFL and ABC.

39  
40 This is 78 percent recreational and 22 percent commercial. This  
41 is 80/20, shown here, and there are very minimal differences,  
42 and then this is the scenario with the commercial sector fixed  
43 at approximately 484,000 pounds whole weight and then the  
44 balance being allocated to the recreational sector.

45  
46 **DR. NANCE:** Ryan, I wanted to also point out that, while we see  
47 the different allocations, it's not only changing some of the  
48 allocations, but it's also changing the years that are used in

1 the determination of those allocations.

2  
3 **MR. RINDONE:** That is correct.

4  
5 **DR. NANCE:** Mr. Chair, that finishes our presentation.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Nance. Do we have any  
8 questions from the committee? I will wait just a minute, to see  
9 if there's any lag in electrons. Okay. I'm not seeing any  
10 hands, and so the next item on the agenda is the AP summary from  
11 the January 2022 meeting. Mr. Rindone, do you want to go  
12 through that?

13  
14 **REEF FISH AP RECOMMENDATIONS**

15  
16 **MR. RINDONE:** I sure do, Mr. Chair. The AP met in early January  
17 and talked about the great amberjack operational assessment, and  
18 staff gave them the quick rundown of what went on in the  
19 assessment and the SSC's discussions, and the AP ultimately made  
20 two motions with respect to their discussions about amberjack.

21  
22 The first was to request that council and NMFS staff compile and  
23 present discard and discard mortality data by species and sector  
24 and year for all mixed-use species in the Gulf, and this should  
25 all be broken out by fleet, and so vertical line and longline  
26 for the commercial sector and for-hire, headboat, and private  
27 angler for the recreational sector, as feasible.

28  
29 This had to do with the AP's concerns about the differences in  
30 the magnitude of the discards between the fleets, and so the  
31 genesis of this discussion started in amberjack, but it would  
32 apply to other species, and then, more germane to this  
33 discussion specifically was the AP's recommendation to recommend  
34 to the council to adopt F rebuild, as recommended by the SSC,  
35 for the current sector allocations, and so 73 percent  
36 recreational and 27 percent commercial, and to not make any  
37 other management changes to greater amberjack until 2026, and so  
38 basically under the presumption that whatever happened from the  
39 work that's being started here wouldn't take effect until 2023,  
40 and they wanted it left in place for at least three years.  
41 Captain Walker, Mr. Chair, might be able to provide some more  
42 context.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Captain  
45 Walker, did you want to provide any additional input from the  
46 AP?

47  
48 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chair. I would just say

1 that, in addition to Mr. Rindone's summary, the overall  
2 discussion, at the AP meeting, had a lot to do with recreational  
3 discards and acknowledging and including those, and, in fact,  
4 breaking those out, as is mentioned here.

5  
6 There was a lot of concern, among the panel, about the  
7 recreational discards, and it came up over and over again, and I  
8 think that's why the panel decided that they would like to see  
9 it broken down by sector, to see where the majority of the  
10 discards are taking place, so that it can be evaluated  
11 separately by not just commercial and recreational, but each of  
12 those broken down to longline, vertical line, and charter/for-  
13 hire and private rec, et cetera.

14  
15 I would also point out that the consensus of the AP was that  
16 they are ready to take real action, and they recognize that  
17 amberjack are in trouble, and they would like to see us kind of  
18 stay the course, currently, that we're on and give the new regs  
19 a chance to take effect. There was no question, among anybody  
20 that I heard, that amberjack are indeed in trouble, and the AP  
21 seemed willing to do what's necessary to get our amberjack back  
22 on track. Thank you.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Captain Walker. Any  
25 questions for our AP leadership? Mr. Dugas.

26  
27 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question with Mr.  
28 Walker. I am not familiar with all the Reef Fish AP members,  
29 but I was just wondering, and was there any conversation about  
30 the western Gulf, and did anybody comment that maybe the western  
31 Gulf doesn't have the issue so much as the eastern Gulf? Thank  
32 you.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Captain Walker.

35  
36 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, and thank you, J.D. We do have -- Ryan could  
37 tell you better, but we definitely have Josh Ellender from  
38 Louisiana, and I'm not sure, and we definitely have -- Well,  
39 we've got Buddy Guindon and some Texas guys on there, but I  
40 don't recall a discussion on western Gulf versus eastern Gulf  
41 amberjack issues. I could be wrong there, but, off the top of  
42 my head, I don't recall that conversation.

43  
44 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Captain Walker. Are  
47 there any other questions for the AP? Ms. Bosarge.

48

1 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, sir. It's not for the AP, but I wanted to  
2 make a comment, before we left amberjack, and so, whenever it's  
3 appropriate, you can just call on me.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think now is your time.

6  
7 **MS. BOSARGE:** Great. Okay. So I assume this means that we're  
8 going to -- Staff is going to start working on yet another  
9 rebuilding plan for amberjack, and I just wanted to go ahead and  
10 mention now -- I think, at some point in that document, we  
11 probably want to look at commercial trip limits again.

12  
13 If you remember, we had this discussion, and, gosh, I guess it's  
14 been two years ago now, and time flies, and we reduced that the  
15 commercial trip limit, because they had been having an annual  
16 closure, seasonal closure, every year. However, now, I see  
17 where they are only making it looks like about 62 or 63 or 64  
18 percent of their ACL, and that's all they're landing in the last  
19 couple of years, and so I'm -- We had a lot of discussion, and  
20 we went back and forth, and I think we may have gone too far  
21 with that trip limit, and we need to look at it again and try  
22 and find that sweet spot somewhere in between the two levels,  
23 the old level and the new level, and so I just wanted to throw  
24 that out there, and we probably need to look at that for  
25 amberjack. Thanks.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Bosarge. I just want to  
28 make a few comments, based on what you had to say, just to  
29 remind folks where we are in this process. We certainly will  
30 have to -- Staff will have to embark upon putting together a  
31 rebuilding plan for amberjacks, and to get them started, we,  
32 ultimately, in this particular session, are going to strive for  
33 a motion that provides the advice, moving forward, so they know  
34 what they're going to try to do.

35  
36 Again, for the benefit of the committee here, we've got a stock  
37 that is overfished and undergoing overfishing, which  
38 necessitates, ultimately, the development of the rebuilding  
39 plan, but it also means that we need to address that at our very  
40 earliest opportunity and acknowledge what the catch limits might  
41 be as soon as we possibly can, and so, when you're thinking  
42 about a motion, all of those things are going to have to come  
43 into consideration, and so, with that said, Kevin.

44  
45 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To help, kind of as we get  
46 further information, as staff develops the documents and such,  
47 and looking at the motion that the AP had passed, I would like  
48 to make a motion.

1  
2 Basically, it copies that motion regarding the discard data  
3 request, and it basically just requests the Southeast Fisheries  
4 Science Center to compile and present the discard mortality  
5 data.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Right, and so, just for clarification, Kevin,  
8 the motion that you would like to essentially provide, in  
9 duplicate, is the one that is shown on your screen now and  
10 highlighted?

11  
12 **MR. ANSON:** Just change the "council/NMFS" to maybe "Southeast  
13 Fisheries Science Center", and I think that's who we normally  
14 ask for that kind of data.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. We're going to move that over. Bernie,  
17 go ahead and say, "Request that", and then remove the word  
18 "council", and is that the only change that you want to make,  
19 Kevin? It looks like that's probably --

20  
21 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I just want to make sure that "present  
22 discard", including dead discards, in parentheses after that, or  
23 "present discard", and then put, in parentheses, "including dead  
24 discards".

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. There you go. Before I -- The motion  
27 on the board is essentially as was provided earlier, and it's  
28 slightly modified, and I will read it into the record, Kevin,  
29 before we get a second, but I know that there's a couple of  
30 folks with their hands up already, but so here's the motion.

31  
32 **To request that the National Marine Fisheries Service staff**  
33 **compile and present discard (including dead discards) and**  
34 **discard mortality data by species and sector and year for all**  
35 **mixed-use species in the Gulf. Commercial data should be broken**  
36 **down by gear type (longline and vertical line) and recreational**  
37 **sector data should be broken down by sub-sector (charter/for-**  
38 **hire, headboat, private angler plus shore), as feasible, and**  
39 **include data sources, where available. Let's get a second. Is**  
40 **there a second for that motion?**

41  
42 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I will second it for discussion.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so the motion has been seconded  
45 by Mr. Schieble. Clay, do you want to weigh-in here?

46  
47 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you, Chair. Just for a little clarity, if we  
48 were talking about just amberjack, say, and the years during

1 which the assessment was accomplished, that would probably be a  
2 fairly easy lift, and we would just have to check if we could  
3 break it out exactly by sectors, but I think we can.

4  
5 The concern I have is, right now, it's written for all mixed-use  
6 species, and I'm not sure what years they're looking for, but,  
7 if you're looking all the way up to current, this is going to be  
8 a pretty big lift, because we don't have estimates for every  
9 species in the most recent years, and so this could be a fairly  
10 time-consuming request, and you're not going to get it in a  
11 month or two. I guess I'm just looking for a little more  
12 specificity here. Do you really need it for all mixed-use  
13 species and for the most recent years? If you want that, it's  
14 going to be something that's going to have to get in the queue.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Clay, for that, and go ahead, Billy,  
17 and then I'm going to come back and ask Mr. Anson a question.

18  
19 **MR. BROUSSARD:** The dead discards, would that not be covered in  
20 the "and discard mortality", or could you explain to me the  
21 difference in the two?

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think that's a good question, Billy. I'm  
24 going to -- I will have Mr. Anson kind of share with the group  
25 what he was intending by including the parenthetical part of the  
26 sentence, and so, Kevin.

27  
28 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. Billy, good catch, and you're right. I  
29 guess, if we remove the "and discard mortality data" from the  
30 motion, and I think that captures what I would like to see, and  
31 that would be the discard information, but the discard  
32 information broken out between live releases and dead releases,  
33 and certainly, in the assessment, there is -- Each assessment  
34 for each species deals with a mortality of those that are  
35 released, if that's handy, and I guess that could be added, and  
36 so I'm just trying to think a little bit about that.

37  
38 Going back to Dr. Porch's comment, I realize about the extra  
39 work and everything, and so, in deference to that comment, I  
40 will suggest then that -- I don't know what "nearer term" means,  
41 but we've had lots of discussion here, and we've had some recent  
42 assessments with the FES and such, and dealing with it, and so  
43 maybe, if we just pare that down to include those species that  
44 would then fall into this mixed-use definition. **I would then  
45 remove the "all mixed-use species" to "for red grouper, greater  
46 amberjack, and red snapper".**

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay.

1  
2 **MR. ANSON:** And maybe add gag, too.  
3

4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Kevin. We've got a  
5 modification to the motion, and, again, for clarity, I will just  
6 read it. **Request that NMFS staff compile and present discard**  
7 **data (including dead discards) by species and sector and year**  
8 **for red grouper, gag grouper, greater amberjack, and red snapper**  
9 **in the Gulf. Commercial data should be broken down by gear**  
10 **type, and recreational sector data should be broken down by sub-**  
11 **sector, as feasible. Include data sources, where available.**  
12 Kevin, you're happy with the motion as it's revised?  
13

14 **MR. ANSON:** Yes.  
15

16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Chris, as the seconder, are you good  
17 with the changes?  
18

19 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I will second again.  
20

21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Is there any further discussion of the  
22 motion? **Not seeing any, is there any opposition to the motion?**  
23 **Seeing none, the motion carries.**  
24

25 Okay, and so I'm going to, again, open the floor up for any  
26 further motions with regard to this topic, reminding people that  
27 we have some information at our disposal, and we know that,  
28 again, the stock is overfished, and it's undergoing overfishing,  
29 and we're going to have to direct staff to initiate a rebuilding  
30 plan, and we'll need a few other things as well, and I see the  
31 Chair, Mr. Diaz, has his hand up. Dale.  
32

33 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** Thank you, Tom. I just wanted to weigh-in here  
34 for a minute. I talked to a few folks in Mississippi before I  
35 came to the meeting, and they did bring up something that I  
36 think would at least be something for staff to consider when  
37 they develop the document, and so, currently, we start the  
38 greater amberjack season on August 1, and it splits two ways,  
39 and so there is a July/August is two months of the wave, and  
40 then September and October is another two months.  
41

42 It's pretty obvious that we're not going to have a lot of fish  
43 to work with, and splitting two ways could potentially be  
44 problematic, especially since part of this is going to have to  
45 be monitored by MRIP, and we know MRIP, as far as monitoring in-  
46 season quotas, is a tough thing to do, and so I just want to  
47 throw that out for consideration, that, at least maybe when  
48 there's some alternatives in the document, that we think about

1 setting up seasons and things like that, because of that, and so  
2 that's all I had. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Diaz. I've got a couple of  
5 hands up, and I will go through them in order. Mr. Dugas and  
6 then Mr. Gill.

7  
8 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question, and maybe  
9 it's for Dr. Porch. Going forward with this, will any of the  
10 data that was collected throughout the Great Red Snapper Count  
11 be implemented into this? Will they utilize any of Dr. Stunz's  
12 team's data?

13  
14 **DR. PORCH:** It depends on -- Are you talking about this  
15 particular motion?

16  
17 **MR. DUGAS:** No, sir. Just, going forward with you guys' study  
18 for amberjack, I mean, I just feel like Dr. Stunz's team has put  
19 a lot of work into the Great Red Snapper Count, and with that  
20 was other species. We call it the Great Red Snapper Count, but  
21 they collected data on other species, and can you guys utilize  
22 some of that information?

23  
24 **DR. PORCH:** I do think that we can, and presumably the folks who  
25 are involved in the great amberjack count would be talking with  
26 Greg, and, I mean, he can comment, to the extent that they have  
27 already, but that was an expectation with the Sea-Grant-funded  
28 projects, that they would look at all the data available, and,  
29 obviously, the Great Red Snapper Count has information on other  
30 species, as well as other studies done by Benny Gallaway and  
31 LGL, and so I would presume they would look at all of that.

32  
33 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Porch.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. The list is growing. Bob Gill.

36  
37 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. **I think the Reef Fish AP**  
38 **gave us a place to start, and so I move the Reef Fish AP's**  
39 **second motion.**

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so we'll get that up on the board,  
42 and so I will help Bernie out here. There you go.

43  
44 **MR. GILL:** That's it.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes. All right. Let's make sure it's all  
47 properly documented. The motion on the board is to recommend --  
48 Bob, do you want to wordsmith that at all? I don't want to put

1 words in your mouth.

2

3 **MR. GILL:** Yes, sir. I would like to delete the "until 2026"  
4 part.

5

6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I just want to -- Again, I'm seeking some  
7 clarity here, and so you're recommending that staff begin the  
8 development of a rebuilding plan, and so, again, Bob, I am not  
9 going to put -- This is your motion, right, but the motion is to  
10 direct staff to do something, and I think what you're directing  
11 them to do is to provide a revision to the rebuilding plan.

12

13 **MR. GILL:** Correct, Mr. Chairman, and the way you were going is  
14 fine. If you would like to word it, that's fine by me.

15

16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. To direct staff to revise the  
17 rebuilding plan. To revise the current greater amberjack  
18 rebuilding plan by adopting F rebuild, as recommended by the  
19 SSC, with the current sector allocation, and not to make any  
20 other management changes to greater amberjack. Are you happy  
21 with that one, Mr. Gill?

22

23 **MR. GILL:** Yes, sir. That looks fine to me.

24

25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so we might have to wordsmith it a  
26 little bit. Dr. Simmons.

27

28 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a  
29 couple of things to remind the council of, and so, back in  
30 January of 2021, we received the results of the stock  
31 assessment, and, at that time, you directed staff to look at and  
32 engage with the IPT, for not only a rebuilding plan, but looking  
33 at different sector allocations. We did that, and that has now  
34 resulted in new yield streams with those various OFLs and ABCs  
35 that were reviewed by the SSC that you had from the November 18,  
36 2021 meeting.

37

38 As you can see, even if you do not change the sector  
39 allocations, we're looking at very drastic cuts, for both  
40 sectors, to rebuild this stock. In 2023, you're looking at  
41 around a 649,000-pound ABC, and so I don't see how we aren't  
42 going to make any other management changes in order to complete  
43 and revise the current rebuilding plan.

44

45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons, and I agree. I think  
46 we're in a position where we're actually going to have to  
47 recognize, because of the status of the stock, overfished and  
48 undergoing overfishing, and with the realization that we're

1 going to have a significantly reduced quota, that we're going to  
2 have to make a recommendation with regard to catch advice in the  
3 very short term, and, if we do that, we certainly have to be  
4 working on a rebuilding plan at the same time.

5  
6 I think we can accomplish both of those things, and the  
7 important point of what Dr. Simmons said, in my mind, is just  
8 focusing on the rebuilding plan, in and of itself, is not  
9 sufficient, and so Mara perhaps wants to weigh-in a little bit  
10 here. Ms. Levy.

11  
12 **MS. LEVY:** Thank you. A couple of things. One, just to remind  
13 the council of the timeline, NMFS notified the council of the  
14 inadequate progress on the current rebuilding plan in April of  
15 2021, and so, under the statute, you have two years to revise it  
16 and implement a new rebuilding plan that will rebuild the stock  
17 within the rebuilding timeline of 2027.

18  
19 To the extent you want to consider other management measures,  
20 which I understand, it would be best to hone-in on those as soon  
21 as possible, and then, just with respect to this motion, I don't  
22 think it's appropriate to just adopt a certain alternative at  
23 this point, right, and we don't have a document, and there are  
24 various other alternatives that you can consider and that the  
25 council requested that the SSC look at and the Science Center  
26 provide projections on, and so, at the very least, I think we  
27 need to consider those alternatives.

28  
29 If at some point the council decides to stay with the status quo  
30 allocation, if the rationale is there, then that's perfectly  
31 fine, but, at this point, to adopt a specific catch limit seems  
32 premature. Thanks.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Stunz.

35  
36 **DR. STUNZ:** Mr. Chairman, it's not to this motion, and so would  
37 you prefer me to wait? It was to the comments regarding  
38 amberjack a little while ago.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Let's sit tight for just a minute, Greg, on  
41 that. It looks like we have other people speaking directly to  
42 this motion. Mr. Anson and then Ms. Bosarge.

43  
44 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Have we gotten a second on  
45 this motion?

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We have not, and so can I get a second?  
48

1 **MR. ANSON:** I will second for discussion.  
2  
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Anson, for keeping us on the  
4 right track.  
5  
6 **MR. ANSON:** Bob, that last part of the motion, "and to not make  
7 any other management changes to greater amberjack", I think, in  
8 the context of the AP, they were just requesting to not do  
9 anything else, size limit, bag limit, allocation, you name it, I  
10 think, and certainly Ed, if he's still on the call, he can  
11 weigh-in, but I think this motion is just to direct staff to  
12 revise the rebuilding plan and to use this one F rebuild, as  
13 recommended by the SSC, as one alternative, in addition to the  
14 no action, of course, and is that correct, Bob?  
15  
16 **MR. GILL:** Mr. Chairman, if I might?  
17  
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Mr. Gill.  
19  
20 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, Kevin, that's correct,  
21 and I think the comments that have been made are germane and  
22 important. In that regard, we ought to strike all after  
23 "allocation", put a period after "allocation", and, to Mara's  
24 point, I was thinking of F rebuild as being what it's built  
25 around, with alternatives to that, and so, if that works for you  
26 as the seconder, Kevin, I'm good with that.  
27  
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Kevin, as the seconder, are you good with the  
29 change?  
30  
31 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, I am good with the change. Thank you.  
32  
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. **The revised motion is to direct**  
34 **staff to revise the current greater amberjack rebuilding plan by**  
35 **adopting F rebuild, as recommended by the SSC, for the current**  
36 **sector allocation.** Ms. Bosarge.  
37  
38 **MS. BOSARGE:** Mr. Chairman, come back to me after we vote on  
39 this one. It's sort of germane to this, but it can wait.  
40  
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. We'll do so. Mr. Strelcheck.  
42  
43 **MR. STRELCHECK:** A lot of good comments and discussion here. I  
44 feel like we're getting ahead of ourselves, in terms of some of  
45 the actions and alternatives, and so I'm concerned about the  
46 statement about the current sector allocation, and I know that  
47 might be desirable, but the council is going to need a  
48 discussion to evaluate, obviously, whether or not it's

1 appropriate to maintain the current sector allocations, versus  
2 modify them, consistent, obviously, with the projections and  
3 work that's been done.

4  
5 F rebuild is certainly, to me, pretty much the only option on  
6 the table, but it doesn't have to be the only option on the  
7 table, and so my recommendation would be to direct staff to  
8 prepare a plan amendment that revises the current greater  
9 amberjack rebuilding plan, period, and leave it at that, knowing  
10 that these are some of the decisions that will come before us as  
11 that document develops.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Strelcheck, before I go to Ed Walker, I  
14 would just like staff to comment on the comments, either Dr.  
15 Froeschke or Mr. Rindone, with regard to what we have in an  
16 amendment, with regard to a rebuilding plan, already.

17  
18 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have a motion already  
19 from you guys to start a plan amendment to amend the current  
20 rebuilding plan for greater amberjack, still endeavoring to  
21 rebuild the stock by 2027. This happened not long after we got  
22 the notice from the Southeast Regional Office about stock status  
23 and the SSC's review of the assessment, and then we didn't have  
24 the corrected assessment and the projections reviewed by the SSC  
25 until the November meeting, this past November.

26  
27 We have all of that on the books to start that work, and I think  
28 what came from the AP's motion, what the AP was trying to get  
29 at, was the management history for greater amberjack is riddled  
30 with management bias, especially in the last ten years, things  
31 like changes to trip limits, size limits, fishing seasons, et  
32 cetera, and all of these things interject additional uncertainty  
33 into the modeling, and it was the AP's opinion to try to just go  
34 ahead and leave things where they were, to the greatest extent  
35 possible, so that there could be some consistency, at least in  
36 the way that the stock was being managed.

37  
38 We did, during that meeting, make it pretty clear that we're  
39 looking at very considerable cuts, but Captain Walker could  
40 probably speak more to their rationale.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, Captain, Walker, and I see you're  
43 on the line.

44  
45 **MR. WALKER:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, and I was just going to  
46 answer Kevin's question. Yes, the AP generally supported  
47 keeping the management as-is for now. As Ryan just said,  
48 sticking with the program as-is, so that we can really get a

1 handle on apples-to-apples-type status of the stock, and so, to  
2 answer your question, yes, we did not really approve of big  
3 management changes, and it was more of a let's roll with what we  
4 have now and see how it adds up, for another couple of years, at  
5 least.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Captain Walker. Bob Gill.

8  
9 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. **Given the comments, if it's**  
10 **okay with my seconder, I withdraw the motion.**

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Mr. Anson, you're good?

13  
14 **MR. ANSON:** I agree, yes.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** **All right, and so the motion will be**  
17 **withdrawn.** Sorry for the brief delay. We're having a bit of a  
18 discussion with staff about what information that they actually  
19 need to move forward, and so, again, there is already direction  
20 to initiate a plan amendment and to work on a rebuilding plan,  
21 but we need some guidance with regard to either both sector  
22 allocations, where they should go in that regard, and we also  
23 need some guidance with regard to whether or not we want to  
24 recommend that they move forward with the SSC recommendations  
25 with regard to the OFL and the ABC, to help inform the  
26 rebuilding plan. I will leave it at that, and I'm going to  
27 listen to a couple other comments before we try to circle back  
28 in and provide some more concrete advice. Dr. Stunz and then  
29 Ms. Bosarge.

30  
31 **DR. STUNZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to speak to  
32 what Clay asked me to, or brought up, regarding J.D.'s comment  
33 regarding the information we should have coming up regarding  
34 amberjack that will help feed into us making the most informed  
35 decisions, but, unfortunately, none of those will be readily  
36 available for some time.

37  
38 There is Benny Gallaway's study for BOEM that he did for that  
39 explosive rig removal that does in fact -- It's completed, and  
40 it has some very insightful information regarding amberjack use,  
41 particularly, of artificial reef, which there is a high  
42 abundance occurring over those.

43  
44 Yes, J.D. is correct that the Great Red Snapper Count did look  
45 at many species, and, obviously, we've been dealing mainly with  
46 red snapper out of that, and so we have plans to look at that  
47 and analyze those, and certainly that will be used as leverage  
48 for the team that is carrying out the current amberjack study.

1  
2 Just so everyone is aware, and I think most of us are, Dr. Sean  
3 Powers at Dauphin Island, the University of South Alabama, is  
4 leading that amberjack count study, and it's very similar to the  
5 snapper count study, in terms of how it will be carried out,  
6 although that's just beginning, and so there's nothing to really  
7 even consider at this point, and data is just starting in that  
8 realm, and it hasn't even started, in some cases, and so it will  
9 be a while before that's useful for management advice, but, Mr.  
10 Chairman, I just wanted to set the stage, or let everyone know,  
11 that that information will be coming available over the next few  
12 years, but it's not something that we will have readily  
13 available for the immediate future.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Stunz. Ms. Bosarge.

16  
17 **MS. BOSARGE:** Kind of along that same train of thought that Greg  
18 was on, and thinking about the information that we may want  
19 available to help inform our decisions here on what type of  
20 management measures we might consider, I think this would be  
21 helpful. This particular species, it would be helpful if we  
22 could get the same sort of analysis that we had for king  
23 mackerel, I believe it was, where we get a snapshot of what the  
24 historical ACLs and quotas would have looked like with FES  
25 numbers.

26  
27 I say that because this particular species has been overfished  
28 and undergoing overfishing, it seems like, the whole time I was  
29 on the council, that's for sure, and I remember looking at the  
30 historical landings and quotas in the last rebuilding plan  
31 document that we did, and I remember seeing that we had really,  
32 you know, handcuffed the fishermen and really dropped those  
33 quotas over and over and over, as we received more information.

34  
35 Sometimes I am wondering what piece we may be missing here in  
36 this particular equation, and so I think it would be helpful for  
37 me, in summary, to see what those historical quotas would have  
38 looked like, so that I can see were we really blowing these  
39 things out of the water, and, if so, that tells me that we may  
40 need X, Y, Z management changes, versus, if we weren't blowing  
41 those quotas out of the water, maybe this is something  
42 biological that we're doing wrong.

43  
44 I know that we recently changed some minimum size limits on  
45 these, and looking at age at maturity, sexual maturity, and so,  
46 anyway, I think that would be helpful for me. I need to see the  
47 big picture, and so I think I will make a motion, Mr. Chairman.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay.  
2  
3 **MS. BOSARGE:** To request that the Southeast Fisheries Science  
4 Center, SEFSC, produce estimates of the historical ACLs/quotas,  
5 and put "annual" in front of "ACL", please, under -- Excuse me.  
6 Using MRIP-FES numbers for the greater amberjack fishery.  
7  
8 I will leave it up to the Science Center as to how far they go  
9 back. They've done this at least once before, and so whatever  
10 works best for them, with the understanding that hopefully we  
11 could get at least ten years or so, so that we can see some sort  
12 of trends and make some inferences from that, if I can get a  
13 second.  
14  
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. I just -- Before we try to find a  
16 seconder for the motion, Leann, I recall a similar letter being  
17 requested already, and maybe Dr. Froeschke, if he's available,  
18 and it was late last year, right?  
19  
20 **MS. BOSARGE:** For greater amberjack? I have already asked for  
21 this?  
22  
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think you have, and I just don't want to  
24 repeat, and so let me make sure.  
25  
26 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, that's fine. If I've already requested it,  
27 we can withdraw the motion, and maybe Clay or Dr. Walter,  
28 whoever is on, could give us a ballpark estimate of when we  
29 might see that.  
30  
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so it looks like, Leann, that  
32 the council provided, to the Science Center, on July 8, 2021, a  
33 request, not unlike that that's in this motion already, and so  
34 what we can do is follow-up with the Science Center and try to  
35 get a status update there. I see that Dr. Porch has his hand  
36 up.  
37  
38 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you. The challenge with this request is it  
39 implies going back and rerunning old assessments, and, I mean,  
40 we've talked about this before, some of which we just really  
41 couldn't even physically do right now, because things have  
42 changed so much, and sometimes the software doesn't even exist  
43 that the assessments were run with.  
44  
45 Conceivably, we could do something like we did for king  
46 mackerel, which is just taking the most recent assessment and  
47 running it with CHTS, but that's not a trivial time request, and  
48 so I think we'll have to look back and see what sensitivity runs

1 are already in the assessment report, because I think we did  
2 something like that, but, if we were to essentially repeat an  
3 analysis like we did with king mackerel, that would be a fairly  
4 considerable effort, and then we have to start talking about, if  
5 we're going to get requests like this regularly, adjusting the  
6 SEDAR schedule, because you're essentially running new  
7 assessments.

8

9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Porch. Ms. Levy.

10

11 **MS. LEVY:** Thank you, and I just wanted to clarify, and maybe  
12 council staff knows this, but, Tom, you mentioned needing  
13 additional motions related to the SSC's recommendations for OFL  
14 and ABC, but I thought that was encompassed in the prior motion,  
15 where the council asked for the different projections based on  
16 the different allocations, and so I guess I just wanted to  
17 clarify what the council actually has to do at this point with  
18 respect to the catch levels.

19

20 I understand that you might need additional motions if you want  
21 to add looking at things like trip limits and stuff, but, with  
22 respect to the different catch levels, I wasn't clear exactly  
23 what further action the council needed to take.

24

25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** So a couple of things, in my mind, Mara. I  
26 mean, certainly, in the motion that was passed previously, with  
27 regard to revisiting the rebuilding plan, and as part of that  
28 effort, you could certainly work with the OFL, and F 30 percent  
29 SPR was recommended by the SSC, and you could certainly work  
30 with the ABC that was provided by that body as well.

31

32 I guess the question, in my mind, is, you know, again, we have a  
33 stock that's overfished and undergoing overfishing, and we know  
34 that there is going to be a quota reduction, and this is a  
35 fishery with a fishing year that starts in August, and so that's  
36 a little more than six months away, and we're not going to be in  
37 a position, moving forward, given kind of the structure of the  
38 process, that will allow us to provide that catch advice on that  
39 timeframe.

40

41 I was hopeful, actually, coming into the meeting, that we could  
42 consider the OFL and the ABC advice that was provided by the  
43 SSC, based on the most recent assessment, and that's SEDAR 70,  
44 and recommend that, but, even if we did do that, and worked  
45 through this process, as part of the amendment, I am concerned  
46 that we won't have catch advice in place that's reflective of  
47 the stock status, and so perhaps maybe the Regional Office,  
48 either you or Andy, might provide a little insight on what our

1 options are in that regard.

2  
3 **MS. LEVY:** So, just to that point, maybe I am misunderstanding,  
4 but I thought, based on the presentation and what the SSC  
5 decided, that they had recommended, or basically had said, that  
6 the projection methods are -- That the projections that you got  
7 doing the different allocation scenarios -- That any one of  
8 those was acceptable, but the council needed to decide the  
9 appropriate allocation. Each one of those has an OFL and ABC,  
10 and each one of those is projected to rebuild the stock by 2027.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and I'm going to let Dr. Simmons or Mr.  
13 Rindone weigh-in, to provide the council with some more details.

14  
15 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Between January and  
16 November of last year, there was a change in the code, the  
17 projections code, that was used to generate those projections,  
18 and, because of that change in methodology, that was one of the  
19 things that the SSC had to revisit, and so no longer are we  
20 talking about the projections that the SSC saw in January, and  
21 we can, at this point, essentially consider those null. The  
22 only thing in front of you guys right now are those that were  
23 reviewed in November.

24  
25 The SSC determined that the methodology, this new methodology,  
26 that was presented to them and used for the allocation-specific  
27 projections in November, was mathematically appropriate and in  
28 keeping with the best scientific information available.  
29 However, the SSC thought that the decision about which of those  
30 allocation scenarios to adopt was a policy issue best left to  
31 the council, and so, regardless of which allocation scenario the  
32 council prefers, the SSC certified that the method used to  
33 determine the OFL and the ABC for that scenario was  
34 mathematically sound and BSIA.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Rindone. So I will hold  
37 my comment. Ms. Boggs.

38  
39 **MS. BOGGS:** Yes, sir. Has amberjack been converted to FES? I  
40 looked back at the presentations this morning, and it all is  
41 still referring to CHTS.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone.

44  
45 **MR. RINDONE:** FES.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so they're converted to FES at this  
48 point. Ms. McCawley.

1  
2 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to ask a  
3 dumb question here, since I haven't been involved in this. I  
4 guess I'm not understanding why we aren't having a discussion  
5 about those four sector allocation scenarios and either making a  
6 motion to have all four analyzed in the document, or selecting a  
7 subset of those four, and I guess I'm just confused why we're  
8 not focusing on that, but I feel like maybe I've missed  
9 something.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I am not sure that you missed anything. I  
12 think there's a couple of questions, again, moving forward,  
13 Jessica, in my mind, right? We have an assessment out there,  
14 and, again, I'm just going to continue to reiterate this, and we  
15 know that it's overfished, and it's undergoing overfishing, and  
16 we know that we have to embark upon a rebuilding plan, and we've  
17 had a change in some of the analyses that direct -- Are in a  
18 position now to direct staff to revise the rebuilding plan,  
19 based on a new OFL and ABC, or at least methodology, to provide  
20 that information.

21  
22 At the very least, we're going to have to consider a scenario to  
23 move this forward, because of the stock status, but, whether or  
24 not we choose to add alternative allocation scenarios in that  
25 direction to staff, again, that's something that we have  
26 historically struggled with, and so we certainly need to move  
27 forward with some catch advice, right, and we need to be able to  
28 provide a corresponding rebuilding plan, or rebuilding schedule,  
29 and, if we ask the staff, in an amendment, or a document, to  
30 consider alternative allocation scenarios, we would have to do  
31 the same, and so we're going to get there one way or another,  
32 and it's very similar to the discussions that we've had with  
33 other managed fisheries, whether or not we want to deal with the  
34 immediate issue at-hand, which is providing catch advice without  
35 consideration of the allocation, or we want to capture it all in  
36 one single document. Does that help? I hope so. Ms. Levy.

37  
38 **MS. LEVY:** Okay, but, as with a lot of these other species, the  
39 allocation is linked to the catch level projections, right, and  
40 so we're not changing the rebuilding timeframe. Everything is  
41 geared towards rebuilding to 2027, as previously established by  
42 the council, because you can rebuild by that time, and you have  
43 different alternatives that either keep the same allocation and  
44 have catch levels associated with that to rebuild or change the  
45 allocation based on various time series or keeping the  
46 commercial catch limit the same.

47  
48 I don't think you can pick one, right now, and just run with it,

1 but you could potentially develop a record as to why you would  
2 keep the same allocation, but that hasn't been developed yet,  
3 and so I kind of agree with Jessica, and like what -- Council  
4 staff, or staff, NMFS and council staff, are going to develop a  
5 framework action, or a plan amendment, to adjust the catch  
6 levels, at the very least, so that we can rebuild by 2027.

7  
8 The question is what allocation scenarios do you want to  
9 consider? What's a reasonable range of alternatives? Each one  
10 of those will then give you the projections you need to do that,  
11 including the OFL and the ABC.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons.

14  
15 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think,  
16 Mara, that is a good point, but one thing we need to keep in  
17 mind, again, is this motion that the SSC made, with the  
18 corresponding OFL and ABCs, based on those allocations, are  
19 completely different, completely different, than what the  
20 council saw in January, and so the council needs to decide if  
21 they want to accept these SSC recommendations.

22  
23 **MS. LEVY:** To that point?

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Ms. Levy.

26  
27 **MS. LEVY:** They can't really -- I mean, decide that how? In a  
28 vacuum? I mean, what's the alternative, meaning where is the  
29 decision going to happen? I guess, what's the alternative, if  
30 the council -- Are you going to send it back to the SSC, and  
31 what would be the basis for that, I guess?

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone.

34  
35 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, at this point,  
36 there isn't really an alternative, because this SSC motion  
37 supersedes the last one. When the SSC reviewed this in January,  
38 it was based on the information they had at the time, which, at  
39 the time, they didn't know that there were two things within the  
40 model that needed to be corrected, and they didn't know, at the  
41 time, that there was going to be a development, a large  
42 improvement, in the projection code.

43  
44 Once that information came to light, the whole basis for by how  
45 much and how to rebuild the stock changed, and so the  
46 information that the council had, at the time, at its January  
47 meeting, when it directed staff to revise the current rebuilding  
48 plan to rebuild the stock by 2027, that information has also

1 changed with the information that the SSC reviewed in November.

2  
3 As far as the data are concerned, we're kind of at a new  
4 starting point with these new recommendations from the SSC, and  
5 the council hasn't seen any of this, up until this point, and so  
6 this is -- This kind of brings us back to ground zero, as far as  
7 the knowledge the council has, in order to actually try to  
8 rebuild the stock.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Anson.

11  
12 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I guess I want to echo  
13 the comments that Jessica had provided earlier, in that I think  
14 we're there, and it's just this is a reset button, essentially,  
15 with what the SSC reviewed this month, or in November, I should  
16 say, and is provided here in this motion that we're looking at  
17 on the screen, is that everything prior to that, that staff or  
18 we had discussed, is off the table, and so we are looking at  
19 this, and we don't have another option.

20  
21 I mean, this is the science part of the management, and the SSC  
22 has reviewed this, and these are -- They are signing-off that  
23 the projections for the scenarios that I guess we provided  
24 earlier -- They ran through the model, and they agree with the  
25 output, and so, from comments that Dr. Simmons had provided, and  
26 that Ryan has provided, I think staff has all the information  
27 they need, unless the council wants, at this time, to pare down  
28 any of the scenarios that were reviewed and approved by the SSC,  
29 and, to Mara's point, maybe it would be best to leave them all  
30 in there, and we may not ultimately decide to choose the ones  
31 that differ in the projection percentages, but, for just having  
32 options in the document, it might be best to have more than just  
33 one and no action. Thank you.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Kevin. Jessica.

36  
37 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Kevin was kind of going where I was going. I  
38 don't know how else to start this discussion, other than saying  
39 why don't we direct staff to look at all five of these  
40 allocation scenarios that are listed there in the table, and I  
41 do understand that the SSC, recent SSC, discussion was kind of  
42 like a reset button, but it just seems like we need to get  
43 started somewhere, and so I guess I am suggesting -- And there's  
44 not a lot of difference between those five, but I don't know  
45 where else to start, but it seems like we should start with  
46 those five alternatives for the allocation scenarios.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Right, Jessica, and I think, again -- I think

1 everybody -- There's not a lot of disagreement here, right, and  
2 I think we've got new information and a direction from the SSC  
3 with regard to the methodology to establish OFL and ABC and how  
4 those fit into the projections, based on any allocation scenario  
5 that you want to consider.

6  
7 I guess what I am trying to emphasize, and get across to the  
8 committee, at least from my own perspective, is that, when we  
9 start to consider multiple allocation scenarios, then we often  
10 struggle with that, and it's the timeframe that bothers me here,  
11 and so we're going to essentially put -- Task staff with  
12 developing an amendment that considers multiple allocation  
13 scenarios, and that in itself will take some time, and then  
14 we'll go through a process to try to pick one of those various  
15 scenarios as a preferred, and rulemaking could take well over a  
16 year, and so we're looking at something happening in 2024, when  
17 we know that the stock is not in good shape now.

18  
19 I am just asking that people consider that. Do we want to move  
20 forward with the current allocations, and it makes it a very  
21 simple process, or do we want to try to eat the whole elephant  
22 and just move forward with the amendment? I don't have a strong  
23 preference, but I am just letting people understand what my  
24 perspective on this is, and it's not unusual for us to be in  
25 this position. Ms. Boggs.

26  
27 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I guess a point of  
28 order. Leann, I think, has a motion on the board that hasn't  
29 been seconded, and so I will be glad to second it, so that we  
30 can dispense with this motion and move on to the discussion  
31 that's based on Jessica's comments. Thank you.

32  
33 **MS. BOSARGE:** Mr. Chairman, I think I withdrew it.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I thought you did, too.

36  
37 **MS. BOSARGE:** Because it was already being made.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, I thought you did too, but, formally, I  
40 guess we didn't withdraw it, but we have withdrawn it officially  
41 at this point.

42  
43 **MS. BOGGS:** Okay. Thank you. There's been a lot said since  
44 then.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so, again, I think everybody is  
47 pretty much on the same page. I think Mara made some excellent  
48 points, and I think so did Mr. Anson and Jessica and others,

1 right, and so, ultimately, we're going to have to move forward,  
2 and I think the direction to staff is, based on the newer  
3 information provided by the SSC with regard to OFL and ABC and  
4 rebuilding, that they prepare a document that considers that  
5 information with multiple scenarios, and is that direction that  
6 people want to head? Kevin.

7  
8 **MR. ANSON:** Mr. Chair, kind of picking up on your comment, to  
9 the extent that we can at this time, reduce the number of  
10 scenarios that the SSC reviewed and approved, to save time, if  
11 you will, and reduce staff time, I am willing to offer a motion  
12 to reduce the number of scenarios, but I guess maybe, Dr.  
13 Simmons, if you and staff had to work on a document with let's  
14 say three scenarios, including a no action scenario, but two of  
15 the SSC scenarios they reviewed, versus the five that are  
16 currently in there, does that increase the chance that you won't  
17 be able to get the document together in time in order to meet  
18 the requirements for implementation of a rebuilding plan?

19  
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons.

21  
22 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I'm  
23 speaking on behalf of our staff and the Regional Office staff,  
24 but I don't think so, Mr. Anson. I think the bigger issue is if  
25 there are other allocation scenarios that we would have to go  
26 back to the Science Center and back to the SSC for, and that's  
27 the larger issue that we have, if we're going to go forward with  
28 looking at sector allocations and a rebuilding plan for greater  
29 amberjack at warp speed.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Okay. I am not  
32 seeing a lot of motions at this point, and we've had a lot of  
33 discussion, and I think, by Full Council, we're going to have to  
34 decide how we want to direct staff, moving forward, and so I  
35 would encourage people to consider this discussion and be  
36 prepared to offer some motions, so we can make some progress,  
37 moving forward. Otherwise, we're going to be in a very, very  
38 difficult situation, with regard to amberjack, and I don't think  
39 we have the luxury of that type of time. Mr. Strelcheck.

40  
41 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Building on Kevin's  
42 comment, in looking at the scenarios, and I certainly could see  
43 eliminating either the 80/20 or 78/22 allocation under  
44 consideration, and considering those virtually overlap one  
45 another.

46  
47 The other comment that I guess I would make is -- I know, based  
48 on the AP, they're recommending that no management measures be

1 made, or changes be made, and it was mentioned earlier about  
2 commercial trip limits. I think, because of the reduction in  
3 the catch level, I'm not sure we would want to even consider  
4 changing the trip limit.

5  
6 You could argue that, based on the commercial fishery and how it  
7 operates, that we would prevent overfishing by closing the  
8 fishery once that catch limit is met, and so you may not have to  
9 do anything on the commercial side.

10  
11 For the recreational, I know we've changed size limits, and bag  
12 limits are low already, but we might at least want to direct  
13 staff to revisit the structure of the recreational season, given  
14 the small catch limits that we'll be looking at. Beyond that, I  
15 could see this being maybe a two or three-action amendment that  
16 focused solely on that, and then, if we wanted to get into more  
17 management options, we could subsequently follow-up, once we  
18 implemented this to end overfishing and rebuild the stock.

19  
20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Andy. Ms. Boggs.

21  
22 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, to Andy's point, and I understand what the AP  
23 is asking, about us not making any additional changes, but, if  
24 I'm not mistaken, one of the reasons that it was changed several  
25 years -- I guess three years ago now, to go to an August 1  
26 opening to a May 31 closing was to, in effect, have something  
27 available to be caught in August and September, and you now have  
28 triggerfish, theoretically, that goes through May, and so I  
29 think you would see a lot of pushback, from at least the charter  
30 fleet along the Gulf coast, about trying to change the year.

31  
32 One of the things -- The reason I raised my hand a moment ago,  
33 and since we're kind of talking about scenarios and what might  
34 work and might not work, is there a scenario -- Is there a  
35 reason why we couldn't look at a constant catch over these next  
36 few years, and, I mean, leave the allocation alone? I have gone  
37 and looked at some past documents, and, I mean, this has been  
38 going on since 2003, and so there's a lot to go back and look  
39 at, but it would seem to me, one, that you wouldn't want to try  
40 to reallocate right now, while you're rebuilding, and, two,  
41 would a constant catch scenario work in this case? Thank you.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Again, Susan, I think these are all things to  
44 consider over the next couple of days, right, before we come  
45 back to Full Council on this, but, again, we're going to try to  
46 wrap this up, because we have a lot of business, but it doesn't  
47 mean that we don't have to accomplish something in Full Council,  
48 and so people really need to be thinking about that.

1  
2 Again, we're going to have to provide the appropriate direction  
3 to staff and where we want them to go with this amendment, and I  
4 think we have to be mindful of the time that's involved in  
5 moving that forward, and so that will affect what we want to put  
6 in it, and so, unless there are any other issues that need to be  
7 discussed with regard to greater amberjack right now, I think we  
8 will go ahead and wrap that discussion up and move on to gag.

9  
10 All right, and so I am not seeing hands for any more greater  
11 amberjack. All right, and so we will move into the SSC  
12 presentation, and, again, Dr. Nance if you want to lead us  
13 through that for gag. For those of you out there, that would be  
14 Tab B, Number 6(a).

15  
16 **PRESENTATION ON SEDAR 72: GAG GROUPEL STOCK ASSESSMENT REPORT**  
17 **PRESENTATION: PROJECTIONS AND SSC RECOMMENDATIONS**  
18

19 **DR. NANCE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Bernie, can we bring up the  
20 PowerPoint and go to Slide 14, please? This is going to be the  
21 -- As Dr. Frazer pointed out, this will be the discussion the  
22 SSC had in regard to SEDAR 72, gag grouper.

23  
24 The Southeast Fisheries Science Center, at our November meeting,  
25 provided -- We had some questions on Fmax and those types of  
26 things, and so they provided some context for us for using  
27 maximum fishing mortality, or Fmax, proxy for the fishing  
28 mortality rate at maximum sustainable yield, or FMSY, for Gulf  
29 gag grouper.

30  
31 The Fmax proxy originated in the 2001 Reef Fish Stock Assessment  
32 Panel assessment of gag grouper. The stock originally assessed  
33 considered only female standing stock biomass. At that time,  
34 Fmax was providing an SPR proxy equivalent to approximately 43  
35 to 65 percent of the SPR, which was greater than the F 30  
36 percent SPR. When looking at female-only SSB for this type of  
37 species, there was less concern for the proportion of males in  
38 the population, and, in this scenario, Fmax was determined to be  
39 appropriate.

40  
41 However, males generally represent the oldest and largest  
42 individuals in the population, and so the inclusion of males now  
43 seems appropriate to better conserve and rebuild the gag grouper  
44 stock structure and status.

45  
46 The Southeast Fisheries Science Center reviewed the SSC's  
47 projection settings for gag grouper. We're using an Ecospace  
48 model used to inform the episodic mortality for red tide, and it

1 was updated and included the data through October of 2021. The  
2 new proportionality severity estimates for low, medium, and high  
3 were 6 percent for low of the strength of the 2005 red tide, and  
4 so low was 6 percent of the strength of the 2005 red tide,  
5 medium was 24 percent, and high was 68 percent.

6  
7 The Southeast Fisheries Science Center reviewed the  
8 corresponding projections under both F 30 percent SPR and Fmax  
9 for low, medium, and high red tide severity designations. Under  
10 Fmax, the gag grouper stock rebuilds in just under ten years  
11 with zero fishing mortality. Under F 30 percent SPR, rebuilding  
12 takes ten to twelve years, depending on the red tide severity  
13 assumed.

14  
15 The SSC is recommending a change in the FMSY proxy from Fmax to  
16 F 30 percent SPR. Fmax is projected to rebuild gag grouper to  
17 an SPR equivalent of only 13 percent, compared to 30 percent for  
18 rebuilding under the F 30 percent SPR. The SSC thought that  
19 Fmax was representative of a harvest strategy that was too  
20 aggressive to support optimum yield.

21  
22 Given the low proportion of males in the gag grouper population,  
23 and it's now estimated around 2 percent, the SSC reaffirmed the  
24 value in consideration of the males in the rebuilding strategy.  
25 The SSC reaffirmed its estimation of using the medium severity  
26 index of red tide, as estimated by the Ecospace model. Age-  
27 specific estimates of red tide mortality are higher for younger  
28 ages. However, in the SEDAR 72 model, this mortality is  
29 averaged across all ages.

30  
31 The motion from the SSC was the SSC finds that the SEDAR 72  
32 based Gulf of Mexico gag projections are the best scientific  
33 information available and are suitable for management. This  
34 motion carried without opposition.

35  
36 The SSC noted the continued importance of maintaining fishery-  
37 dependent data and that it would be disruptive if the fishery  
38 experienced a closure.

39  
40 The motion from the SSC is the SSC finds that, based on the new  
41 scientific information, that Fmax for Gulf of Mexico gag is no  
42 longer appropriate for use as a proxy for MSY, and the SSC  
43 recommends that F 30 percent SPR be the MSY proxy and the basis  
44 for status determination criteria. The SSC recommends that  
45 projections based on F 30 percent SPR and the medium red tide  
46 scenario be used to establish OFL, ABC, and the rebuilding  
47 schedule. Projections based on Fmax are scientifically valid  
48 and suitable for analytical purposes, excluding the setting of

1 catch levels for rebuilding purposes. That motion carried  
2 without opposition.

3  
4 During our meeting in November, the Southeast Fisheries Science  
5 Center took us through  $T_{min}$  tables for  $F_{max}$  and F 30 percent SPR  
6 for all the different red tide scenarios. The tables that I'm  
7 going to present are all the ones that the SSC is recommending,  
8 which are the F 30 percent SPR at the medium red tide level.

9  
10 This is F 30 percent SPR at the medium red tide level with F set  
11 at zero, and this scenario allows rebuilding to occur by 2034.  
12 This is -- Again, all of these are going to be for F 30 percent  
13 SPR, using the medium red tide scenario, and this is using F  
14 fixed at 75 percent of the maximum fishing mortality threshold.  
15 You can see, under this scenario, that the stock is rebuilt by  
16 2040.

17  
18 If we set the timeframe as  $T_{min}$  plus one generation, rebuilding  
19 occurs at 2043, and the next slide is, if you use F rebuild at  
20  $T_{min}$  times two, then rebuilding would occur by 2045. All of  
21 these different scenarios -- They're all appropriate, and they  
22 give us different rebuilding projections or, really, different  
23 timeframes, depending on the different levels, and so one is F  
24 set at zero, one is F fixed at 75 percent of the maximum fishing  
25 mortality threshold, and the others are F rebuild,  $T_{min}$  plus  
26 one generation, and F rebuild at  $T_{min}$  times two. That, Mr.  
27 Chairman, ends the presentation from the SSC discussions.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Nance, for that  
30 presentation. Is there any questions from the council? If not  
31 immediately, I'm sure that there will be as we go through the  
32 discussion. Mr. Rindone, would you like to work through the  
33 Reef Fish AP summary?

34  
35 **REEF FISH AP RECOMMENDATIONS**  
36

37 **MR. RINDONE:** Can do, Mr. Chair. The AP discussed the gag  
38 assessment results and projections at its January meeting and  
39 had a couple of motions for you guys, and so the first of which  
40 was to recommend to the council, Science Center, and SSC to use  
41 the State Reef Fish Survey data curated by the State of Florida  
42 to rerun the SEDAR 72 stock assessment model for gag and get  
43 away from glaring and significant estimation issues clearly seen  
44 in the current private recreational and shore landings data  
45 between 1965 and 1995 inputs being used in the stock assessment.  
46 The AP urged the council, Science Center, and the SSC to ensure  
47 that this review is completed prior to formulating a rebuilding  
48 plan or management changes.

1  
2 The AP's next motion was to recommend to the council, and the  
3 council's SSC, not to close the gag grouper fishery, in order to  
4 avoid a loss of fishery-dependent data, and then, lastly,  
5 related to gag, the AP stated that, if the council must decide  
6 on gag management that includes the options presented to the  
7 SSC, that the Reef Fish AP recommends the adoption of the  
8 longest time series, which is F 30 percent SPR, under the medium  
9 red tide severity scenario, setting F rebuild at T min times  
10 two. Mr. Chair.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Are there  
13 any questions, again, relative, or related, to either the SSC  
14 report or the overview of the AP? Ed, Captain Walker, is there  
15 anything you would like to add to the AP discussion?

16  
17 **MR. WALKER:** I think this is a pretty good summary of our  
18 discussion, and I would share with you that there was widespread  
19 discussion in the AP about recalibrated recreational landings  
20 data in years past, and that won't come as a surprise to anyone,  
21 I don't think, and some of the comments from the panel were the  
22 landings seem exceedingly large, considering that, back in time,  
23 not near as many people fished as far offshore as they do  
24 nowadays, and, if I may quote some of the panel members, the  
25 new/old recreational landings do not jibe with reality, and  
26 that's kind of the general gist of it. In the essence of time,  
27 I will hang on to the rest of it, unless anybody has any more  
28 questions about this for me.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Ed. All right, and so I'm going to  
31 open up the floor for any discussion, as it relates to gag. Mr.  
32 Gill.

33  
34 **DISCUSSION - COUNCIL REQUEST FOR SRFS INTEGRATION AND UPDATE**  
35 **ASSESSMENT OF SEDAR 72**  
36

37 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The SSC, as Dr. Nance  
38 noted, recommended a change to the MSY proxy, and so, Bernie, if  
39 you would pull up the revised gag motion, I would like to make a  
40 motion to do just that.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Bob, we're going to work with  
43 Bernie to get that up there. Hold on, and we'll get it squared  
44 away, and we'll get right with you.

45  
46 **MR. GILL:** Bernie, it's in a very recent email.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Bob, it doesn't look like we've got an email,

1 and so did you send it to meetings?  
2  
3 **MR. GILL:** Yes, I did, and, if you haven't got the new one,  
4 Bernie, use the one that I sent you yesterday.  
5  
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Bob, if it's okay, and we're having a hard  
7 time locating it in the email log, and can you just read it out  
8 to us?  
9  
10 **MR. GILL:** Surely. One moment, please. **The motion is, for gag**  
11 **grouper, that the current proxy for FMSY, Fmax, be replaced by F**  
12 **30 percent SPR, per the recommendation of the SSC.**  
13  
14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. We'll clean it up, but, in the interim,  
15 I would like Dr. Froeschke to weigh-in.  
16  
17 **DR. FROESCHKE:** A couple of things to think about. Based on the  
18 process that we have in place right now, we would have to do  
19 this through an action in the document, and so that's one thing  
20 to think about. In Reef Fish Amendment 48, that is still in the  
21 rulemaking process, there is a process by which the council  
22 could adopt a new MSY proxy, based on the recommendation of the  
23 SSC, by just noting it in the document, and perhaps we could get  
24 an update from SERO on if that amendment is expected to be  
25 implemented in time to allow that.  
26  
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and we'll let SERO ponder that for a  
28 minute, while we work on this motion. Bob, are you -- Let's  
29 make sure we're good with the wording here, and I'm not sure  
30 that the motion is --  
31  
32 **MR. GILL:** The motion should read "the current proxy for FMSY".  
33  
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. **The motion is to replace -- The current**  
35 **proxy for FMSY, Fmax, be replaced by F 30 percent SPR, per the**  
36 **recommendation of the SSC.** I think we understand where that's  
37 going. For gag. I mean, it falls under the -- I think it's --  
38 Okay, and so this is the motion, Bob, and are you okay with  
39 that?  
40  
41 **MR. GILL:** Yes, sir, I am.  
42  
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Is there a second for the motion?  
44  
45 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Second.  
46  
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It's seconded by Ms. McCawley. All right. Is  
48 there further discussion? Ms. Levy.

1  
2 **MS. LEVY:** Thank you. Ultimately, right, the council is going  
3 to have to prepare a plan amendment that has a rebuilding plan  
4 and ends overfishing, and, as part of that amendment, this  
5 should be a part of it. Whether you need alternatives or not,  
6 based on the prior amendment, I am not going to get into at  
7 this point, but, either way, you can't just adopt this by a  
8 motion, right, and you could direct staff to begin a document to  
9 put in place the rebuilding plan and end overfishing and look at  
10 modifying the MSY proxy.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Levy, I agree, and so I think your comment  
13 essentially suggests that Bob's motion should be included as  
14 part of the plan amendment process. Again, I am pretty mindful  
15 of the time, Bob, if you and Jessica might allow me an  
16 opportunity to maybe provide a bit of a suggestion here, and  
17 partly based on what Mara had to say, and is that okay?

18  
19 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Sounds good.

20  
21 **MR. GILL:** Absolutely.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Using Mara's language, Bernie, let's try to  
24 craft this one. We'll say that the council directs staff to  
25 begin work on a plan amendment to establish a rebuilding plan  
26 for gag grouper to end overfishing of the stock, and so that  
27 deals with the fact that we know that the fishery is overfished  
28 at this point, and undergoing overfishing, but, after "stock",  
29 you can put a hard stop, or a period, there.

30  
31 What we're looking for is actions in the plan amendment, and so  
32 go ahead and write "Actions in the plan amendment should include  
33 revising the FMSY proxy", and you can get rid of all that other  
34 stuff right now, and just move it down, so we remember what it  
35 said. Revising the FMSY proxy, and a comma after proxy, and  
36 other things that would be in the plan amendment would be the  
37 catch limits, and there are other things, like accountability  
38 measures. I mean, we could go on, and so we'll just say, "and  
39 other management measures".

40  
41 I think that will allow us to capture the motion, the original  
42 motion, Bob, and it takes into consideration, full  
43 consideration, the comments and the direction suggested by Ms.  
44 Levy, and so are you okay with that as a friendly amendment,  
45 Bob, to your motion?

46  
47 **MR. GILL:** Yes, sir.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Jessica, as the seconder?  
2  
3 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Yes, and I had a question, when you're ready.  
4  
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think, since we've had the motion and a  
6 second, it's time for discussion. Go ahead.  
7  
8 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** I guess my question is do we need to specify that  
9 we agree with the medium red tide scenario that the SSC  
10 discussed? Does that need to be captured somewhere, and do we  
11 need to have a discussion about it? I am just putting that  
12 question out there.  
13  
14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think it's a good question, and I think that  
15 we certainly have a discussion about it. Whether it affects  
16 this motion specifically, I don't think so, and I think we can  
17 move forward with this motion, but we can talk about those  
18 scenarios in a separate item.  
19  
20 Okay, and so we know that we have to end overfishing, right, and  
21 so plus it's that we're accepting the recommendations from the  
22 SSC, or at least considering those recommendations in the plan  
23 amendment, having to do with the FMSY proxy catch limits and  
24 things of that nature, and so my question to staff is, is that  
25 enough direction to initiate the plan amendment, as you envision  
26 it? Dr. Simmons.  
27  
28 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I think  
29 so, and I think it would be good for us to circle back and talk  
30 about the three different -- I think it was three different  
31 rebuilding scenarios that the SSC recommended, and, at that same  
32 time, we could discuss the -- I believe it was the medium, low,  
33 and high red tide scenarios as well.  
34  
35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, but can we do that separately from this  
36 motion, do you think?  
37  
38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes.  
39  
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Given that input from staff, is there  
41 any further discussion on this motion as it exists? **Not seeing**  
42 **any, is there any opposition to the motion? I am not seeing any**  
43 **opposition, and so the motion carries without opposition.**  
44  
45 To follow this up then, I think, to Jessica's point, do you want  
46 to talk about the various elements, I guess, or scenarios, and,  
47 Jessica, I will give you a chance to weigh-in here.  
48

1 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It just seemed like we  
2 should have a discussion about that, like the medium red tide  
3 scenario, and I believe what Carrie was referring to is the  
4 number of years in the rebuilding plan, and is what she's  
5 talking about?

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons.

8  
9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, Ms. McCawley. That's what I  
10 was referring to. I don't know, and is it best to put up Dr.  
11 Nance's presentation or go to the report, so we can look at  
12 those?

13  
14 **MR. RINDONE:** We can put the presentation back up.  
15 Visualization is probably the most acceptable way for more  
16 people. Bernie, can you pull Dr. Nance's presentation back up  
17 and go to the last few slides in the gag portion of it? Just so  
18 you guys know about how long these things are projected to take,  
19  $T_{min}$ , which was the minimum time to --

20  
21 **DR. NANCE:** Slide 21 is the first one, Bernie.

22  
23 **MR. RINDONE:** There you go, and so  $T_{min}$ , which would be the  
24 minimum time to rebuild the stock, under zero fishing pressure,  
25 is twelve years, and so, because  $T_{min}$  is greater than ten years,  
26 the council has a few options to it, or for it, and it's  $T_{min}$   
27 times two,  $T_{min}$  plus one generation time, and F rebuild at 75  
28 percent of the maximum fishing mortality threshold.

29  
30 Now, the last one there rebuilds the stock the quickest, in  
31 eighteen years, and  $T_{min}$  plus one generation time rebuilds it in  
32 twenty-one years, and  $T_{min}$  times two, which is the Reef Fish  
33 AP's recommendation, rebuilds it in twenty-three years, and, of  
34 course, the council has other tools at its disposal that it can  
35 use to help the SSC do heat checks and any catch limit revisions  
36 on gag over time, like doing interim analysis requests and then  
37 doing additional operational assessments as part of the SEDAR  
38 schedule.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. I see a couple of hands, and sorry, and  
41 it was crowded by the screen, but it looked like we had Ed  
42 Walker and then Mary Levy. Captain Walker.

43  
44 **MR. WALKER:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to throw it in  
45 there that the AP did discuss the different red tide scenarios,  
46 and they agreed with the medium red tide recommendation.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Ed. Ms. Levy.

1  
2 **MS. LEVY:** Thank you. I just wanted to make clear that the  
3 three options that you see there, if the  $T_{min}$  is greater than  
4 ten years, they represent the  $T_{max}$ , right, and so, if you have a  
5  $T_{min}$  that's greater than ten years, then the guidelines provide  
6 several options that you can do to establish the  $T_{max}$ , and there  
7 may be situations in which you have the information to look at  
8 all of these and say what the  $T_{max}$  might be, and, in some  
9 situations, one might work.

10  
11 In this case, it looks like all three would work, but that  
12 doesn't necessarily need to be the target time, right, and so  
13 the target time is the shortest time possible, taking into  
14 account the biology of the stock, the needs of fishing  
15 communities, and recommendations by international organizations,  
16 which don't apply here.

17  
18 I just want to make clear that that would be a  $T_{max}$  that we  
19 would be choosing, and it doesn't necessarily mean it's the  $T$   
20 target. It could be, but I don't want to automatically assume  
21 that the  $T_{max}$  is the  $T$  target. Thanks.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Mara. Bernie, do we have  
24 any other hands? Again, I guess I'm just trying to provide the  
25 context, so people know what we're dealing with here, right, and  
26 so, in my mind anyway, we recognize that we've got a stock that  
27 is in, by all accounts, and the assessment, is not in good  
28 shape, and we are beginning to work on a plan amendment, or at  
29 least that's the suggestion, right, that takes into account the  
30 recommendations from the SSC with regard to the FMSY proxy and  
31 other things, catch limits, et cetera.

32  
33 That will take some time, again, right, and it's 2022, and I  
34 don't think we -- Even if we start this amendment now, and  
35 depending on where we might go with it, it's unlikely that we  
36 would have a completed amendment, an accepted amendment, that's  
37 been blessed, et cetera, by 2023.

38  
39 We're forced with the responsibility of kind of ending  
40 overfishing now, and so I'm going to actually ask, perhaps,  
41 Andy, from the Regional Office, what is a plausible path forward  
42 with regard to any recommendations coming from this body that  
43 allows us to end overfishing in 2023? It's already 2022, and  
44 the quota has already been released, from the commercial side of  
45 things, and we don't want to be in a position, I don't think, in  
46 2023, where we haven't put a plan in place to manage this  
47 fishery in a responsible manner, and so, Andy, do you want to  
48 weigh-in on this?

1  
2 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Tom. Yes, I appreciate you teeing this  
3 up for me, and I was going to talk about it at the right time,  
4 and so, I guess, for the council's benefit, just so that  
5 everyone understands kind of the timeline we're working off of,  
6 when the council is notified that a stock is overfished and  
7 undergoing overfishing, that starts a two-year time clock to  
8 implement action to rebuild the stock, as well as end  
9 overfishing, and the Act states that you have to end overfishing  
10 immediately, and, obviously, the council needs time to do that,  
11 and so it's not going to, obviously, happen overnight.

12  
13 Right now, where we're at is I have a letter that will likely go  
14 to the council, as early as this week, that will notify the  
15 council that overfishing is occurring, and the stock is  
16 overfished, and you have, at the previous meeting, recommended  
17 that the State Reef Fish Survey assessment be considered and  
18 used for scientific advice going forward, and Clay can certainly  
19 talk about the timeline of that, but that motion and  
20 recommendations do not negate the council from going forward and  
21 proceeding with measures to end overfishing and rebuild the  
22 stock, and so you're going to need to move forward and take  
23 action now, until such time that maybe that new scientific  
24 advice is available, and, obviously, there is some uncertainty,  
25 in terms of timing, and whether that gets approved by the SSC,  
26 et cetera.

27  
28 My recommendation is the council proceed and not bank on the  
29 fact that you are going to get that stock assessment in the  
30 near-term, knowing that we need to take some actions to address  
31 the overfishing, and it's very clear, from the assessment,  
32 whether you use the State Reef Fish Survey or you use the FES  
33 survey, that overfishing is occurring and that the stock is  
34 overfished.

35  
36 There could be a number of ways to do this, and the council  
37 could do some simple actions to end the overfishing in the near-  
38 term, and wait to maybe build out the rebuilding plan, but you  
39 run the risk of having a short timeframe for the rebuilding  
40 plan, if the scientific advice and guidance changes down the  
41 road.

42  
43 The other option is you could request an interim action, or  
44 emergency action, by the agency to proceed with rulemaking, in  
45 order to end the overfishing, while you work toward, obviously,  
46 a rebuilding plan, and so I think there is several paths, and  
47 the paths are going to be confused, based on the fact that we  
48 may be getting new scientific advice and information mid-stream,

1 but, as I said, that scientific advice does not prevent you from  
2 the need to act now, given what we know about the stock and the  
3 best available science that we have before us.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Andy. That information is actually  
6 really helpful, and I was trying to figure out a path forward,  
7 and so, again, I mean, if the council opted to -- We're  
8 compelled to take action to reduce overfishing, but, if they  
9 were to recommend some type of an interim rule, or an emergency  
10 rule, so we could get numbers in place for the start of the 2023  
11 season, we could do that using the recommendations coming from  
12 the SSC, these most recent recommendations, as they relate to an  
13 appropriate MSY proxy, or, as Jessica had pointed out,  
14 considering the various red tide scenarios, the medium red tide  
15 being the one that was zeroed-in on.

16  
17 Then thinking about the suggested rebuild timeline, and so that  
18 would give us all the parameters that you need to set an OFL and  
19 ABC and other catch advice for 2023, and then allow the staff,  
20 when they are developing the amendment, moving forward, some  
21 latitude, right, in what that looks like. Did I capture that  
22 correctly?

23  
24 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, I think that's correct. I mean, we  
25 certainly could take an action that addresses just 2023 and  
26 ending the overfishing, and that would be setting, obviously,  
27 new catch limit advice and recommendations from the SSC and then  
28 any modifications of management measures that would be  
29 necessary. Then, depending on where things stand with any new  
30 scientific advice emerging, the council would still have 2023 to  
31 implement the rebuilding plan in time to meet the two-year time  
32 period.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Andy. Again, my goal here is -  
35 - There's a lot of complicated things in this agenda today, but  
36 I would like us to be able to try to move forward in a  
37 productive manner, and so we do have one motion that we moved  
38 forward with gag with regard to the development of an amendment,  
39 and I think that's a positive direction, but, again, I  
40 recognize, and I think we all recognize, that we have to take  
41 action, immediate action, to alleviate overfishing, and one way  
42 to approach that is to recommend some rulemaking, an interim  
43 rule or an emergency rule, it sounds like, Andy, for the 2023  
44 season, based on some of the SSC recommendations.

45  
46 I am happy to try to construct a motion for that purpose, but,  
47 before I do that, I just want to make sure that folks on the  
48 council are good with that approach, and so let me see if there

1 are any hands. Go ahead, Andy.

2  
3 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, certainly Mara could weigh-in, and I  
4 don't see this as absolutely having the agency do an interim or  
5 emergency rulemaking here, and I think the council, obviously,  
6 has a number of meetings between now and August that they could  
7 take some sort of action and make recommendations to the agency  
8 and submit a rulemaking to us for consideration, and certainly  
9 the interim approach would put the onus on the agency then to  
10 move forward with rulemaking, if that's the path that you  
11 decide.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** No problem, Andy, and so I guess what I'm  
14 thinking about, because it's an IFQ fishery, and things  
15 certainly need to be in place by January, in advance of January  
16 2023, and I'm pretty concerned about the timeline, but we don't  
17 have to do it right now, and I think that it's something to  
18 consider, and we can either do it at Full Council, or we can do  
19 it after we take a look or a little bit of a break. I am  
20 actually going to look at the Chair and ask at what point he  
21 wants to take a little bit of a break for lunch.

22  
23 **MR. DIAZ:** What I am going to propose, but I do want to see if  
24 anybody would have any problems with this, and we're scheduled  
25 for a thirty-minute lunch, but I do realize that some people are  
26 doing this meeting virtually, and we made this schedule when we  
27 thought we were going to do an in-person meeting, and I know  
28 that some people are operating out of office buildings, where  
29 they may have to go out and get lunch.

30  
31 If we was to do a forty-five-minute lunch, does that give  
32 anybody any problem, where they won't have to get them some  
33 lunch? Anybody speak up now if you have any issues with that.  
34 Seeing nobody speaking up, let's come back at -- Let's come back  
35 at 12:20 Central. Thank you.

36  
37 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on January 25, 2022.)

38  
39 - - -

40  
41 January 25, 2022

42  
43 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

44  
45 - - -

46  
47 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery  
48 Management Council reconvened on Tuesday afternoon, January 25,

1 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Tom Frazer.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We are not quite done with our deliberations  
4 as they relate to SEDAR 72, gag grouper, and our path forward,  
5 and so I want to kind of revisit our next steps in that, and so  
6 we had one motion on the table to direct staff to begin a plan  
7 amendment, and I think we were good with that. The question on  
8 the table is what we want to do in the short-term to be able to  
9 respond in a timely manner to the fact that the stock is  
10 overfished and undergoing overfishing. I am going to -- I know  
11 a couple of people were interested, perhaps, in making some  
12 motions in that regard, and so I will open the table up for  
13 discussion. It looks like Jessica McCawley.

14  
15 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Thank you, and I sent this motion over to the  
16 motions email, and I don't know if they have received it yet,  
17 but I'm suggesting that the council recommend that NMFS  
18 implement an emergency rule for gag grouper that would start  
19 January 1, 2023, based on the yield streams corresponding to F  
20 30 percent SPR and the medium red tide severity determination,  
21 in keeping with the SSC's recommendations from SEDAR 72 and  
22 using the current sector allocation. Further, the council  
23 recommends that the catch limits for the emergency rule for gag  
24 grouper be based on the rebuilding timeline of T<sub>min</sub> times two,  
25 to ensure that the council is able to end overfishing while it  
26 works to develop a comprehensive rebuilding plan. Thank you,  
27 Mr. Chairman.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Jessica. We do have a motion on  
30 the board, and I am reading through it now. It captures the  
31 need to respond in short order to the stock status, and it  
32 incorporates the latest SSC recommendations, and it doesn't  
33 necessarily deal with the allocation issue, which will be dealt  
34 with in the plan amendment, and so all of that looks  
35 appropriate. Is there a second to this motion?

36  
37 **MR. BROUSSARD:** I will second.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It's seconded by Mr. Broussard. Is there any  
40 further discussion on the motion? I will wait a second, to make  
41 sure that people have an opportunity to read through it.  
42 Jessica, do you want to provide any rationale at all, before I  
43 go to Andy, or do you think it kind of speaks for itself?

44  
45 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** I can add a little. I feel like this is  
46 capturing the discussion that we were having before lunch, and  
47 it's capturing the discussions from the SSC. We brought in the  
48 piece about the red tide, and we brought in the rebuilding

1 timeline, and also talking about a date, and it's kind of  
2 phasing this in, just like it was suggested, I believe, by Andy,  
3 and maybe Mara, right before lunch, that we would work on one  
4 piece first, and then we would come in second with the  
5 rebuilding plan, and so that's kind of the basis for my motion,  
6 and I'm just trying to capture what we were talking about before  
7 we broke for lunch.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Jessica, and I guess one of the  
10 issues that we found ourselves trying to deal with is that, you  
11 know, because the gag fishery is an IFQ fishery, right, that we  
12 have already released, for example, the quota for 2022, and our  
13 hands are a bit tied, and we certainly don't want to find  
14 ourselves in that position at the beginning of 2023, and so I  
15 guess I appreciate the need for the motion, whether or not it's  
16 an emergency rule or some other mechanism, and it looks like  
17 Andy might have something to say there, and so Mr. Strelcheck.

18  
19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Jessica, I appreciate you  
20 putting the motion on the board, and I do want -- We are looking  
21 at our guidance with regard to emergency versus interim  
22 rulemaking, in terms of what would be most appropriate here, and  
23 so I do think we'll need to clarify if this needs to be an  
24 emergency rule or an interim rule.

25  
26 Under interim rules, you don't have to end overfishing, but you  
27 would, at minimum, have to reduce the overfishing until such  
28 time that, obviously, council action takes place.

29  
30 Prior to the break, I had mentioned possibly a framework action,  
31 but, after discussions with General Counsel, I have concluded  
32 that this is a more appropriate approach. The one thing that I  
33 guess I would add is, and maybe it's a subsequent motion that  
34 Jessica or others would offer, was any management measures that  
35 you would want the agency to take, obviously, to reduce, or end,  
36 the overfishing under this request, because we can't simply  
37 just, obviously, change the catch limit in order to achieve this  
38 for the recreational fishery, and we would want some guidance  
39 with regard to whether or not you wanted any further management  
40 measures. Thanks.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Andy, for that input. We could  
43 certainly think about additional management measures. If we  
44 don't have any on the table at this point, when we come back at  
45 Full Council, we could actually modify the motion, if it passes.  
46 Bob Gill.

47  
48 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I like this motion, but I

1 would like to have a discussion on the suggested use of the  
2 rebuilding timeline of Tmin times two, and I understand that was  
3 the AP's recommendation, but that was the longest rebuild time,  
4 and one of the effects of that says that you get somewhat more  
5 fish available throughout the rebuild time to do it, and I guess  
6 the question, in my mind, is whether this predisposes the plan  
7 amendment for how we want to rebuild the gag stock.

8  
9 My kneejerk reaction to Tmin times two is probably not the way I  
10 would support for that plan amendment, and it makes no  
11 difference for the emergency rule, and I will go with it, but  
12 extending the rebuild timeline out, to me, it seems to me to be  
13 the wrong approach, and I think we want to take a little bit  
14 tougher look at it and rebuild it as soon as we can, within  
15 reason. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Good comments, Bob, and my own read, and I  
18 will look to staff, after I think about it for a minute, but I  
19 don't think that this action, in the short-term, would hamstring  
20 the development of an amendment, or tie anybody's hands, and so  
21 I just want to make sure that that's true, and maybe John or  
22 Carrie.

23  
24 Bob, in just talking with John, again, whatever -- The amendment  
25 will supersede this action, for sure, but perhaps Ms. Levy might  
26 want to weigh-in here. Mara.

27  
28 **MS. LEVY:** I don't think taking emergency, or interim, action to  
29 reduce or end overfishing is going to stop the council from  
30 looking at the various alternatives for the rebuilding plan and  
31 the rebuilding timeline, and, as I mentioned before, those three  
32 scenarios, including this Tmin times two, are the T maximum, the  
33 maximum time, and that doesn't mean that it's necessarily the  
34 time that you should choose to rebuild the stock, which is  
35 required to be the shortest time possible, taking into account  
36 the needs of the fishing community, and so I think you have some  
37 flexibility, in terms of what you do in the plan amendment and  
38 the rebuilding plan.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Mara, and so, again, the  
41 understanding is that this motion, moving forward, will not  
42 preclude a consideration of other rebuilding timelines in the  
43 plan amendment, and so I think we have some flexibility in that  
44 regard. Is there any further discussion of this motion? Okay.  
45 I am just going to wait just a second. I am not seeing any  
46 hands. **Is there any opposition to the motion? Hearing none,**  
47 **and seeing none --**

48

1 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Mr. Chairman, I am going to vote against it. I  
2 am not voting against it because I'm opposed to it. I'm just  
3 not sure, by me voting for it, that the agency would be able to  
4 prevent moving forward with it, if we thought it was  
5 unnecessary, and so I will -- I apologize, but it's a Regional  
6 Administrator thing.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I understand your position. **We have one no,**  
9 **and are there any others opposed to this motion?** Ms. Bosarge,  
10 did you want to --

11  
12 **MS. BOSARGE:** No, I'm sorry, and I was trying to raise my hand  
13 for after the motion.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so let's dispose of the motion.  
16 **Again, is there any opposition to the motion, other than Mr.**  
17 **Strelcheck? Seeing none, the motion carries with one in**  
18 **opposition.** Leann.

19  
20 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so Mr. Strelcheck  
21 mentioned that, yes, we could put this in place, possibly, but  
22 he didn't feel like that would do it, and we would have to have  
23 some management measures as well on the recreational side, and  
24 what -- I wasn't sure exactly what he meant, and were you  
25 speaking to an ACT or something else, Andy?

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Andy, would you like to clarify?

28  
29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Leann. We, obviously, manage the gag  
30 fishery with size limits, bag limits, and closed seasons, and so  
31 I would have to look at the accountability measures, and I don't  
32 recall, but we open the season on June 1, and then, if the  
33 accountability measures allow us to close when the new catch  
34 limit is met, whatever is specified under this emergency action,  
35 then that would be sufficient, but, if they don't, or you wanted  
36 to recommend additional management measures that the agency  
37 would consider to lessen any sort of economic impacts, or  
38 biological impacts that go along with this, then that was what I  
39 was implying.

40  
41 **MS. BOSARGE:** A follow-up, Mr. Chairman?

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Ms. Bosarge.

44  
45 **MS. BOSARGE:** I'm sorry, Andy, and I guess I'm not following you  
46 about if it doesn't allow you all to close the season when the  
47 quota has been met, and I'm not following that, and I don't know  
48 if you mean that the quota is just going to be so small that

1 maybe it could really be met in one wave, and you don't feel you  
2 would have the data soon enough, and, if that's the case, you  
3 know, I mentioned possibly looking at some Florida data on this,  
4 or even, if the quota is small enough, to make sure that we stay  
5 within it, and given it's that small, that the season would be  
6 that short, is this not a time where maybe we want to look at  
7 some alternative management scheme for this little-bitty amount  
8 of fish and see if we can find a way to dole it out to the  
9 fishermen that lets them go catch those fish when they're ready  
10 to go catch them, but has enough accountability built into it  
11 that we don't have to worry about going over.

12  
13 Honestly, I'm thinking about some sort of electronic tag system  
14 of some sort, and not necessarily physical tags, but an  
15 electronic tagging system, and so, if you could elaborate a  
16 little more, Andy, then maybe we could come up with some ideas.

17  
18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Leann. I am trying to ahold of the  
19 accountability measures, and so what your example was is exactly  
20 correct, right, and so we are reducing the catch limit  
21 considerably under this action, and so, if the agency has  
22 authority that, once the season opens, that we close when we  
23 project the catch limit to be met, then that would be  
24 sufficient, from a management measures standpoint.

25  
26 If we don't have that authority, then we would essentially allow  
27 for harvest to ultimately exceed the lower catch limit that's  
28 been specified, and I would much rather have the council come in  
29 and ask the agency to consider modifications to when the season  
30 is open, or changes to the bag limit or size limit or whatever  
31 management measures that you would deem appropriate at that  
32 point to consider under the interim rule, or emergency rule.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Andy, and so I'm trying to think  
35 through this a little bit, and the clarity helps, right, and so  
36 I understand that what we're faced with is a significant  
37 reduction in the quota, in the number of fish that are available  
38 to the recreational sector, or both sectors, but, because of the  
39 in-season monitoring may not be sufficient to curtail that catch  
40 before a significant overage, that becomes problematic, and so  
41 we could, for example, and, again, I am just throwing out some  
42 ideas here, look at the historical catches, after some period of  
43 time, one month for example, to get an idea of when we expect  
44 the quota that's allocated to a particular sector, to the  
45 recreational sector, in this case, to be caught, and that is the  
46 additional management measure, or the constraint, that you might  
47 consider moving along with this motion, and is that right, Andy?

48

1 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, that's correct, Tom.  
2  
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. That is super helpful to me. Jessica.  
4  
5 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Mine is on a different topic, and so you might  
6 want to finish out that particular question from Leann and then  
7 maybe circle back to me.  
8  
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so, Leann, did you want to continue  
10 with your line of questioning, or are you good for right now?  
11  
12 **MS. BOSARGE:** I think I'm good for right now, mainly because I  
13 guess the internet cut out, and so I missed what was said there,  
14 and so I will just be quiet and listen in, but I do want to  
15 circle back to this idea, whether it be in the interim/emergency  
16 rule or whether it be something that we just request comes back  
17 at the next meeting for the longer-term plan, to find a way to  
18 allow the recreational fishermen as much flexibility with that  
19 handful of fish that they're going to get next year, and  
20 probably for years to come after that, to fish it when they want  
21 to, and so it's time to think outside the box with this one, I  
22 believe, and maybe not for this short-term, next year, but  
23 definitely moving forward, and so just circle back to me later,  
24 please, sir.  
25  
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Will do, Ms. Bosarge, and, again, I  
27 think that the core of this motion will not necessarily change,  
28 but it might be expanded upon, to tackle the additional  
29 management measures that might go along with the rule, and so,  
30 Andy.  
31  
32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Tom. Just to add to this, I like the  
33 way that Leann is thinking, in terms of innovation, and I  
34 certainly wouldn't recommend adding that to any sort of  
35 rulemaking, just to keep that as simple and straightforward and  
36 move as easily as possible.  
37  
38 In terms of the accountability measures, we do have an  
39 accountability measure that, once the catch limit is met, or  
40 projected to be met, we would close the fishery, or I have  
41 authority to close the fishery, and so that still then begs the  
42 question of, well, what type of season would that result in,  
43 based on a reduced catch limit, and, if the council is fine with  
44 moving forward, and the agency proceeding with, obviously,  
45 implementing, in all likelihood, that accountability measure,  
46 when we could proceed on that front.  
47  
48 If you would like, obviously, additional management measures

1 that might extend the length of the season a little bit longer  
2 and avoid as long of a closure, then we would certainly want to  
3 hear recommendations from the council on that emergency  
4 rulemaking. Thanks.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. That makes sense. I think, again, in  
7 the interim between now and Full Council, when we come back to  
8 this motion, I think council members should give some thought to  
9 that, so that we can provide more detailed direction moving  
10 forward, and so, Jessica, is that an old hand? You had  
11 something else you wanted to talk about, and so let's go ahead -  
12 - I am not seeing any other hands that are up right now, and so,  
13 Jessica, if you want to go ahead and tackle whatever it that was  
14 on your mind.

15  
16 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** I guess I just -- This is gag, and I wanted to  
17 circle back to something that I think that you all did at  
18 another meeting, where you all were requesting the Florida State  
19 Reef Fish Survey be part of the gag assessment, and so I wanted  
20 to make a motion, and then maybe we can get an update after the  
21 motion is made, and I also sent this to staff.

22  
23 **A motion that the council requests that the calibration of the**  
24 **Florida State Reef Fish Survey, with the MRIP-FES for gag**  
25 **grouper, be a priority for the National Marine Fisheries Service**  
26 **and all associated parties to that process, and so just trying**  
27 **to understand the timeline and make sure that this is moving,**  
28 **and make sure that this is actually going to get done sooner**  
29 **rather than later, because I feel like we need this.**

30  
31 Also, Mr. Chairman, I believe that this was discussed by the AP  
32 as well, and so I wasn't sure -- I know we're behind, but I  
33 don't know if you wanted to go to Captain Walker to talk about  
34 that, and I'm not sure that we reviewed this piece when we went  
35 over the AP report.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Jessica, and so I will try to take  
38 these issues in order, and so, for the record, I will just read  
39 the motion. **The council requests that the calibration of the**  
40 **Florida State Reef Fish Survey, with MRIP-FES for gag grouper,**  
41 **be a priority for NMFS and all associated parties to that**  
42 **process.** Before I move to Captain Walker, is there a second for  
43 this motion?

44  
45 **MR. BROUSSARD:** I will second.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It's seconded by Mr. Broussard. Okay. We  
48 certainly will have some discussion about this, and I know it

1 looks to be a logical transition to the update that's going to  
2 be provided by Dr. Porch and Mr. Strelcheck, but we'll hear what  
3 Captain Walker has to say with regard to the AP's discussion as  
4 it relates to this issue. Ed.

5  
6 **MR. WALKER:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Just to reiterate what Ms.  
7 McCawley had to say, we did, at the AP, discuss and have  
8 universal approval of including the Florida State Reef Fish  
9 Survey data into the assessment, if possible, and we didn't take  
10 a vote, or a motion on it, but I can tell you that consensus in  
11 the room was definitely in favor of doing that.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Mr. Rindone, to the point made by Mr. Walker?

14  
15 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, there is a motion to  
16 that effect, and I can read it out to you guys. There it is.  
17 It's on the board. The motion was to recommend to the council,  
18 the Science Center, and the SSC that we, and I'm presuming the  
19 council and its constituencies, use the SRFS data to rerun the  
20 SEDAR 72 stock assessment model for gag and get away from the  
21 glaring and significant estimation issues clearly seen in the  
22 current private recreational and shore landings data from 1965  
23 to 1995 inputs being used in the stock assessment. We urge the  
24 council, the Science Center, and the SSC to ensure this review  
25 is completed prior to formulating a rebuilding plan or  
26 management changes. That motion carried unanimously.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Mr. Rindone, and so that motion  
29 from the AP seems to be consistent with the motion made by Ms.  
30 McCawley. I am looking for other hands, and I'm wondering if  
31 it's -- Do we want to vote on the motion prior to having the  
32 discussion with Dr. Porch and Mr. Strelcheck? Before we get  
33 there, I see Susan Boggs. Go ahead, Susan.

34  
35 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will support this motion,  
36 but I just am concerned about the precedent that we're setting  
37 using state data collection to influence, to replace, a portion  
38 of the assessment, and I just hope that, going forward, we can -  
39 - I understand that this is kind of -- Gag is centric to  
40 Florida, but I sit back and I remember when we used to catch gag  
41 off of Alabama, and so the question, in my mind, is what has  
42 happened to the gag, and there's a lot of explanations, I'm  
43 sure, that are out there, but I just -- I will support this  
44 motion, but I want to be cautious, moving forward, and I don't  
45 know if council staff -- How we need to maybe go about this at a  
46 later date, setting strict requirements as to when we use state  
47 data in place of in a stock assessment.

1 I mean, normally, we use state data, yes, but it's not removing  
2 something out of the stock assessment, and so, again, I would  
3 like to -- I will support it, but I want to be cautious, moving  
4 forward, the precedent that we're setting the state data. Thank  
5 you so much.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Ms. Boggs, for those comments. Dr.  
8 Porch.

9  
10 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you. Just to give you an update on that, and  
11 we talked to Ms. McCawley about that, with actually the leader  
12 of our agency, Janet Coit, and the plan, at this point, is to  
13 finalize the terms of reference for the review of the  
14 calibration of the SRFS survey with FES at the February  
15 transition plan meeting, and so, at that point, they would  
16 clarify exactly what will be requested from the State of Florida  
17 for the review and specify the terms of the review.

18  
19 We expect that that review should only take a few months,  
20 especially since what the state did was supply a constant  
21 calibration to the FES time series, and so it shouldn't be  
22 anything that's too hard for the reviewers to study and  
23 understand and draw a conclusion about.

24  
25 The key is whether they agree that that's the appropriate way to  
26 calibrate the SRFS survey back in time, and we think that may  
27 take, on the outside, a few months, and so it could be that,  
28 within four to six months after the February workshop, that we  
29 should have a decision through that transition process.

30  
31 Remember that Dr. Cisco Werner sent a letter to all the state  
32 directors describing the transition process, and one of the  
33 things that was listed in there, in the last steps after  
34 certification, is to actually understand how to calibrate these  
35 time series back in time and then have some level of review of  
36 it, and so, unfortunately, that got delayed, due to COVID, and  
37 maybe other reasons, and we're trying to get it all back on  
38 track, and so, at that February workshop, we should do just  
39 that, get the terms of reference settled, and then the Office of  
40 Science and Technology, and Richard might be on, and he could  
41 comment on it, but they think they can get some consultants to  
42 review it fairly shortly after that. Like I said, the whole  
43 process done in maybe six months, on the outside.

44  
45 After that point, we just need to discuss if we need to bump one  
46 of the assessments that the Gulf is doing by a few months to  
47 accommodate the time it will take the analysts to run all the  
48 diagnostics and everything that they need to do for the gag

1 assessment, assuming that it successfully undergoes the peer  
2 review, the SRFS calibration.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Clay, for laying out that timeline.  
5 It looks like Mr. Rindone has a question.

6  
7 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Dr. Porch. I  
8 do have one question about that, and so you had said that you  
9 thought that it could take four to six months after the February  
10 2022 meeting for that calibration to be reviewed and approved,  
11 and would it be after that point, after that four to six months,  
12 that work would begin on a SRFS run for SEDAR 72, if that  
13 calibration is approved, and, if so, how much longer would you  
14 estimate it would be before the SSC would have something that  
15 they could review?

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Clay.

18  
19 **DR. PORCH:** The final steps would happen after that, just  
20 because I'm not going to ask the staff to make a bunch of runs  
21 and go through all the diagnostics when we're not completely  
22 sure what the outcome of the transition process will be.

23  
24 It could be that the reviewers have some suggestions to improve  
25 that calibration back in time, and I don't know that they will,  
26 but it's possible. After that, it could take a couple of months  
27 to complete all the diagnostics, and I'll just -- We'll get back  
28 with staff and talk about what the progress is, and what it's  
29 likely to be, and then we'll figure out if we need to bump the  
30 next assessment that the analysts will be working on by an  
31 equivalent amount.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Clay. Mr. Gill.

34  
35 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Porch answered my  
36 question, and so I will pass.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so Ms. Bosarge.

39  
40 **MS. BOSARGE:** I'm going to support the motion, and I said this  
41 at the last meeting, but I guess it's worth saying again, now  
42 that we have new representation in the Florida seat, which we're  
43 glad to have you, and we love you to death, although we do miss  
44 Martha too, and she was amazing.

45  
46 The one caveat that I had, when I supported a similar kind of  
47 motion at the last meeting, was that the thing that I can say  
48 for MRIP, whether CHTS or FES, which I have been rough on them

1 about it, but the one positive thing I can say is that the data  
2 is transparent.

3  
4 In other words, me, as just a regular member of the public, I  
5 have a lot of access to see the data and really get down in the  
6 weeds on it, and, as we move forward using state data, in either  
7 this assessment or others, or in other ways, I feel that that  
8 same level of transparency has to be there, and so, at some  
9 point, I guess maybe we can have a discussion on where the  
10 public can access the actual intercepts and things like that,  
11 any calculations and formulas and the raw data, essentially, and  
12 so hopefully we can get to that point, but I do have that as an  
13 expectation in my mind, moving forward.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Ms. Bosarge. Okay. Are there any  
16 other comments or discussion on this motion? **I am not seeing**  
17 **any hands, and I am not hearing any appetite for further**  
18 **discussion, and so is there any opposition to the motion?**  
19 **Seeing none, the motion carries.**

20  
21 Okay. We have, on the agenda, a discussion that was to be led  
22 by Dr. Porch and Mr. Strelcheck, and I am not sure that we need  
23 any more, based on Clay's comments, but I don't want to  
24 prematurely restrict their opportunity to provide information,  
25 and so, Clay or Andy, did you have something more that you  
26 wanted to talk about on that topic, or are we good? Dr. Porch.

27  
28 **DR. PORCH:** The only thing that I would just add is remember we  
29 do have the results from the sensitivity run, with the latest  
30 version of the SRFS survey calibrated back in time, and it  
31 doesn't really change Tmin very much. In fact, it might even be  
32 ten years, and it doesn't result in really much of a change in  
33 the rate of rebuilding or anything like that. It's just scaling  
34 down the recreational catches back in time, and so I just want  
35 to manage expectations. Just because you change that time  
36 series, it doesn't mean it's actually going to change the  
37 management actions very much, and it's just going to change the  
38 currency that you're working in.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Good point, Clay, again, and so, moving  
41 forward, I think people need to recognize that that change in  
42 currency isn't necessarily going to result in a large amount of  
43 additional quota relative to using the other data streams, and  
44 so that's just a precaution, or a little cautionary note, and I  
45 appreciate that as well, and so thank you. All right.

46  
47 Is there any other discussion with regard to the gag grouper,  
48 before we move on? I am not seeing any, and so we will go ahead

1 and move to the individual fishing quota, or the IFQ, programs.  
2  
3 **MS. BOSARGE:** My hand is up, Mr. Chairman.  
4  
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** You've got to be faster, Leann, or I'm going  
6 to move on.  
7  
8 **MS. BOSARGE:** I know. I'm just going to start jumping in, I  
9 guess.  
10  
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I'm joking. Go ahead. I'm sorry.  
12  
13 **MS. BOSARGE:** No, that's okay, and so can we get something, a  
14 presentation, at the next meeting, and I asked last time, but I  
15 know this agenda is jam-packed, but on the out-of-the-box  
16 thinking that we've had in the past, and let's pull together  
17 some pieces of that, and let's look at something for gag, with  
18 the quotas that we're looking for 2023 forward on the  
19 recreational side, and how can we release those fish to the  
20 recreational fishery in a way that they have a little more  
21 flexibility in accessing their fishery.  
22  
23 Right off the top of my head, obviously, tags comes to mind.  
24 However, I am totally open to other ideas, but I do want a  
25 presentation on that at the next council meeting, hopefully, so  
26 that we can start to talk about it and figure out what those  
27 other ways of divvying those fish out might be, so that we'll  
28 have it ready for 2023, or 2024, whatever it is, the longer-term  
29 plan.  
30  
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so I think it's -- Again, there's a  
32 lot on the upcoming agenda, and I know that already, and I think  
33 that there's a working group that is dealing with kind of issues  
34 related to innovative management approaches, as it's related to  
35 the Modern Fish Act, and so we might be able to pull something  
36 out of there, but I am just --  
37  
38 I understand that staff is kind of nodding their heads right now  
39 that they can think about what might be possible, and so that's  
40 a suggestion under consideration, and we'll do the best that we  
41 can, perhaps, and maybe we can talk about it again at Full  
42 Council. All right. Thanks, Leann.  
43  
44 Okay, and so let's go ahead and move to the IFQ programs, and  
45 there is a number of items there having to do with the focus  
46 group formation and next steps, and so I am going to let Dr.  
47 Lasseter take it away.  
48

**INDIVIDUAL FISHING QUOTA (IFQ) PROGRAMS  
FOCUS GROUP FORMATION AND NEXT STEPS**

1  
2  
3  
4 **DR. AVA LASSETER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Okay. We'll begin  
5 with the reef fish action guide, and so, for this item, I am  
6 going to use a presentation to go through everything about the  
7 IFQ focus group, how we got to where we are now and what our  
8 next steps are going forward, and I am going to have some  
9 questions for the committee to provide guidance for us, to make  
10 sure that we're all on the same page about how this is going to  
11 work.

12  
13 We have also provided a revised public hearing draft of  
14 Amendment 36B as background, and then just to let everybody know  
15 that, at the end of the Reef Fish Committee today, in closed  
16 session, the council is going to review the applicants and make  
17 selections towards that, and so let's move into the  
18 presentation, which is located Tab B, Number 8(a).

19  
20 The IFQ focus group is why we're here, and a little bit of the  
21 context, and so this is the motion, with the revisions, that  
22 were made at the last meeting, and so the council has requested  
23 to form a small, facilitated focus group of knowledgeable  
24 individuals selected by a process that we completed in August to  
25 review the current IFQ programs' goals and objectives and  
26 recommend their replacement/retention. These revised goals  
27 shall serve as the basis for the focus group recommendations.  
28 That addition was made at the previous October meeting.

29  
30 The original motion carries on, which is to define the changes  
31 needed for an improved IFQ program, for both programs, to  
32 specifically address minimizing discards, fairness and equity,  
33 and new entrants' issues. The focus group should report their  
34 findings to the SSC and appropriate APs for review and advice to  
35 the council, and we're going to come back to this last part  
36 right here a little later in the presentation.

37  
38 What we're going to kind of cover here is we'll first review the  
39 application process and the ten possible member positions, and I  
40 will remind everybody about the closed session selection of  
41 focus group members this afternoon, and I'll talk a little bit  
42 about focus groups broadly and how this applies to the council's  
43 authority for convening such groups, and then we'll look forward  
44 for next steps, from that last part of the motion, the returning  
45 results to the council. We'll talk about the timeline and talk  
46 about staff's idea for the facilitators.

47  
48 Member positions, this is just the bulleted list of all of them,

1 and there is one available position for each, except for the  
2 shareholder, and there will be three shareholder positions,  
3 identified as small, medium, and large. Of course, because  
4 there is six share categories, an individual may be small,  
5 medium, or large in one and a different ranking in another, and  
6 so this does get a little more complicated, but let's take a  
7 look at each of the position descriptions that were provided on  
8 the application form and approved by the council.

9  
10 A dealer is someone who has the Gulf and South Atlantic dealer  
11 permit and has received IFQ landings through their dealer  
12 account, and so has processed landings through that dealer-  
13 permitted account. Crew with no shares is not required to have  
14 shares or a permit, and so there was an allowance that they  
15 could, but they do serve as captain or crew of a vessel that  
16 participates in the IFQ program, and so the idea here is that  
17 they may not be as visible in the program, in terms of having  
18 shares, permits, landings, and so, for this position, we did  
19 request additional information as a way to verify their  
20 participation, such as the phone number and name of the captain  
21 they work on, for example.

22  
23 The next one is permit holder who leases allocation, and this  
24 person must have a commercial reef fish permit associated with  
25 the same account used to transfer and land allocation, and this  
26 permit holder does not have shares.

27  
28 Then we have an eastern Gulf longliner who leases red snapper  
29 allocation, and so they would be required to have one of these  
30 longline endorsements, and I believe there is roughly fifty-  
31 eight of those, and they must also have a commercial reef fish  
32 permit associated with the same account used to transfer and  
33 land this allocation, because that's how we verified the  
34 participation. However, this longliner does not have red  
35 snapper shares.

36  
37 The shareholder positions, this is the full description that was  
38 provided for the positions in the application process, and,  
39 basically, it's focused on looking at red snapper and/or red  
40 grouper shares, to kind of focus on those, and so a small  
41 shareholder could be one that holds one or both, and a permit,  
42 and, again, I noted that you may be a small, medium, or large in  
43 one category and a different ranking in another, and we were  
44 broadly looking at all shareholders and then broken down into  
45 the top third that have the most shares, roughly a middle third,  
46 and then a bottom third, and then staff attempted to rank  
47 applicants loosely, and, of course, the council has some leeway  
48 in interpreting how to assign people to these positions.

1  
2 Finally, the last three positions is we have public participant,  
3 and so this is the somebody who does hold red snapper and/or red  
4 grouper shares, but does not have the ability to land the  
5 allocation associated with those shares, does not have a permit.

6  
7 A new entrant has a commercial reef fish permit and has  
8 purchased shares and/or allocation for the first time within the  
9 last three to five years, and this is one point that I did take  
10 the liberty to expand on a little bit after the council met and  
11 approved new entrant to be within the last three years, and we  
12 thought about COVID, and how the last couple of years have been  
13 a bit of a time warp, and we did expand that to three to five,  
14 and felt that the council could -- If they didn't want to look  
15 at that broad of a timeframe, they could just narrow down.

16  
17 Then the final one that you added at the last meeting is a  
18 knowledgeable participant who is not financially invested, and  
19 so as in a non-participant, in the programs, and so this should  
20 be somebody that has a solid understanding of the Gulf IFQ  
21 programs, but is not a permit holder or shareholder in their  
22 name, and so those are the ten possible positions.

23  
24 We noticed the IFQ focus group and the application process on  
25 the council website and distributed a press release. The  
26 application -- There was an online application, and it was open  
27 from November 19 until December 17, and we received a total of  
28 fifty-seven applicants across ten positions. Some applicants  
29 applied for one, and only one, position, and many applicants  
30 applied for multiple positions, and we anticipated this, of  
31 course, and it really speaks to that there are multiple ways  
32 that any one individual can participate in the program, and so  
33 you can be, of course, both a shareholder and a dealer, and so  
34 this is something to keep in mind, that each of these positions  
35 is not a distinct perspective, but, often, many of them are  
36 related and overlapping.

37  
38 The staff at the Regional Office helped immensely in examining  
39 the holdings behind the applicants, and they looked at permits,  
40 and they looked at shareholdings, and they looked at whether  
41 landings had been made, and they also examined holdings tied to  
42 the individual, rather than just at the account level, and so  
43 they did actually look behind a lot of the corporate accounts  
44 and tallied shareholdings across accounts, and so we're really  
45 grateful for their assistance.

46  
47 Now just a couple of slides about the focus group and the  
48 context of the Gulf Council, and so what does a successful focus

1 group look like? I think we're all familiar with the term  
2 "focus group", and focus groups can be used in many different  
3 disciplines, and I think they're familiar in like marketing, and  
4 people may convene a group, and I have a little picture here.  
5 They're going to develop some kind of new pizza, it looks like,  
6 and they're trying to get input from random people, for example  
7 a diverse membership, that might have different views on the  
8 subject at-hand, like what kind of pizza would be best.

9  
10 Another characteristic is that members are able to listen to  
11 others and consider perspectives different from their own, and,  
12 in our case here, we're having people who are -- This is their  
13 livelihood, and so this is going to be a slightly different  
14 context, where people really are invested in the outcome of this  
15 group, probably more so than deciding what kind of pizza  
16 toppings a company might be selling.

17  
18 Another characteristic is that the moderators will create an  
19 atmosphere where everybody can be comfortable to speak freely,  
20 and they also don't follow parliamentary procedure, like a lot  
21 of our meetings do, and it will be more likely to produce  
22 something like consensus statements, and I say like consensus  
23 statements because we're not expecting that specifically, but it  
24 would be more inclined towards the group agreeing on things  
25 rather than providing recommendations, motions, that are made  
26 and seconded and then forwarded to the council, and so it's  
27 going to be a little more -- These are a little more  
28 participatory, a little more informal.

29  
30 In terms of the council, this IFQ focus group is an advisory  
31 panel, in that that's the Magnuson-Stevens Act authority that we  
32 are doing this under, and the MSA provides, requires, councils  
33 to convene advisory panels to provide input on fishery  
34 management plans and various issues, and so this IFQ focus group  
35 is essentially an advisory panel.

36  
37 It will be similar, in that the council has already expressed  
38 its priority to select members that represent a diverse  
39 geographic perspective around the Gulf, and it will be like an  
40 AP, in that it must be open to the public, and so non-members  
41 will have some kind of a role. They are at least observing, and  
42 so that's very much like an AP.

43  
44 Unlike AP meetings, which are like the council meetings, where  
45 members sit around a u-shaped table, we're expecting that the  
46 members may be broken down into small groups for discussions,  
47 and there will be some kind of participatory exercises, and then  
48 those sub-groups would come back and report back to the council,

1 and that's one type of example that the facilitators may be  
2 using.

3  
4 Another difference, of course, is, in AP meetings, the members  
5 themselves elect from amongst themselves a chair and vice chair,  
6 and the chair then runs the meeting, and, in this case, the  
7 focus group will be run by external individuals, one of more  
8 facilitators.

9  
10 The rest of the slides are going to go towards where do we go  
11 from here, what are the next steps, and so let's return back to  
12 that council motion that was on the first slide, and it  
13 specified that the IFQ focus group would report their findings  
14 to the SSC and appropriate APs for review and advice to the  
15 council, and so, after the meetings, and in consultation with  
16 the original motion maker, we did want to follow-up with this  
17 and discuss if this is really the council's intent for the focus  
18 group recommendations. It seems more appropriate that perhaps  
19 they should be coming directly to the council, and I would like  
20 to pause there and see if there is any discussion by the  
21 committee.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Lasseter. We have the slide up  
24 on the board, and so I'm going to rely on Bernie to let me know  
25 if people have their hands up. Okay. Thanks, Bernie. Chris.

26  
27 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I think, if that is the intention, as written  
28 there, that this workgroup, or AP, whatever we're going to end  
29 up calling it, has to answer back to the IFQ AP, and it kind of  
30 precludes membership from that AP then, right, because they  
31 would just be answering back to themselves, if that is the true  
32 intent. If it's not, then we probably need to change the  
33 structure of what the intent of this really is, and so that's my  
34 two-cents. Thank you.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Chris. Mr. Gill.

37  
38 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My thinking on this is that  
39 the focus group is pretty wide open, in terms of what they can  
40 do relative to their thoughts on the IFQ program. If you look  
41 at the terms of reference, it's almost a blank page, and it  
42 says, hey, take an overview, and give it your best shot, and  
43 tell us what you think is best for the program and the  
44 fisheries.

45  
46 In that sense, it's different than the more tightly structured  
47 normal approach that we utilize the advice from the SSC and the  
48 APs, and so, for my way of thinking, given that wide-ranging

1 potential nature of what this focus group might come up with,  
2 it's advisable to get both the science side, and I presume the  
3 Ad Hoc IFQ AP, to comment whether they agree or disagree, so  
4 that we get the full range of advice on the results of the focus  
5 group and utilize that as the basis for going forward.

6  
7 To Chris's comment, I agree that this focus group should  
8 certainly not replicate either the Ad Hoc IFQ AP or the Reef  
9 Fish AP, but I would not go so far as to say it precludes some  
10 of their members. I think the important aspect of this focus  
11 group is the diversity, some of which we will presume is not  
12 already represented on an AP, or an SSC, and maybe it is, or  
13 maybe it's not, but that it is a collective of folks that can  
14 share on it.

15  
16 I am thinking that, in all likelihood, I would expect that some  
17 of the IFQ AP members might possibly be there, or at least  
18 they're eligible, and, at the end of the day, what we want is a  
19 composite of individuals that we think can best handle the issue  
20 and provide their thoughts and suggestions on how to improve  
21 these programs, and so I don't preclude members of existing APs,  
22 or SSCs, as potential members for the focus group, and I would  
23 expect that some of those would actually be there. Thank you.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Gill. Mr. Williamson.

26  
27 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think I probably agree  
28 with Bob on most points, except for the fact that I would prefer  
29 that the focus group come directly back to the council, rather  
30 than diluting their recommendations through the SSC and the APs.

31  
32 One other personal point is my experience with focus groups and  
33 facilitators is limited, but, when I have been involved, I find  
34 that facilitators tend to try to drive a particular point that  
35 may or may not be something that they feel strongly about, and  
36 maybe that won't happen here, but I guess my point is that,  
37 rather than dividing up into small groups, to be potentially  
38 influenced by a facilitator, it would be my recommendation that  
39 the group, the focus group, stay together, and I don't see any  
40 problems with a u-table type of situation, where everybody hears  
41 everyone else and has the opportunity to comment. Thank you,  
42 and those are my comments.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Williamson. Ms. Boggs.

45  
46 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I may be jumping the gun a  
47 little bit, but have we had any discussion about how many times  
48 this focus group is going to meet? I mean, this cannot be an

1 open-ended kind of project, and I just wanted to -- I may be  
2 jumping ahead, Ava, and so I apologize, but have we set any kind  
3 of a timeline, one meeting or two meetings, or is it just open-  
4 ended? Thank you.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Lasseter.

7  
8 **DR. LASSETER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Why don't we go ahead  
9 and go through the next couple of slides, and then we'll just  
10 come right back here, and so we'll see everything, and that  
11 might be better.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, that's good.

14  
15 **DR. LASSETER:** Okay. Great. Susan, I'm going to come to that  
16 in just another slide or two. Okay, and so the next thing we  
17 want to talk about is a proposed timeline, and so this is what  
18 we are thinking. All of this may need to be changed, depending  
19 on lots of factors, the pandemic, COVID, whatnot, but, right  
20 now, here we are.

21  
22 In January, at this meeting, we're expecting participants to be  
23 selected, and we believe we have all of the fishing violation  
24 checks completed. Before the April council meeting, we expect  
25 to notify the applicants of their appointments and select the  
26 dates for the meeting. The facilitators, and I will go into  
27 this in the next slide, will be meeting with each of the focus  
28 group members virtually prior to the meeting, and there's a lot  
29 of pre-work that goes into this type of a facilitated focus  
30 group.

31  
32 We're going to provide background materials to the focus group  
33 members and then just be planning the meeting for April. At the  
34 April council meeting, we propose to review the plan with you  
35 all, for the initial focus group meeting, and then we have two  
36 potential weeks for dates to actually convene the group, that we  
37 have already cleared, again, with our proposed facilitators. A  
38 lot of this is -- We're kind of having to propose it and get  
39 things kind of lined up, before we can run them by you.

40  
41 For the facilitators, and some more about these pre-meeting  
42 tasks, staff is proposing a dual-moderator focus group with  
43 facilitators from the Natural Resources Leadership Institute,  
44 which is through the University of Florida, and the two of them  
45 are Joy Hazell and Wendy-Lin Bartels, and I provided the website  
46 here, which Bernie is going to be so kind as to open that page  
47 up, so we can see a little bit more about them.

1 I do know, personally, both of these women, and Joy is a little  
2 more familiar with the red snapper -- Not just red snapper, but  
3 the Gulf of Mexico IFQ programs, and they do a -- The NRLI does  
4 a leadership training program, and they do use the red snapper  
5 example in the Gulf of Mexico as one of their case studies to  
6 discuss, and so she's kind of familiar with that context.

7  
8 Wendy-Lin is a little less familiar with fisheries on general,  
9 and I spoke with her on that, that she really doesn't know  
10 anything about fisheries, and her -- I have known Wendy-Lin  
11 since 2003, and she's been doing these kinds of workshops and  
12 conflict resolution strategies since I've known her, and she's  
13 really stellar, and, when I approached both of them with this  
14 idea, it was their idea to kind of do this together and be able  
15 to provide more assistance, because there would be people in the  
16 public, possibly, that are not the official members, but it's  
17 wanting to somehow engage them or be aware of them and involving  
18 them in the group somehow as well.

19  
20 I don't have all the plans finalized out, and this is all kind  
21 of iterative still, as we see how things go along, but you do  
22 have the link here for the NRLI page, and you can explore their  
23 bios and more information about what the team does.

24  
25 Coming back to the presentation, the proposed facilitators also  
26 suggested to me that they would do a pre-meeting of up to an  
27 hour with each of the focus group members, where they get to  
28 know them and understand their perspective and what they are  
29 coming to the table with, and then staff will also be spending -  
30 - Homework is in quotes, because it's really just background  
31 materials, and we don't plan to -- Like, in an AP meeting, often  
32 we have many presentations that could even take a good part of  
33 the morning, and, here, we're planning on all of that to be done  
34 beforehand. People do need to come to the meeting prepared, so  
35 that we will be spending the meeting to actually be working on  
36 addressing the charge.

37  
38 Then, finally, getting to the slide for Susan's questions, this  
39 is what we need some feedback on as well, and, also, in speaking  
40 with these proposed facilitators, they had suggested a one-and-  
41 a-half-day initial meeting, and we don't know beyond that. I  
42 would think it depends on how this meeting goes, before we would  
43 want to commit to more than one meeting, or is there some kind  
44 of other metric that we want to consider for how to determine if  
45 they should meet again?

46  
47 Some things to keep in mind is it is ideal to hold an in-person  
48 meeting. If that is not possible, the meeting should be held

1 entirely by webinar, and a hybrid model for this kind of topic,  
2 or not this topic, but this kind of a structure, the  
3 facilitators said just really wouldn't work, and they do know  
4 though that this is timely for the council, and so they didn't  
5 want to suggest that we should just delay it, but they really  
6 did emphasize that this type of group meeting really should be  
7 held in person, and that looks like, with the time coming up,  
8 that would be possible.

9  
10 Then a little more about this idea of the breakout groups that I  
11 had mentioned, and the idea is to have smaller groups have a  
12 more involved discussion and to report back, and this is similar  
13 to the way to the SEDAR data workshops are done, and, again,  
14 this was an idea from the facilitators, and then other points,  
15 again, is it's open to the public, like an advisory panel  
16 meeting, and then there's our question for Susan, is how many  
17 meetings, and so we'll leave the discussion there.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so thank you, Dr. Lasseter. Mr.  
20 Gill.

21  
22 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of points. One is  
23 that the reason for the facilitators is to accelerate the  
24 likelihood of getting to a good endpoint. The bottom line on  
25 all of this is that, if it works properly, the focus group will  
26 provide meaningful recommendations relative to the IFQ program.  
27 If they don't, it's a waste, and I think, the thought I had  
28 anyway, was that the facilitators might help drive that.

29  
30 They're the experts, much more so than we are here at the table,  
31 and I think that we ought to let them design however they  
32 operate during the meeting that would best get to the endpoint.  
33 They know that, and, therefore, they're better at it than we.

34  
35 My second point is it's a little bit unknown on when they'll get  
36 to that endpoint, and so, from our perspective, I would suggest  
37 that we consider capping the number of meetings at something  
38 like two, and so they've got a deadline, and the facilitators  
39 can know this, and the participants will know it too, but they  
40 know that the whole point of being there is getting to the goals  
41 established for the focus group, and, by the way, you can't go  
42 on forever, and so we cap it at some number, and I would suggest  
43 two. Thank you, sir.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Gill. Ms. Boggs.

46  
47 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is a complicated issue,  
48 and I understand that the people that we are choosing for this

1 focus group are fairly knowledgeable, and some of them, it  
2 appears, have been part of the council process, and some of them  
3 not, and so, with that, I would think maybe, instead of a day-  
4 and-a-half, you have a full two days, just because it's such a  
5 big, in my mind, lift.

6  
7 I do agree with Bob that, if you have the right facilitator, or  
8 facilitators, they will keep you focused and not get in the  
9 weeds, as we sometimes do, and maybe be able to come to some  
10 conclusions, or consensus statements, quicker than what the  
11 council does. The breakout groups, typically, is a good idea,  
12 but you're only going to have ten people, and so I guess you  
13 would divide them in half, and I really don't know.

14  
15 Open to the public, I understand that we have to be transparent,  
16 but I just hope that that doesn't interfere with people wanting  
17 to speak freely, and then, of course, how many meetings, and I  
18 tend to agree with Bob that, yes, we need to cap it, because we  
19 can't let this go on in perpetuity, because there are decisions  
20 that this council needs to make, and there is a lot of people  
21 who their livelihoods depend on the decisions that we make,  
22 good, bad, or indifferent, but they have been hanging on for  
23 many years, and I think it's time that we try to draw this to a  
24 close, and so I would be okay with two meetings, two meetings  
25 max, and fairly quickly back-to-back, not to prolong it. Thank  
26 you.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Susan. Kevin Anson.

29  
30 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I agree with most of the  
31 points that Bob and Susan have just stated. It would be open to  
32 the public, and I kind of agree with Susan's comment that it  
33 could -- Even though they aren't participating, members in the  
34 audience, there could be some apprehension amongst some of the  
35 folks participating in the meeting to not feel free to say  
36 things and such, and so I agree with Bob and Susan that probably  
37 two meetings will be enough, and it kind of puts the bounds as  
38 to when the group should come with their finished product, and  
39 certainly try to hold them in-person, if possible.

40  
41 Then, going back to the first question that was posed on the  
42 next steps, although it was in our motion, I can go either way,  
43 or I didn't really have too much to say if it goes through the  
44 APs and the SSC first, or it comes to the council first, and,  
45 either way, whatever ideas that are offered by the group that  
46 the council will pick up will eventually go to the SSC and APs  
47 for review, and so whether or not we should still have a  
48 specific item on an agenda that would summarize the focus

1 group's recommendation, I think that's something that we should  
2 probably have, or plan on having.

3  
4 Again, whether that's after the fact, that it's gone through  
5 some prior SSC review, or AP reviews, but, regardless, we should  
6 still have a separate agenda item that would summarize their  
7 recommendations. Thank you.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Anson. Ava, did you  
10 want to go back to the slide? Just to make sure I get us to  
11 where we need to go, the question is what is the intent of the  
12 focus group, and I guess, and this is specific, Ava, to how any  
13 recommendations would be delivered, as the first point of  
14 delivery to the council, based on the discussion that I heard,  
15 that's probably the case.

16  
17 I am not sure, depending on what those recommendations are,  
18 whether they need to go to another body or not, but we won't  
19 know that until it's all said and done, and so, from your  
20 perspective, Ava, is that something that this council needs to  
21 say in a specific motion?

22  
23 **DR. LASSETER:** Because this is the words of a motion, I just  
24 wanted to make sure we have it on the record and that it's very  
25 clear. What I feel most comfortable doing is, at the next -- Is  
26 bringing the council the report from this focus group as its  
27 next meeting, and then, if you the council look at this and say,  
28 oh, we would like this to go to the SSC, or the IFQ AP, then we  
29 could do that, but it does seem appropriate to have the council  
30 make that next decision, and so I don't feel like I need a  
31 motion, unless that is not the sense of the council, and that's  
32 the way we would handle it.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I will suggest, based on the conversation that  
35 I heard, because the council is the entity that convenes the  
36 focus group, that the focus group would provide a deliverable  
37 back to the council, and the council would have the discretion  
38 to disseminate it further, should they choose to do that or not,  
39 and so that is what I heard, and I think that's what the intent  
40 is of the various council members, but I will not speak for all  
41 of them, and I would like them to have an opportunity to  
42 interject. Mr. Diaz.

43  
44 **MR. DIAZ:** I kind of see it the way you're describing it, Tom,  
45 and so me and you had a discussion this morning, for a period of  
46 time, and I think what is liable to happen is the focus group is  
47 going to identify some issues and challenges, and then, based on  
48 what those issues and challenges are, I mean, we're going to

1 have to try to figure out what things we're going to pick to try  
2 to solve problems with, and, at that point, that's probably  
3 where we're going to need help from the APs and the SSC.

4  
5 That's how I would envision it. We would get the report, and we  
6 would look at the challenges that are provided, that need to be  
7 addressed, and then we would decide what of those challenges we  
8 could use advice from, from those entities, which would be the  
9 AP and SSC, and so that's the way I perceive it, but I would  
10 like to hear some other input from other council members and  
11 make sure we proceed as the majority wants us to. Thank you.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so it looks like  
14 we have Mr. Strelcheck and then Ms. Boggs.

15  
16 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. The way you described it is  
17 similar to how I envisioned it as well, Tom, and the -- I think  
18 it needs to come back to the council, and then, based on the  
19 input and information we receive, we can decide kind of the  
20 appropriate pathways to then share that information out, or the  
21 next steps.

22  
23 I would say, when Dale and Ava and Martha and I were meeting to  
24 talk about the focus group, what we really want to avoid is  
25 having the focus group make motions and very, I think, specific  
26 recommendations with regard to how to proceed, and not typical  
27 information that would come back to the council with like an AP,  
28 and we talked some about them sharing, obviously, their  
29 perspectives, pros and cons.

30  
31 I think that's really informative and helpful, obviously, as we  
32 wrestle with the topics that are going to be before the focus  
33 group, and we can get, obviously, the picture from all sides of  
34 those participating in the process, with regard to whether or  
35 not there is consensus around something, as well as what the  
36 council needs to be thinking about in terms of proceeding with  
37 an action and maybe both the positives and downsides of  
38 approaching that action. I hope that a focus group can bring  
39 recommendations more along those lines, rather than what we  
40 typically do with motions. Thanks.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Susan.

43  
44 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Tom. We were discussing this a moment  
45 ago, and you all were discussing deliverables, and so do we need  
46 to set a timeline, that, by the August council meeting, we will  
47 have a report from the IFQ focus group, or whatever meeting, but  
48 set a finite time, so that -- I understand that things that get

1 in the way, but, at the same time, if we have by year's end or  
2 whatever, but do we need to set a finite time for a deliverable  
3 from this group?  
4

5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I mean, I'm going to look to staff for a  
6 second, but I'm assuming that, when they enter into an agreement  
7 with the facilitators, there will be some language around what  
8 they have to deliver, right, and so, to the extent there's a  
9 schedule involved in that, and I will look at Ava and Carrie,  
10 and is that part of what you plan?  
11

12 **DR. LASSETER:** Thank you for that question. This is as much as  
13 we've outlined right now, and, going forward with this, if  
14 everything goes well, I would envision the meeting would be held  
15 either that last week in April or that second week in May, and,  
16 unfortunately, people are not available the prior week in May,  
17 and then we would draft the report, and so, at your June  
18 meeting, you would receive their recommendations, or the report  
19 from the first meeting.  
20

21 I would prefer that you kind of stop at that point and decide  
22 that, okay, yes, we approve this, and let's go ahead and  
23 schedule the next meeting. We could be ready to do so, so that  
24 we could, ideally, hold it between June and August, although it  
25 may need to be -- We're still getting out a couple of council  
26 meetings here, and so that timing is starting to -- I can't  
27 quite tell Carrie's expression.  
28

29 I think we kind of have a timeline to get us through the first  
30 meeting, and I think that's a pretty tight timeline that we've  
31 got here, but we could carry on with that and get you the  
32 results for the second meeting either in August or October,  
33 depending on how the first one goes, if that works.  
34

35 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons.  
36

37 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with  
38 Ava, Dr. Lasseter, and I also think that we need to be a little  
39 flexible here, because this is a little bit different way than  
40 we normally operate, and we will have to work with the  
41 facilitators to try to figure out the best way to develop a  
42 contract for this.  
43

44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Bernie, do we have any other hands at the  
45 moment? Kevin, I will give you an opportunity, real quick.  
46

47 **MR. ANSON:** I am just -- I am having a little difficulty, I  
48 guess, with that plan, with having a meeting and then

1 summarizing the meeting as kind of a deliverable and then the  
2 council decides whether or not they should hold a second  
3 meeting, and so I'm okay with it, as long as it's very clear,  
4 upfront, that the facilitators and the participants have a day-  
5 and-a-half to try to get it worked out, and they do their best  
6 and try to get it accomplished, but the day-and-a-half is over,  
7 and there are still some issues that are yet to be resolved, or  
8 discussed, and that's one thing, but, you know, I just --

9  
10 I don't want, I guess, them to go in with the notion that they  
11 have a second meeting, or they don't really come to any  
12 deliverable, I guess, whether it's finalized or halfway  
13 finalized. If, again, they have the -- If all of their  
14 discussions are based on another meeting being held in the  
15 future.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Kevin, for that, and it looks like Dr.  
18 Lasseter wants to weigh-in.

19  
20 **DR. LASSETER:** I guess I'm struggling through a lot of this,  
21 just to be able to anticipate what the next steps are before  
22 kind of knowing what comes before, and it does -- Like our ad  
23 hoc -- Our IFQ AP is an ad hoc AP, and they never know that  
24 they're going to meet again, or subsequently, and I'm all for if  
25 you want to commit to two meetings with this group, or if you  
26 want to commit with just one and we see what happens, and I feel  
27 like we don't even know who the members are going to be, and we  
28 don't know how the first meeting is going to go.

29  
30 Are we going to get something out of here that the group feels  
31 is actionable, and, if you don't feel it, are we then locked  
32 into going ahead and convening them a second time? I am just a  
33 little more uncertain of everything, and so I would like to have  
34 a little more of the flexibility in it, so that the council can  
35 decide if it's happy with the way that things are going or if it  
36 wants to say, oh, never mind, this isn't working, and let's take  
37 a different track, but as you like, as you think would work  
38 best.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so I am not seeing other hands, and,  
41 based on this discussion, maybe I will offer up a few thoughts.  
42 Again, I think that, if we are able to provide the facilitators  
43 with appropriate direction, prior to convening the focus group,  
44 and we allow, in that initial meeting perhaps, a full two days,  
45 as opposed to a day-and-a-half or something, Ava, we might  
46 anticipate getting the feedback that we want, right?

47  
48 It's quite possible -- I mean, so there's a hard stop at that

1 point, and it's possible, at that point, that there's value to  
2 be gained, right, by convening that group again, but you have no  
3 expectations of doing that, necessarily, and I guess I am trying  
4 to just think of -- I don't want it to be totally open-ended,  
5 right, and we have limited resources, but I think that we can  
6 strive to convene the group for two days and strive to deliver  
7 to the facilitators direction that will keep them focused  
8 enough, right, to get the information, or the advice, that they  
9 need from the focus group, moving forward.

10  
11 That would be my inclination, based on what I am hearing around  
12 this table, and so it doesn't preclude us from reconvening that  
13 group, but it does put a bit of a hard stop on it, and so is  
14 that what -- I am going to kind of throw this back in Kevin  
15 Anson's lap. Does that make sense to you, Kevin? Is that  
16 consistent with what you were saying?

17  
18 **MR. ANSON:** Yes, and I think you've summarized my comments well,  
19 and I just -- Certainly we don't want to -- This is a big issue,  
20 and, if we go to two days, that will probably leave enough time  
21 to get through at least the major items that we have already  
22 identified that the group should concentrate on, and so, if you  
23 word a contract, for the contract purpose, to make sure the  
24 facilitators are available to allow for a second meeting, but  
25 make it very clear that the intention is to try to walk away  
26 with this consensus around these topics at the end of the first  
27 meeting, the two days, that would be fine.

28  
29 Then we immediately review that, and, if there is something that  
30 was kind of left unclear, or the facilitators, or staff, can  
31 provide some feedback as to, well, this really just didn't have  
32 enough time to get fleshed out, and we feel it's worthwhile to  
33 bring them back the second time, then we've already got the  
34 paperwork, so to speak, in place to do that, and we'll just have  
35 to work out timing, and so I think that is what I would prefer  
36 to see, yes.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Kevin, for circling back with me. I  
39 am not seeing any other hands, and I definitely want to make  
40 sure that the staff is comfortable moving forward, and I am not  
41 convinced that they're entirely comfortable at this point, but I  
42 just want to make sure of that. Ava.

43  
44 **DR. LASSETER:** I am very comfortable, but I am just wanting to  
45 make it clear that everything is going to have to be a little  
46 bit flexible, but I am comfortable with that flexibility, with  
47 just adapting and keeping the council informed, and we'll see  
48 what happens.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Carrie, you're good?

3  
4 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I concur. Thank you.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so I think we'll go ahead and  
7 move forward with this proposed timeline, recognizing that we  
8 have a little bit of flexibility in there, and I am not sure  
9 that we need to devote any more discussion to this particular  
10 item, and so if you want to go to 36B, and is that the next part  
11 of this discussion?

12  
13 **PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT AMENDMENT 36B**

14  
15 **DR. LASSETER:** We were expecting to just be moving forward with  
16 the IFQ focus group. We did revise 36B. We did revise it and  
17 provide it as background. I have a couple of extra slides that  
18 I could provide, that I could go over, for 36B, if you wanted to  
19 do so, and we were concerned about time, and I know we have the  
20 closed session afterwards, and is the council interested in  
21 going through the amendment?

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think, given the remaining number of agenda  
24 items, that we will go ahead and move into the Amendment 44,  
25 which is a snapper grouper amendment, and Reef Fish Amendment  
26 55, which has to do with modifications to southeastern U.S. --  
27 Sorry, Leann. Go ahead.

28  
29 **MS. BOSARGE:** That's okay, Mr. Chairman, and so one question  
30 about -- I had hoped to go through the extra slides that Ava  
31 has, but I will defer to you, Mr. Chairman, but I do have a  
32 question, at least, about timing.

33  
34 We hope to get a report back from this workgroup, I guess we  
35 call it, and is there -- Once we have that report back, and so I  
36 guess, at the latest, we would have that at our June meeting,  
37 and this document could come to our June meeting as well, and is  
38 it ready to be posted for final action at that June meeting, or  
39 is there something that still needs to be worked on between now  
40 and then? Is it simply staff time that's involved, or are there  
41 decision points that have to be made by the council for it to be  
42 final in June?

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I will let Dr. Lasseter respond.

45  
46 **DR. LASSETER:** The document is a public hearing draft, and it  
47 does have preferences selected in them. However, it does appear  
48 that you're going a different direction that would affect 36B,

1 and so I'm not really sure what your intent is there, and, if we  
2 did go through the rest of the slides, I actually did include  
3 the National Academy of Sciences report that you received the  
4 presentation on, about LAPPs in mixed-use fisheries, and it  
5 included a recommendation that is specific to what you're  
6 considering in 36B, and so I really think the council should  
7 kind of be aware of that, and maybe think about that, in terms  
8 of -- Perhaps we should look at that, real quick.

9  
10 The National Academy of Sciences committee spoke directly to  
11 what you are considering, and I won't read the whole  
12 recommendation, and it is included in there in two sections, but  
13 they did encourage that NMFS should sponsor a study of the  
14 direct and indirect consequences of moving from LAPPs that  
15 require holding active fishing permits or other measures of  
16 active participation in fishing, to the public scope of  
17 eligibility to own quota shares, and so, really they are  
18 recommending that you examine this a little more, and it should  
19 inform you on your decision-making, and so I did want to kind of  
20 tie that back in, and we didn't really talk about this  
21 specifically when they presented the report, and I will just see  
22 if anybody else has any concerns about 36B.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Bernie, are there any other hands? Okay. Ms.  
25 Bosarge.

26  
27 **MS. BOSARGE:** All right. Thank you for that, Dr. Lasseter. I  
28 appreciate it, and so the other part of my question is can 36B -  
29 - Is 36B ready to come before the council for final action, as  
30 far as the document is concerned, in June, and do we need to ask  
31 staff to go ahead, and in conjunction with this meeting that's  
32 going to transpire with the workgroup -- I don't know if you're  
33 doing virtual public hearings on this, or you plan to go out to  
34 the different locations physically, but what do we need to do to  
35 get the report back from this group in April or May, or whenever  
36 it comes, and be ready to go final with this by June?

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Leann, I just want to -- I am not sure that I  
39 understand the question here, and so we have two different  
40 issues that we're dealing with, right, and so we've got a focus  
41 group that is going to be facilitated, and the facilitators will  
42 synthesize the discussion material and provide it in a report  
43 back to the council.

44  
45 That is separate, in my mind, from the document, 36B, and so I  
46 am not sure that they necessarily depend on one another, and  
47 they may, but is your question related to where we stand on 36B  
48 specifically?

1  
2 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, it is to 36B. In other words, I would have  
3 continued working on 36B in this interim period of setting up  
4 this workgroup, populating it, having them meet, but I deferred  
5 to Bob, and Bob made the motion for the workgroup, and he really  
6 didn't want this document to proceed until they met and we got a  
7 report back from them, and so that's why I am asking. Since  
8 we're going to get the report back in -- I don't know if we'll  
9 get it before our April meeting, and it sounds like we'll get it  
10 after the April meeting, but is there any work that needs to  
11 happen so that this document could come back at the same time,  
12 this 36B, and we would be ready to take final action, if  
13 everything seems to line up?

14  
15 If the workgroup seems to have similar thoughts as to what we  
16 have as preferreds in here, or at least options in here, if the  
17 public also has similar thoughts, but I am ready to make a  
18 decision on it one way or the other, and it sounds like June is  
19 the earliest we can do that. What needs to happen before then,  
20 so that we can go final in June?

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Again, what I am hearing is that -- What do we  
23 need to do on 36B, and the only thing, to my understanding, is  
24 that it still needs to go out for public hearing, but I will let  
25 Dr. Lasseter respond to that directly.

26  
27 **DR. LASSETER:** Yes, that's my understanding. The document has  
28 all sections, and it just has not gone out for public hearings.

29  
30 **MS. BOSARGE:** So do you need a motion to go out to public  
31 hearings?

32  
33 **DR. LASSETER:** If the council intends us to take this out for  
34 public hearings, yes, and we're not -- The agreement has been  
35 that it would be virtual public hearings and a mail-out, was  
36 what we were going to do instead of in-person public hearings.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Leann, do you want to make that motion?

39  
40 **MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, sir.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Let's get it up on the board.

43  
44 **MS. BOSARGE:** I would move that we send Amendment 36B to public  
45 hearings, giving staff the leeway to decide the best path  
46 forward for that, whether virtual, in-person, or mail-out, or  
47 some combination.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We're getting it on the board right now,  
2 Leann.

3  
4 **MS. BOSARGE:** Okay. I am watching her type it here, because  
5 there is a little piece that I'm going to put here at the end.  
6 (Virtual, in-person, mailout, or some combination), with the  
7 intention of bringing the document for potential final action by  
8 June. Thank you.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so the motion on the board is to  
11 send Amendment 36B to public hearings, giving staff the leeway  
12 to decide the best path forward (virtual, in-person, mailing, or  
13 some combination thereof) within the intention of bringing the  
14 document for potential action by 2022, and I think there might  
15 be a few grammar issues in there, but I think everybody gets the  
16 intent of the motion. Is there a second for that? Jessica, is  
17 that a second? I saw a hand up.

18  
19 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** It's a hand up.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Let's wait and see if we can get a  
22 second for the motion. Okay. I am not seeing a second at the  
23 moment. Jessica.

24  
25 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** I was going to speak against this motion, and it  
26 didn't get a second, and I'm going to pass.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Is there any other further discussion?  
29 All right. I am not seeing any. The motion fails, due to lack  
30 of a second. Okay. Our next agenda item is Agenda Item Number  
31 IX, and Mr. Rindone is going to provide us a brief update of  
32 Amendment 44 and Reef Fish Amendment 55. Mr. Rindone.

33  
34 **DISCUSSION: DRAFT SNAPPER GROUPER AMENDMENT 44 AND REEF FISH**  
35 **AMENDMENT 55: MODIFICATIONS TO SOUTHEASTERN U.S. YELLOWTAIL**  
36 **SNAPPER JURISDICTIONAL ALLOCATIONS, CATCH LIMITS, AND SOUTH**  
37 **ATLANTIC SECTOR ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS**

38  
39 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Bernie, if you could bring  
40 up the action schedule, and that's the impetus for 99 percent of  
41 what I have to say, actually. All right, and so we've been  
42 working on Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 and Reef Fish Amendment  
43 55, which is a joint amendment to both FMPs for the Gulf and  
44 South Atlantic Councils' joint management of southeastern U.S.  
45 yellowtail snapper, which was found to be healthy, based on the  
46 results of the SEDAR 64 stock assessment, which used data  
47 through 2017 and also used FES.

48

1 We've had some pauses and delays and whatnot associated with the  
2 development of any work related to the results of that  
3 assessment, because the councils were waiting on the NOAA Office  
4 of Science and Technology to finalize all of the MRIP-FES  
5 historical calibrations back in time, so the councils had a  
6 better idea of what the landings were actually going to look  
7 like.

8  
9 Then each council had its own priorities shuffling for  
10 contemporary issues that each was dealing with, and so, when we  
11 finally got to a point where we were ready to take this action  
12 up, we were looking at the projections coming from the SSCs  
13 being at least six years old, by the time we could  
14 optimistically hope to get any management changes implemented.

15  
16 The SSCs, for both councils, have historically been very clear  
17 that they don't recommend the use of projections that are older  
18 than five years old, because, after that point, the uncertainty  
19 can get pretty wide, and it's really best, at that point, to  
20 reanalyze the stock and re-estimate what the catch limits should  
21 be.

22  
23 Considerate of all of this, the South Atlantic Council requested  
24 that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission,  
25 which was responsible for the SEDAR 64 stock assessment, update  
26 that assessment with landings data through 2020, and so that is  
27 the action that is before you guys to consider with respect to  
28 the development of work on this amendment, and, basically, we're  
29 in a situation where our projections are going to be very dusty  
30 by the time we get around to actually seeing this thing  
31 implemented, even if we moved with the utmost expediency. Mr.  
32 Chair, I think Ms. McCawley might be apt to speak directly to  
33 the South Atlantic Council's discussions on that, since she sits  
34 over there as well.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Jessica, if you're willing to provide a little  
37 insight from the South Atlantic side of things.

38  
39 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** I sure can, and I will also provide some insight  
40 from the FWC side of things, and so, as Ryan mentioned, FWRI did  
41 complete the stock assessment, and they are willing to update  
42 it, but another thing that we didn't cover here is that it's the  
43 same analyst that will be working on yellowtail, mutton, and  
44 hogfish, and so the analysts that need to go back and work on  
45 the yellowtail assessment -- This will delay the mutton snapper  
46 assessment, and possibly the hogfish assessment as well, and so  
47 I just want to throw that out there, but the South Atlantic  
48 Council felt that it was important to get the updated data

1 before we made any sort of management recommendations, next  
2 steps forward in the document, et cetera, and so that's where we  
3 are, is just waiting for those new numbers from FWRI before we  
4 pick this back up again on the South Atlantic side, and I guess  
5 I would just suggest a similar action here on the Gulf side,  
6 would be just to wait until this could be completed, before  
7 picking this back up again.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Jessica, and so, with regard to  
10 providing any direction to staff, I mean, the South Atlantic has  
11 already requested that the FWC update the SEDAR 64 assessment  
12 with more recent data, and they have agreed to do that, and so I  
13 don't think that there is a need for this council to write a  
14 letter, necessarily, and I think what we need to do is recognize  
15 that we agree with the South Atlantic's recommendation,  
16 recognize that action is being taken, and I see that Ryan has  
17 his hand up, and I will finish my thought here, but I guess wait  
18 for the assessment, the updated assessment, but go ahead, Ryan.

19  
20 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was actually going to  
21 compel you guys to consider a commensurate motion as the South  
22 Atlantic's, since this is a jointly-managed species, and,  
23 forecasting where we would go from here, I would include writing  
24 a letter including the council's and FWC's agreed-upon terms of  
25 reference for what to do with the update, to outline everything,  
26 per the SEDAR standard operating procedures, so long as there is  
27 agreement between the analytical body and the cooperator, or, in  
28 this case, cooperators, with respect to any changes or  
29 additional work to the stock assessment schedule.

30  
31 This is something that can be worked out outside of SEDAR,  
32 between the cooperators, in this case the Gulf and South  
33 Atlantic Councils and the analytical agency, which is FWRI, but  
34 a motion to that effect, of what to do that mirrors the South  
35 Atlantic Council's, and then a joint letter of sorts, including  
36 the terms of reference, of which we have a draft that we're  
37 working on with FWRI that we can get approved by the SSC, all  
38 inclusive of that, to be sent to the FWRI, to let them hit the  
39 ground running on that, I think would be appropriate.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Ryan, for that advice, and so I  
42 think it's good advice, and so we can throw out a motion, or, if  
43 somebody is willing to offer one to that effect, we can -- Let  
44 me look at hands, real quick. Dr. Porch.

45  
46 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you, Chair. Unfortunately, I'm not sure it's  
47 quite as simple as that, because we also provide data for that  
48 assessment, and so I think we may need to have more discussion

1 before we just assume that it would be between the councils and  
2 the State of Florida, because, if we have to provide information  
3 there, it will change our schedule, and we may have to push back  
4 the data deadlines for some other assessments, and so we need to  
5 have a dialogue before we assume that the conversation is only  
6 between the councils and the State of Florida.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Clay. Again, I want to keep this  
9 moving, and I think we should come back to this one in Full  
10 Council, actually, and be prepared to make a motion, after  
11 consultation with the appropriate entities, including both the  
12 FWC and the Science Center. Jessica.

13  
14 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** I had a motion ready, but it can wait until Full  
15 Council, but I sent it over to the email.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Well, go ahead, and let's take a look at it  
18 now.

19  
20 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** I don't see it being pulled up, and someone is  
21 probably trying to find it, but --

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** There it is. Hold on.

24  
25 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** There it is. **Suspend work on** -- This is what  
26 came out of the South Atlantic Council meeting, and so I grabbed  
27 this one from the South Atlantic Council Snapper Grouper  
28 Committee Report. We can certainly amend it to add the things  
29 that Clay mentioned.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and so, again, I think, at this point, I  
32 want to give us a little bit of meat and direction, right, so  
33 we're not floundering on the last day of this meeting, and so we  
34 can certainly take the next day or so to think about how we  
35 might refine this motion, to make it more inclusive of some of  
36 the things that Clay commented on, and so we can -- I don't  
37 know, Jessica, if your preference is to just leave it out, and  
38 this is where we want to head, or we could vote on this motion  
39 and refine it, if necessary, and I will leave that up to you,  
40 Jessica.

41  
42 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** That's up to you, Mr. Chairman. I am fine going  
43 ahead and making this motion.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and then I would prefer to have  
46 something to work with, and so let's go ahead. Is there a  
47 second for this motion?  
48

1 **MR. GILL:** Seconded, Mr. Chairman.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It's seconded by Mr. Gill. Is there any  
4 further discussion of the motion? I am not seeing any. Mr.  
5 Anson.

6  
7 **MR. ANSON:** I am just wondering, as far as setting the ABC, and  
8 do we have constant -- I thought, in the past, we have requested  
9 constant catch analysis, and I am just wondering, Jessica, and  
10 it's pretty much your fishery, and I'm just throwing that out  
11 there, if you want to include that, if it needs to be specific.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think it is specific in there, Kevin. I am  
14 not -- Hold on. Three additional years of data and a constant  
15 catch projection.

16  
17 **MR. ANSON:** I skipped right over that. I apologize.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Is there any further discussion of this  
20 motion? I am not seeing any. **Is there any opposition to the**  
21 **motion?** Leann, is that opposition or something to add here?  
22 Ms. Bosarge.

23  
24 **MS. BOSARGE:** That was just a slow hand on my part. Sorry, and  
25 I had a question, but it's fine. I was just wondering when the  
26 last time we saw that Reef Fish Amendment 55 was.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We saw it at the last meeting, and so that's  
29 coming directly from Mr. Rindone.

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

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** You betcha. Okay. **I am not seeing any other**  
34 **hands at this point, and is there any opposition to this motion?**  
35 **I am not seeing any, and the motion carries.** Thank you, Mr.  
36 Rindone, for that. We will revisit this in Full Council, if  
37 necessary.

38  
39 The next item on the agenda is wenchman, Item Number X, and we  
40 will go ahead, and it looks like, Mr. Rindone, if you want to go  
41 to the action guide.

42  
43 **DISCUSSION: WENCHMAN IN THE GULF OF MEXICO**

44  
45 **MR. RINDONE:** Sure, and so SERO staff are going to present a  
46 landings history of wenchman, and we're also going to look at  
47 the management history of the stock from the council's Generic  
48 Annual Catch Limits and Accountability Measures Amendment, and

1 this is all being presented in response to public comments  
2 received by the council in October of 2021, where you guys  
3 learned of substantial commercial landings of wenchman in the  
4 northern Gulf, which may have contributed to the midwater  
5 snapper ACL being met for 2021.

6  
7 The committee should discuss all of this information and make  
8 recommendations, as appropriate, and just to note that, at the  
9 October meeting, you guys also requested that council and SERO  
10 staff begin work on an amendment to update the catch limits for  
11 data-poor species, and, of course, work on this will begin as  
12 council priorities allow.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone, and so we'll go ahead  
15 and pull up the presentation, and I believe that Peter Hood is  
16 going to deliver that.

17  
18 **MR. PETER HOOD:** Yes, I am. Thanks for teeing things off there,  
19 Ryan. Wenchman is part of the midwater snapper complex, and  
20 this complex was developed in the Generic ACL Accountability  
21 Amendment, and, basically, there was some analyses that were  
22 done looking at various life history data, landings data, and  
23 whatnot, such as, I guess, gear type that were used to target  
24 species, statistical area, depth, a variety of things, and one  
25 of the outcomes of this analysis was this midwater snapper  
26 complex.

27  
28 Just as a note, silk snapper was considered the most vulnerable  
29 species for this complex. Unfortunately, I don't know exactly  
30 how it was considered most vulnerable, and I think that came out  
31 of some SSC discussions, and I didn't dig down quite that far.

32  
33 You saw these figures this morning, presented by Kelli, and, on  
34 the left-hand figure, you can basically see the commercial and  
35 recreational landings of midwater snapper, starting from the  
36 left and going to the right, and the 2021 fishing year, 2020,  
37 2019, and then the average for 2018 through 2020. If you look  
38 at the 2020 fishing year, we just barely exceeded the annual  
39 catch limit, and it was by 760 pounds.

40  
41 Basically, that triggered the accountability measure, which is  
42 basically, if the sum of commercial and recreational landings  
43 exceed the stock complex ACL, then, during the following year,  
44 if the sum of the landings reach, or is projected to reach, that  
45 stock ACL, then we would file a notification to close the  
46 fishery, and that's what happened last year, and we did a  
47 closure on September 18.

48

1 You can see that, in 2021, and I think it caught us a little bit  
2 off-guard, because we weren't expecting it, but we did exceed  
3 the ACL, and the landings were 130 percent of the ACL.

4  
5 In the right-hand slide, if you break it out by species, you can  
6 see that wenchman contributed to the total from 2021 through  
7 2019, but, in 2020 and 2021, we saw a big increase in wenchman,  
8 and that's what ended up putting us over, and we were fortunate  
9 enough to have Captain Early come and provide public testimony  
10 at the October meeting, and he indicated that he used trawls to  
11 target butterfish and goggle-eyed scad, and big-eyed scad is  
12 another name for goggle-eyed scad, if you're more familiar with  
13 that name, and he stated basically that he can't get away from  
14 wenchman, and he said he started to see them at about fifty  
15 fathoms, and then, if I understood his testimony right, when he  
16 would then fish with his trawls between sixty and 120 fathoms,  
17 that's when they really started to show up.

18  
19 I just would also add too that, based on what he told us, his  
20 vessel name was Captain Salty, and I did go in and look at what  
21 types of permits were on a vessel named the Captain Salty, and  
22 it does have a reef fish permit.

23  
24 For midwater snapper, and I hope, Ryan, that I am not stealing  
25 any of your thunder here, the ACL, ABC, OFL, and ACT were all  
26 put in place through the Generic ACL and AM Amendment, and,  
27 basically, this looked at -- It used average landings from 2000  
28 to 2008, and stock is considered a Tier 3a stock, and that's  
29 basically a category for stocks that have not been assessed, but  
30 are stable over time, or, in the judgement of the SSC, the  
31 stock, or stock complex, is unlikely to undergo overfishing at  
32 current average levels, and so that is how these different  
33 values were calculated.

34  
35 I am going to talk a little bit about wenchman now, and they are  
36 found over rough bottom, and the depth range -- I have it in  
37 meters here, but, basically, twenty-four meters is about  
38 thirteen fathoms, or eighty feet, and they're found as deep as  
39 about 270 fathoms, or 1,600 feet, and that's at 488 meters that  
40 McEachran and Fechhelm provided.

41  
42 Then, in FishBase, they said that they're generally found  
43 between about 150 feet, which is about fifty meters, and that  
44 would be twenty-seven fathoms, and then out to about 820 feet,  
45 or 140 fathoms, roughly. That kind of fits with Captain Early  
46 was telling us, and he was picking them up there at that sixty  
47 fathoms, out to 120 fathoms, or 300 feet to 720 feet.

1 In terms of the sizes that are caught, I went in and got some  
2 maximum lengths from FishBase, and then also from SEDAR 49, and,  
3 basically, the largest fish are up around eighteen to twenty-two  
4 inches, which is what that forty-seven and fifty-six centimeters  
5 correspond to, and FishBase said that they're very common at  
6 about twenty centimeters, which is about eight inches, and the  
7 figure on the left there is just a size frequency distribution  
8 of fish caught in the Mississippi Lab's small pelagic survey,  
9 and you can see that's -- The peak to the right, those fish are  
10 generally, I would say, between five to ten inches. I don't  
11 know what Captain Early is seeing, and it would be very  
12 interesting to see what sizes he was catching.

13  
14 A little bit about landings data. Because few fishermen land  
15 wenchman, confidentiality issues make it difficult to present  
16 landings information. With respect to recreational landings, I  
17 won't be showing anything there. They are very low, generally  
18 less than 300 pounds per year, and then, also, it seems like  
19 this slide would be pointless here, but, in terms of commercial  
20 landings, they mostly come from trawls, and, depending on the  
21 year, between 2014 and 2020, it was 93 to 99 percent, but I  
22 would say that, most years, it's at 98 or 99 percent.

23  
24 This shows landings by year, but, again, because of  
25 confidentiality issues, what we did was we scaled them to 2021,  
26 which is the furthest year to the right, and it's certainly  
27 higher than what we see in other years, and so, basically, you  
28 can kind of think of these lines as a percentage of what was  
29 caught in 2021.

30  
31 There is a peak in 2001, which is at the other extreme, the  
32 right-hand side of this -- Or sorry. The left-hand side of this  
33 figure, and this actually is a peak. I went back to SEDAR 49,  
34 and they had some landings starting in 1990, and you sort of saw  
35 landings similar to what were caught between 2002 and 2008, and  
36 then you have 2001 that was the peak.

37  
38 Basically, in about 2002 to 2005, landings were about 40 percent  
39 of what was landed in 2021, and you can see that there is a  
40 gradual decline in landings as you go forward from 2005, until  
41 you get to 2020, and then we start to see that increase.

42  
43 Just in terms of trying to get at when do landings occur during  
44 the year, what this figure does is, for each month, the percent  
45 of the total landings for a particular year are shown here, and,  
46 basically, what it shows is that most landings occur in the  
47 summer, and so we're looking at landings showing up in about  
48 May, going through to August or September.

1  
2 2020, which is, at least on my figure, is kind of a dark green  
3 line, but it's that one furthest to the right, and we can see  
4 that there were some landings in October through December, and I  
5 am not exactly sure what caused that, but, for the most part,  
6 landings seem highest in the summer.

7  
8 Then just about allowable gear types, and I pulled this from  
9 your website, and there's an allowable gear table, and this  
10 shows allowable gear for the Gulf of Mexico reef fish FMP, and I  
11 know that, when I was first hearing trawls, I was going like I  
12 didn't think that reef fish were really caught with trawls, and  
13 is that an allowable gear type, and so I put this table here to  
14 show you that, yes, if you look under B, Other Commercial  
15 Fishery, we have spearfishing, cast nets, and trawls, and so a  
16 trawl is an allowable gear type. I would be willing to take any  
17 questions, if anybody has anything to ask.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Peter, for the presentation. I  
20 will open up the floor for comments or questions from council  
21 members. It looks like we've got Chris Schieble.

22  
23 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Hood, thank you for the presentation, and I  
24 will keep this real quick, and I just have a couple of  
25 questions. I spoke with Captain Mike Grieco earlier this week,  
26 and I believe he's going to be giving us some public comment  
27 tomorrow also, and he can probably elaborate on all of this, but  
28 I asked him, when you look at those landings graphs  
29 specifically, what happened in 2019, and why did he suspect the  
30 landings are only about 50,000 pounds on that graph, and what he  
31 thought happened, and he described the fishery as he did to us  
32 at the last meeting, stating that he focuses, or targets,  
33 butterflyfish, and these happen to be a bycatch for that.

34  
35 He stated that, in 2019, they just didn't find butterflyfish, and  
36 they weren't around, and so they didn't fish as much, and that's  
37 really an artifact of why it's so low there, but then,  
38 obviously, the butterflyfish have returned, but what I am trying to  
39 find out, and maybe you know this, and maybe we need to look it  
40 up, and I don't know, and I haven't had time to research it, but  
41 he is finding these large concentrations of wenchman around the  
42 same depth that he is finding the butterflyfish, and are these  
43 potentially spawning aggregations, and that's the time of year,  
44 life history wise, that these fish spawn, or did he just happen  
45 to find the epicenter of wenchman? Can you speculate on that at  
46 all? Thank you.

47  
48 **MR. HOOD:** No, I can't. Unfortunately, there is very little

1 information on the life history of wenchman. I am trying to  
2 think if FishBase had anything on reproduction, and I don't  
3 think they did, and I think this is one of those species that  
4 people don't see them, and, as a result -- Well, at least most -  
5 - We just don't see them showing up in a lot of different  
6 catches that are normally sampled, and so, because of that, life  
7 history information really isn't collected, and so I have to  
8 basically plead ignorance, like yourself, about their life  
9 history.

10  
11 I do thank you for that clarification about the 2019 landings,  
12 because that was kind of a head-scratcher, in our office, trying  
13 to figure out, well, why were they so low, and that's a great  
14 explanation, and so I appreciate that. Thanks.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. It looks like Ryan Rindone had a  
17 question, and then we'll go to Ms. Bosarge.

18  
19 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to add that  
20 SEDAR 49 had looked at wenchman as one of the eight species that  
21 were considered for that data-poor assessment, and, at the time,  
22 there were not enough data available to have a reference period  
23 of catch and to inform the other parts of the data-poor models,  
24 to try and do a proper assessment for this species, and so  
25 wenchman is considered to be quite data poor.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Ryan. Ms. Bosarge.

28  
29 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of things.  
30 Chris's kind of questions -- I will say that I talked to Mr.  
31 Early last night, late last night, and he was trying to get to  
32 the dock, and he was offshore in that weather, but he was close  
33 enough that he had some signal where he was at, and so we talked  
34 for a minute, and I confirmed with him again, and he said that  
35 those fathoms that we were just quoted -- Those are about right,  
36 and he said, as far as from east to west, he finds them from  
37 about the Canyon as far -- As far west as he's gone thus far,  
38 trying to get away from them, essentially, is about the western  
39 side of Louisiana, and so the Texas/Louisiana line, essentially.

40  
41 He said he was going to try and go farther west, to get out of  
42 them, just trying to get away from them, but he said that they -  
43 - I kind of asked the same thing, are they aggregated, and he  
44 was like, no, they're dispersed all over the grounds, and he  
45 said it's not -- I saw in this slide, and it says hard -- What  
46 did it say, hardbottom or something like that, but he said it's  
47 actually mud bottom and hardbottom, and they're just kind of  
48 everywhere, and in large enough quantities that -- Dispersed

1 throughout the grounds, but enough catch that it drives him to  
2 have to stop catching his target species, so that he doesn't  
3 essentially blow that quota out of the water for wenchman.

4  
5 He is accountable, and he's an accountable fisherman, and I  
6 think we have a lot to learn from him, and he actually started  
7 off in the North Sea, and just a little bit of background, and  
8 he actually went through an apprenticeship program there, for  
9 two solid years, as a deckhand on a boat, and then he finally  
10 became I think it was a half-share man, which means you make  
11 half as much as a regular deckhand, for another two years after  
12 that in the North Sea, and so he has fished all over.

13  
14 Now he's here, and he's been here for a while now, and targeting  
15 some things that, in the past, have been more heavily targeted,  
16 butterfish and things, but that have fallen off here in the more  
17 recent past, and so he's picking that back up again, and I'm  
18 proud to see that. I think that's a good thing in our  
19 commercial fisheries, where we have healthy stocks and we  
20 essentially don't lose all the talent pool that we had for those  
21 stocks, and we have people coming back into them.

22  
23 Anyway, the point being I think we have a lot to learn from him,  
24 and I am not sure that our group, the management side, this  
25 council, could really decide what is the best path forward, and  
26 I don't know that we have the expertise for that, and I am  
27 wondering though if we could set it up for the SSC to take a  
28 look at this and have Mr. Early there at that SSC meeting,  
29 because it is a data-poor species.

30  
31 I think, the more information we can get on it from the  
32 fishermen, the more likely we are to be able to take a look at  
33 this and see what is the best path forward, as far as looking at  
34 this quota again, looking at the health of this stock and just  
35 the range, the historical range, what the population may look  
36 like, and there may be some anecdotal data from the fishermen  
37 that is the best data we have and actually helps us figure out  
38 the best path forward, and so I wanted to put that out there.

39  
40 Hopefully Dr. Porch could maybe weigh-in, and maybe Carrie and  
41 Ryan, as far as the SSC schedules, and maybe there's a better  
42 idea, but we need to look at this. It's data-poor, and it's  
43 becoming a choke species, and that seems a little crazy, for me  
44 to think that we can't do anything about that on a data-poor  
45 species.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Leann. I am looking  
48 around for other hands. Billy Broussard.

1  
2 **MR. BROUSSARD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is more of a  
3 question than an answer, but, several years back, didn't the  
4 council remove some of the grouper from the grouper complex,  
5 because it was a data issue, and what would it take to pull  
6 those from the midwater snapper complex, or is that even doable?  
7

8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I will let somebody from the council staff  
9 weigh-in. Dr. Froeschke.

10  
11 **DR. FROESCHKE:** The last time we looked at the species in the  
12 FMU was in the Generic ACL/AM Amendment in 2011, and we  
13 developed criteria, and primarily those were associated with low  
14 landings and things like that, like really low landings, a few  
15 hundred pounds here and there, and we did remove some of those  
16 stocks, but I don't think, for example, wenchman or something,  
17 where we have landings that are increasing and becoming a choke  
18 species, perhaps, would be a criterion for removing from  
19 management.  
20

21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Dr. Froeschke. It's not quite as  
22 simple as removing them, particularly as they are targeted by  
23 some folks in the industry. Mr. Strelcheck.  
24

25 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. In follow-up to that, the  
26 council would have to determine whether or not wenchman are in  
27 need of conservation and management, and, if we determined that  
28 they weren't in need of conservation and management in federal  
29 waters, then they could be removed from the FMU, or fishery  
30 management unit, and I don't think, based on what John just  
31 said, and the landings, that that's probably something that  
32 could be justified.  
33

34 What I did also want to follow-up on is Leann's comments, and so  
35 I agree with her, and I think this is an interesting issue, and  
36 it's kind of unique and something that would be worth at least  
37 putting on a future SSC agenda for discussion. If you recall,  
38 at the last council meeting, I made a motion to address catch  
39 limits for non-assessed species, and that will ultimately come  
40 around to us and include the complex, the midwater snapper  
41 complex, that we're talking about now, but that could be some  
42 time, and so I think the question really is more of, you know,  
43 if there is changes to be made here, how quickly does the  
44 council want to address those changes and get something before  
45 the SSC for consideration? Thanks.  
46

47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Andy. Mr. Broussard.  
48

1 **MR. BROUSSARD:** I think Andy answered my question. Thank you.  
2

3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Dr. Simmons and then Dr. Porch.  
4

5 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am a  
6 little concerned about asking this question, but I will ask.  
7 What is the agency's plan, or path forward, for calibrating  
8 MRIP-FES recreational landings for the midwater and jacks  
9 complex, because I feel like, before we bring this back to the  
10 SSC -- We're looking at a time series of landings, and even  
11 though wenchman is not targeted recreationally, some of those  
12 other species in that complex are, and I think that we need to  
13 have that information at-hand before we take it to the SSC.  
14 Thanks.  
15

16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Dr. Simmons, do you want a response  
17 from the agency? I will pop that over to either Andy or Clay.  
18

19 **DR. PORCH:** I was going to pop that over to Richard, actually,  
20 but I think there's a system in place that could do that, and I  
21 will have to consult with Richard on that, if he's not available  
22 to answer that, but I don't think that's necessarily all that  
23 difficult, but I do need to consult on it.  
24

25 The other thing, to Leann's point, and Andy partly answered what  
26 I was going to say, and the only other thing I would add is the  
27 challenge we have is we don't actually have any fishery-  
28 independent surveys for wenchman, and so, absent the kind of  
29 fishery data that we usually have, like good age composition, or  
30 even really catch per unit effort time series, I don't see us  
31 ever doing a very informative data-limited assessment.  
32

33 I think, at least for the foreseeable future, it would just be  
34 some kind of average-catch-type approach, as it exists in the  
35 council's ABC Control Rule, which isn't really very useful for a  
36 developing fishery, and so, basically, we would have to  
37 purposely go out and get more information on that species, and  
38 it's not clear how it would be cost effective to do that.  
39

40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Clay. Ms. Bosarge.  
41

42 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you. So, since you don't have very much  
43 fishery-independent data, to me, that makes the fishery-  
44 dependent data that you have that much more valuable, as opposed  
45 to us maybe writing it off. To me, it gives it even more value,  
46 and so I would like to see this go before the SSC.  
47

48 Personally, if I was on the SSC, I would find it kind of

1 interesting, something outside the norm of what they look at  
2 over and over, but I think the key is to have Mr. Early at that  
3 meeting, so that he can share his knowledge with them, and then  
4 they have the scientific knowledge, and the understanding of how  
5 we assess these, and they can come up with some ideas on maybe  
6 something that we can do, but I am not going to give up and sit  
7 here and just live with the fact that, essentially, one, or  
8 maybe two, fishermen are going to shut down -- Be able to shut  
9 down harvest -- Because of our data-poor assessment of this  
10 stock, shut down harvest of species that we don't even have  
11 quota management on, that we don't manage, that are just fine  
12 and healthy, or we would be managing them, if there was a  
13 problem with them, and so I'm not going to give up.

14  
15 I understand what Carrie is saying about the recreational  
16 landings. However, I think -- That's just -- This is data-poor,  
17 and so that's just going to be a scaling thing, as we move  
18 forward. Right now, we're in the currency that we're in, and,  
19 one day, we will get a new currency on those, and, being as it's  
20 data-poor, and it's just an average of a number of years, it's  
21 just going to be a new average. There is no sector allocations  
22 or anything, and so I don't really see where we have to hold  
23 things up for that.

24  
25 Honestly, I'm tired of holding up issues that are -- Issues for  
26 commercial fishermen right now that are stopping us from fishing  
27 because we're waiting on recreational data. This is a  
28 commercial issue, and it's an issue now, and it's shutting down  
29 seasons, and so I would like to see it go before the SSC and  
30 given some sort of consideration.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Leann. Mr. Rindone.

33  
34 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Ms. Bosarge, I guess I'm  
35 trying to think of what direction to provide to the SSC. What  
36 is it that we're asking them to do, I think is what the question  
37 becomes, because what we did in the Generic ACL/AM Amendment was  
38 we used the average landings from 2000 to 2008 to inform the OFL  
39 and ABC and ACL and ACT for the entire complex.

40  
41 I don't think that we're necessarily talking about breaking this  
42 stock out of that complex, but it would require looking at all  
43 four species, all four of which are data-poor, and we know next  
44 to nothing, and we have no fishery-independent information for  
45 any of those species, and so it is all fishery-dependent, and it  
46 just -- We will be very limited in what we can do, and probably  
47 not able to do much more, if anything more, than what was done  
48 in the Generic ACL/AM Amendment.

1  
2 Looking at the recent landings history, especially considerate  
3 of 2019, I don't know how different the most recent ten years  
4 would be from the first set of ten years that we used to come up  
5 with this information, and so I'm thinking out loud and asking  
6 you, and the rest of the committee, specifically, what direction  
7 are you giving the SSC with respect to this item?  
8

9 **MS. BOSARGE:** Mr. Chairman, may I follow up?

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** You may.  
12

13 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you. I appreciate that. I can't tell you  
14 what the outcome from the SSC would be. I wish I was a PhD and  
15 had that knowledge, but I don't, and that's why I am sending it  
16 to them. What I would hope that we would do is present them  
17 with the available information on how it was assessed the last  
18 time, give them a refresher on that, because I remember going  
19 through that, and that was many years ago, at this point, and  
20 give them the historical landings, those landings all the way  
21 back to the 1990s that NMFS was just talking about, that they  
22 saw in that last assessment.  
23

24 Present all that landings information to them, and then have Mr.  
25 Early present his information to them, which would just be a  
26 conversation, and I'm not expecting this man to come in with a  
27 PowerPoint. He's a fisherman, and I'm sure he would not  
28 appreciate that, but he would like to discuss it with them, and  
29 we talked about that last night, and he would like to talk to  
30 them and tell them what he sees of this population, which sounds  
31 like it's more information than what we have from anywhere else.  
32

33 We have new information, and we need to examine that new  
34 information, and the SSC needs to examine that new information,  
35 and then they can deliberate on what -- If there are any  
36 potential possibilities and what those might be, as a path  
37 forward, and bring that back to the council.  
38

39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so I guess, Leann, I just listened  
40 to that, and I'm thinking -- I mean, it's hard to go to the SSC  
41 and talk about an assessment, what was done last time, because -  
42 - I will look to Ryan or John or Carrie, but I don't believe  
43 we've ever done an assessment on wenchman.  
44

45 **MR. RINDONE:** There is no stock assessment for wenchman, and  
46 there never has been.  
47

48 **MS. BOSARGE:** We tried to do one though, right, Ryan? It was in

1 that -- There was like six species that we tried to do that  
2 data-poor assessment on, and we didn't have enough data on  
3 wenchman to do it, and isn't that right?

4  
5 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, ma'am, and nothing about the condition of  
6 those data has changed. We had commercial landings at the time,  
7 but that was it, and there is no other information to inform any  
8 sort of model, even a data-poor model, at this point for the  
9 stock.

10  
11 **MS. BOSARGE:** I am not an expert on wenchman, Ryan, but I can  
12 look at the slide that we were presented right here, where it  
13 says found over rough bottom, and that's from McEachran and  
14 Fechhelm in 2005, and I can tell you that what our fishermen  
15 that are out there encountering these fish right now are telling  
16 me is, well, we have updated information on that, that in fact  
17 they're found dispersed over the grounds, over mud bottom and  
18 all sorts of other bottom, and so I do think there is new  
19 information.

20  
21 I don't know what the scientists will take from that new  
22 information and be able to do, but I think it warrants -- It has  
23 value and warrants a conversation. It's a problem for  
24 commercial fishermen, and I don't understand why we have to  
25 fight so hard, as commercial fishermen, to even have a  
26 conversation with the scientific community about our issues.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Leann. I am going to circle  
29 back to you in just a minute, but I will get Kevin Anson.

30  
31 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate Leann's  
32 sentiment here, and Andy said this would be an interesting  
33 investigation, or exercise, and, I mean, who is to say what the  
34 next wenchman is going to be, and it might be in a similar  
35 situation, as far as being a data-poor species, but, you know,  
36 technologies change, and economies of scale, as such, change,  
37 and so a fish that may have been unimportant and underutilized  
38 in the past may come to the forefront, and so I am going to  
39 support Leann's motion to send it to the SSC and have them  
40 evaluate it, look at the older information and have that  
41 discussion with the captain, and kind of think about it a little  
42 bit outside the box and see if there is a way that we could get  
43 there, but it shouldn't stop the process of trying to see what  
44 could be done.

45  
46 Ryan, we may come to an impasse, and there's just no agreement,  
47 other than what's been already deliberated in a prior amendment,  
48 relative to data-poor species, but maybe there is some new

1 information that has transpired that may bring some new tools or  
2 ways to look at these things a little bit more -- How do I say -  
3 - In-depth, but with less information, to give the scientists,  
4 you know, at least a better understanding of that that stock is.  
5

6 I mean, when you look at one of the slides that was in the  
7 presentation, and I realize it's data-poor, and there may be  
8 other data sources for it that just weren't highlighted in  
9 Peter's presentation, but, if the maximum length is 570  
10 millimeters, and the only data that we have is the data that  
11 goes up to about 240, you're essentially in a bind, because the  
12 fishery-independent information we have is selected to those  
13 younger-aged fish, and so, if there is just even a way of --  
14 Maybe it's just simply identifying it as, hey, this will be an  
15 interesting research project for a master's level student  
16 somewhere in the northern Gulf of Mexico, and, if that professor  
17 can find some money and fund that, maybe that might be enough  
18 information. Anyways, I don't want to belabor it. Thank you.  
19

20 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Mr. Anson. Again, I understand  
21 the conversation, and clearly it's frustrating that we don't  
22 have the information that we would like to have to, you know, do  
23 something a little more progressive, and, in fact, we don't even  
24 have enough information, at this point, to clearly articulate a  
25 question or provide direction for the Science Center or the SSC,  
26 and so I'm not discounting the discussion at all.  
27

28 What I am suggesting, perhaps, to Leann, and/or Kevin, or any  
29 other council member, for that matter, is that we -- If we think  
30 about this a little bit, and recognize where we are with regard  
31 to information gaps, and, as we move forward, what would we ask  
32 of either the Science Center or the SSC, to at least start to  
33 move the ball forward to improve our understanding of this  
34 fishery, but I think we don't have that right now, but so take a  
35 day and think about it. Okay? Ryan, did you have something to  
36 add? Okay. All right.  
37

38 Again, I just don't want my comments to be interpreted that I  
39 don't care, and I don't think it's a meaningful endeavor.  
40 That's not the case. I just, again, recognize that we have a  
41 tremendous amount of things to do. The staff, at the council  
42 and the Science Center and the agency in general, are fairly  
43 taxed, and so I just -- If we're going to give them a task, or  
44 if we're -- I want to make sure that it's focused and time  
45 appropriate. Mr. Strelcheck.  
46

47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair, and I agree with you, and  
48 that's partly been kind of my struggles, is what are we asking

1 the SSC, and just to speak on this, and certainly others can  
2 think about this, as we come back to this conversation, and, to  
3 me, what we have is a situation that's changing, and I think  
4 Kevin said it well.

5  
6 There is new landings and information, and this potentially is a  
7 fishery that has some area for growth, and so the question, I  
8 think, that the council wants answered is, based on the decision  
9 of the SSC and how they determined the catch level, or ABC,  
10 advice previously, is that something that could be reconsidered  
11 and changed, and, if so, what would be recommendations about how  
12 we go about doing that, which we may or may not have sufficient  
13 information to proceed.

14  
15 Then the other aspect of this, looking at Peter's presentation,  
16 is there certainly is data that's being caught by the  
17 Mississippi labs, with regard to wenchman, and maybe there is  
18 some information and data with regard to the surveys that they  
19 are conducting, in terms of abundance and fishery-independent  
20 indices.

21  
22 I mean, this is all data-poor, once again, but it's potentially  
23 something that could be explored, and, maybe before it goes back  
24 to the SSC, they could provide some additional information and  
25 data with regard to what data and information they actually have  
26 in-hand that may or may not be useful to help us with obviously,  
27 the conundrum we're in with having insufficient information to  
28 set the catch levels.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thanks, Andy. I think those are all really  
31 good suggestions. Ms. Bosarge.

32  
33 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Andy. I appreciate that. I think Andy  
34 just gave you essentially the agenda item, or the charge, for  
35 the SSC and potential data sources that they could look at and  
36 be presented with, in addition to the anecdotal data from  
37 Captain Early, and so do you need a motion to make that happen?

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I see that Mr. Rindone has his hand up, and  
40 we'll come right back to you, Ms. Bosarge. Let's see what Ryan  
41 has to say.

42  
43 **MR. RINDONE:** Just, in preparation for any motion, I just wanted  
44 to note that the SSC reviews information that is presented to  
45 them, and it's not often that they are actually doing these  
46 analyses, and so, in terms of who is tasked with compiling all  
47 of the landings data necessary, and the council's motion at the  
48 last meeting that Mr. Strelcheck referenced wasn't just for this

1 species, but it was for all of those data-poor species that we  
2 don't have assessments for.

3  
4 I'm just trying to capture the entire scope of the work that is  
5 being requested here and noting the differences between who it  
6 is that's actually doing the analysis and who is doing the  
7 reviewing of the analysis.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Ryan. Back to Leann, and so,  
10 Leann, certainly it's your prerogative if you want to provide a  
11 motion at this point or if you want to think about it a little  
12 bit further and provide it at Full Council, and I am not  
13 strongly wed to either one.

14  
15 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Andy, do you think that  
16 you can word that motion? I will make it, if you can word it,  
17 but, if you would rather wait until Full Council, we can do  
18 that. I'm going to leave it up to Andy, because he said it  
19 best.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** He did say it very well. Andy, do you want to  
22 work on that a little bit and get with Leann before Full  
23 Council?

24  
25 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and let's work on wordsmithing something  
26 for Full Council.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so I look forward to seeing what you  
29 guys come up with. All right. Is there any other business  
30 related to wenchman? I am seeing no hands, and so we -- Our  
31 next agenda item is the Great Red Snapper Count and SSC  
32 recommendations, and that's Agenda Item Number XI. I'm going to  
33 look over at our Chair for a minute. Do you want to take a  
34 five-minute break? All right. We'll take a ten-minute break,  
35 and then we'll come back and hit red snapper.

36  
37 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We will go ahead and move into Agenda Item  
40 Number XI, which is Review of the Revised Great Red Snapper  
41 Count Estimates and SSC Recommendations for Reevaluating Red  
42 Snapper Catch Advice. I would like to invite Dr. Nance to come  
43 on back and fill us in from the SSC's perspective.

44

45 **REVIEW OF REVISED GREAT RED SNAPPER COUNT ESTIMATES AND SSC**  
46 **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REEVALUATING RED SNAPPER CATCH ADVICE**

47

48 **DR. NANCE:** Dr. Frazer, thanks. Bernie, let's go to Slide 26,

1 please. Thank you. As had been stated, in this presentation,  
2 we're going to look at the review of the revised Great Red  
3 Snapper Count estimates and then discuss the SSC recommendations  
4 for reevaluating red snapper catch advice.  
5

6 During our meeting a few weeks ago, we went over these four  
7 different items during our review process. First, we went over  
8 the revised Great Red Snapper Count estimates, and we discussed  
9 and looked at the framework for poststratification of the  
10 Florida nearshore depth stratum, and, third, we looked at an  
11 updated fishery-independent indices for relative abundance, and,  
12 fourth, review of the fishing effort over the uncharacterized  
13 bottom.  
14

15 As we discussed the Great Red Snapper Count, there is different  
16 estimates that kind of float around, and so the council and  
17 staff put these into a grouping, so we can kind of look at each  
18 one. The initial estimate that was reported, probably about a  
19 year ago, we had 110 million fish from the estimate, and it was  
20 the second estimate of 118 million fish, and that estimate came  
21 by the removal of the random forest sample selection for  
22 Florida, and then it addressed some of the peer review comments,  
23 and that's where that estimate came to be.  
24

25 There was a third estimate of 96.7 million fish, and this came  
26 about by inclusion of the random forest sample selection for  
27 Florida, at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center request, and  
28 it also addressed other peer review comments.  
29

30 Then there was a fourth estimate of ninety-two million fish.  
31 There was inclusion of a random forest sample selection for  
32 Florida, and it includes some other peer review comments, and  
33 then it addressed some other Southeast-Fisheries-Science-Center-  
34 requested revisions, and so that's where those four estimates  
35 came to be.  
36

37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Nance, just real quick, I see that Mr.  
38 Dugas has his hand up, and I want to give him an opportunity to  
39 ask a question, if he needs to.  
40

41 **DR. NANCE:** Absolutely.  
42

43 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** J.D.  
44

45 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Dr. Nance. I  
46 am a little uneducated on some of this, and so I guess I have a  
47 question, but it seems to me that there's been a request, or  
48 several requests, to reanalyze what the Great Red Snapper Count

1 has done, and I am just wondering how many times you guys are  
2 going to have to go back to the drawing board for these  
3 requests.

4  
5 I mean, who is asking for this? Is this the Science Center, or  
6 is this the SSC? I am just -- I thought this was done, and we  
7 were past it, and we were moving on, and we had great data, with  
8 some of the best scientists in the world on this project, and  
9 Congress got over \$12 million for this, and I feel like we just  
10 keep revisiting and revisiting and revisiting, and so I'm just  
11 wondering who keeps asking you guys to revisit this.

12  
13 **DR. NANCE:** Well, we have excellent scientists that have done  
14 this, and I have no issue with anything they've done. There  
15 have been a few changes that have occurred over the past year,  
16 as we've looked at this data, and, Greg, I see your hand up, and  
17 could I call on Greg, Mr. Chair?

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Jim.

20  
21 **DR. NANCE:** Greg, I think you probably are in a good position to  
22 kind of go over these numbers in a lot better sense than I have.

23  
24 **DR. STUNZ:** Jim, I'm happy to do that, and that's why I raised  
25 my hand, and I wanted to clarify just a few things, Mr.  
26 Chairman, but I can't clarify J.D.'s question, and so do you  
27 want to finish with this motion that you're on? At some point,  
28 I want to clarify that, but I don't want to stop you in the  
29 midpoint here of where we're at.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** J.D., I'm just going to interrupt, and I'm  
32 sorry, Dr. Nance.

33  
34 **DR. NANCE:** No, that's fine.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** J.D., I think what I will do, and I'm, again,  
37 not ignoring your question, but let's go ahead and work through  
38 this presentation and then circle back on some of the key  
39 elements, with regard to timing and where we might be at moving  
40 forward, okay? Is that all right with you, J.D.?

41  
42 **DR. STUNZ:** Tom, I definitely want you to please call on me  
43 again, because there are a few things that I want to clear up,  
44 and Jim pointed out some things that were -- They're accurate,  
45 but there's more to it that I think is relevant to the council  
46 that I want to highlight.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so, for continuity purposes, we'll

1 go ahead and let Dr. Nance finish his presentation, and then I  
2 will circle back to you, Greg, and then follow-up with J.D.

3  
4 **DR. NANCE:** Okay. That sounds perfect to me, if everybody else  
5 is happy.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think we're all good.

8  
9 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

10  
11 **DR. NANCE:** Okay. Thank you very much. What I was trying to do  
12 on that previous slide is just there are different estimates  
13 that have kind of floated around over the past year, and I  
14 wanted to give some substance to where those came from, so we're  
15 all kind of looking at the same thing, but, as the SSC looked at  
16 these different things, we came up with a substitute motion.

17  
18 One of the things that we're trying to do here is to move  
19 forward with reevaluating the red snapper catch advice, and  
20 that's one of the things that the SSC was chosen to do for this  
21 meeting, and so that's what we're trying to do. We have  
22 reviewed the estimates again, and now we're trying to move  
23 forward with reevaluating the red snapper catch advice.

24  
25 This motion moves us forward on that a little bit, and the first  
26 motion is the SSC recommends the Southeast Fisheries Science  
27 Center use the 96.7 million age-two-plus red snapper from the  
28 Great Red Snapper Count estimate of absolute abundance for the  
29 catch analyses, to be considered at the SSC's March 2022  
30 meeting, to enable the SSC to consider new management advice for  
31 OFL and ABC. That substitute carried nineteen to three, with  
32 two abstentions and one absent.

33  
34 The next thing we did is we looked at -- We were presented with  
35 poststratification of the Florida nearshore depth stratum, and  
36 the Great Red Snapper Count estimated a large proportion of red  
37 snapper in Florida occurs in the Big Bend region between ten and  
38 forty meters. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center and  
39 Florida Wildlife Commission surveys and landings data do not  
40 estimate the same abundance in that area.

41  
42 The Southeast Fisheries Science Center is interested in  
43 reanalyzing those data in smaller depth bins, and so, instead of  
44 using the ten to forty, they were looking at re-stratifying  
45 those into ten to twenty-five and twenty-five to forty. This  
46 would give increased resolution and may improve interpretation  
47 of the data. The Great Red Snapper Count team, at that time,  
48 cautioned that deviating too much from the original study design

1 may cause issues.

2  
3 The SSC had another motion. The SSC requests the Southeast  
4 Fisheries Science Center proceed with the post-stratification  
5 analysis of the Gulf of Mexico shallow-water stratum (ten to  
6 forty meters, per the Great Red Snapper Count) where possible,  
7 and present the results at the March 2022 SSC meeting, along  
8 with a second catch analysis incorporating these  
9 poststratification results. The motion carried twenty to zero  
10 with five abstentions.

11  
12 With these two motions, we were asking for two different data  
13 being presented to the SSC at our March 2022 meeting, the first  
14 using this -- Or the second using this poststratification  
15 analysis, which will bring us some data, and the first one is  
16 the 96.7 million pound data, and so those are the two motions  
17 that we hope to be able to see at our March meeting.

18  
19 Then we also looked at an updated fishery-independent indices of  
20 relative abundance. The SSC reviewed the catch per unit  
21 analysis from the SEAMAP and FWRI video surveys and the NMFS  
22 Bottom Longline Survey. The indices showed decreases in  
23 estimates of relative abundance of red snapper in the last few  
24 years in the eastern Gulf, and the National Marine Fisheries  
25 Service Bottom Longline showed increasing abundance in the  
26 western Gulf.

27  
28 The fourth item we looked at was review of the fishing effort  
29 over the uncharacterized bottom. The Southeast Fisheries  
30 Science Center used spatial mapping studies, VMS data, and  
31 recreational effort data from the Gulf states to estimate  
32 fishing effort over the uncharacterized bottom.

33  
34 The spatial mapping study used data from 2011. During our  
35 discussions, many of the SSC members thought that the study may  
36 be too dated. Red snapper distribution and abundance has likely  
37 changed since 2011. Spatial mapping studies and the Great Red  
38 Snapper Count likely are not comparable.

39  
40 Commercial harvest is estimated to be split 54 percent from  
41 natural bottom and 46 percent from artificial structure, and so  
42 that's where the harvest comes from, and recreational effort is  
43 measured using distance from the nearest pass, depth, and region  
44 for all the different Gulf states, and so we started to try to  
45 get a handle on the fishing effort over the uncharacterized  
46 bottom.

47  
48 Analysis showed that less than 50 percent of the total biomass

1 of red snapper is vulnerable to fishing off of Florida,  
2 Louisiana, and Texas, and more than 80 percent of the total  
3 biomass is vulnerable to fishing off of Alabama and Mississippi.  
4 The Southeast Fisheries Science Center estimates the total  
5 proportion of red snapper biomass vulnerable to fishing to be  
6 around 37.6 percent. The previous estimate of 22 percent did  
7 not include more recent recreational data.

8  
9 The third motion from the SSC, at our meeting, is this. The SSC  
10 encourages the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to analyze how  
11 catch level increases could impact different fishing sectors  
12 with respect to the ability to redistribute fishing effort  
13 according to localized abundance and depletion patterns. If  
14 sufficient social and economic data are not available for these  
15 analyses, the SSC encourages the Southeast Fisheries Science  
16 Center to identify specific data gaps and needs for assessing  
17 the impacts of changes in catch limits. The motion carried  
18 nineteen to one with five abstentions.

19  
20 The recommendations, while we have those two different data  
21 streams that are going to be providing data for us at our March  
22 SSC meeting, we also -- This is a recommendation for how those  
23 would be used for the analysis.

24  
25 The motion is the SSC requests the Southeast Fisheries Science  
26 Center catch analysis of the OFL look at the following  
27 scenarios, and so each of the two items, each of the two  
28 scenarios that we looked at, would incorporate these four other  
29 scenarios, and we would look at all structure, all structure  
30 plus 10 percent of the uncharacterized bottom, all structure  
31 plus 15 percent of the uncharacterized bottom, and the fourth is  
32 incorporate two key uncertainties regarding, first, the total  
33 biomass that might be accessible to the fishery, and second is  
34 potential impacts to the stock from localized fishing. That  
35 motion carried nineteen to one with two absent and three  
36 abstentions. Mr. Chair, that ends my presentation, and I would  
37 be happy to take any questions.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Nance. Before we get into the  
40 questions from the council, I want to, as I indicated, circle  
41 back and let Greg Stunz have an opportunity to fill in some gaps  
42 and then circle back with J.D., and so, Dr. Stunz, if you want  
43 to go first.

44  
45 **DR. STUNZ:** Thank you, Tom. I will be as brief as possible,  
46 and, Jim, thank you for summarizing that. That was a lot of  
47 ground that you covered in a short period of time, and I know  
48 it's confusing, and a lot of iterations, and I just wanted to

1 clear just a little bit about how we arrived at this estimate.  
2  
3 Bernie, I don't know who is switching slides, and I think it's  
4 you, but if we could go back to Jim's slide on -- I think it was  
5 28.  
6  
7 **DR. NANCE:** It would be Number 28, Bernie. That's the one that  
8 gives the different abundance estimates, Greg?  
9  
10 **DR. STUNZ:** Yes, that's it. That's the one there. Okay. As  
11 you all know, this project assembled the best red snapper  
12 biologists that exist, and we put that team together. So  
13 everyone is very clear, it wasn't just us completely  
14 independent, and there was a team of federal scientists and  
15 other experts, through the steering committee that worked with  
16 us closely the whole time, and so, despite there being what is  
17 four estimates here, and I will explain that in just a second,  
18 our team stands by that number, despite the other reanalysis.  
19  
20 I think what J.D. might be referring to -- J.D., I don't want to  
21 put words in your mouth, but it's the last part of this is that  
22 Florida restratification, in terms of who is requesting that.  
23  
24 We stand by the numbers that we have produced here, and that's  
25 what you're going to see in those peer-reviewed journals. As  
26 everyone knows, and speaking of different levels of peer review,  
27 and, you know, we went through this I don't know how many day,  
28 but four days, roughly, of a live peer-review process, and I  
29 don't think any of our team thought that this was the most  
30 rigorous review that any of us had ever had by some of the top-  
31 shelf independent quantitative fisheries folks that exist in the  
32 world, so it was reviewed by as good as you can get.  
33  
34 While that was certainly a painful process, in the end, it  
35 resulted in a better estimate that we were able to respond to,  
36 and that's what Jim, was referring to here.  
37  
38 We brought in that initial estimate of 110 million fish, and the  
39 review panel carefully evaluated that, over several days,  
40 including with the SSC weighing-in as well, and they recommended  
41 we remove this random forest routine, is what we're talking  
42 about here, and that's getting way in the weeds, and, by the  
43 way, this is for Florida only and not the whole estimate, and  
44 also address some variance concerns and a bunch of other things  
45 that we were able to do.  
46  
47 If that was Analysis A, the initial estimate, we responded back  
48 with Estimate B, which was 118 million fish, responding to that

1 peer-reviewed comments and concerns, as well as the SSC. That  
2 was our official estimate.

3  
4 On the heels of the SSC meeting before last, just a day or so  
5 prior, the SSC came back and said, well, we would prefer if you  
6 built that random forest back in and stay true to your original  
7 design, even though the reviewers said that we should remove it,  
8 and we did that, but we did it really quickly, right at the last  
9 minute, and the SSC did not have time to review that. That is  
10 where the third, or I guess you can say Estimate C, originated,  
11 of the ninety-six million fish, and it reduced that by  
12 incorporating back in that random forest.

13  
14 Now, the SSC couldn't have time to review that, because we were  
15 only asked to do it a day before, and then we provided it at the  
16 meeting. Jim, just to be clear, there was never a fourth  
17 estimate, and this is where everyone gets confused.

18  
19 Each estimate comes with our official estimate and then a  
20 validation, or alternative estimate, using different estimators,  
21 to see if we arrive in the same ballpark if we have an  
22 independent team just do this, to sort of groundtruth what we're  
23 doing, and that's where the ninety-two million fish came from,  
24 and those were -- For some reason, everyone, including the  
25 Florida restratification that you were referring to, Jim,  
26 focuses on that alternate analysis, and that's not even our  
27 official analysis, and so I want to make sure that, for the  
28 record -- We want to be focusing on our main analysis and not  
29 the validation analysis.

30  
31 We never -- This study was never intended to break down at that  
32 fine scale of resolution, and our goal was to generate a Gulf-  
33 wide estimate, with, of course, some regional considerations and  
34 some depth stratification, but, as soon as you start parsing  
35 this down into smaller and smaller pieces, it begins to violate  
36 some of the statistical assumptions of our design, and a whole  
37 variety of other things, is why we are concerned. You know, if  
38 you start not staying true to this original design, there is  
39 some serious statistical concerns that we have. That's how we  
40 arrived where we are.

41  
42 **DR. NANCE:** Greg, I appreciate you going over that, and I  
43 probably did a poor job in looking at that, because the first  
44 three estimates were from your reports, where those came from,  
45 but there is that ninety-two million fish floating around out  
46 there, and that's why I wanted to put it in there as something  
47 people may have seen, and I shouldn't have put it maybe the same  
48 grouping, because people then think you estimated all four of

1 those.

2  
3 **DR. STUNZ:** Jim, there is no fault at all, believe me, and this  
4 is why we all have this all archived and transparent on the  
5 snapper count webpage, because even for me, who lived and  
6 breathed this project for the past three years, keeping track of  
7 exactly how this happened, and, by the way, the Science Center  
8 and others have this data, and anybody -- What I meant by we're  
9 standing by our number is anybody can take this information and  
10 reanalyze this for as long as they want to, but our team has  
11 completed it and finished, and so you're going to see that  
12 second estimate, and potentially maybe the third, depending on  
13 how our PIs want to deal with this peer review, because those  
14 same peer reviewers will be reviewing this again, if we keep in  
15 or remove this random forest.

16  
17 In reality, there were -- Each estimate came with two, and so  
18 there were six estimates, rather than just four, and that  
19 ninety-two was just the validation estimate that breaks down all  
20 these strata that people keep getting stuck on, and that's not  
21 even our official analysis, and so, anyway, I just want to make  
22 sure that that's clear.

23  
24 I also want to point out, on this Florida reanalysis component  
25 that I think J.D. is referring to, there is some issues there  
26 too that we all know. Since we did this study several years  
27 ago, obviously, the fishery has changed, and we hear a lot of  
28 testimony, here at this council, about recolonization of  
29 snapper, and the grouper guys can't get snapper quota, and  
30 they're only catching snapper, and we all know that story.

31  
32 Also, the areas that -- The data for the Florida estimate was  
33 sampled by different methods at different times, and I just want  
34 to make sure, with any future re-analyses, that our team is  
35 carefully involved, because we want to make sure that we're  
36 comparing apples-to-apples, but the short of it, right now, is,  
37 you know, our team is finished with that second, or maybe third,  
38 estimate realm, and we're publishing our peer-reviewed papers,  
39 and then I guess it's someone else to move forward with this,  
40 with the data that we provided, and I believe that's what J.D.  
41 is asking, is where is that coming from, and it's not coming  
42 from our team, but I don't know the answer to that, and so, Tom,  
43 I know that was exceptionally long-winded, and so I will stop  
44 right there and answer any questions, if there are some, or not,  
45 but I just wanted to make sure that that's where we are, as of  
46 today.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thanks, Greg, for providing that

1 information too, and so I just want to remind folks where we  
2 are, and this is essentially an opportunity for the SSC to  
3 provide a recap of how they are using the information that they  
4 have available to them moving forward, and I thought that Dr.  
5 Nance did a good job of walking through some of the suggestions  
6 and motions that were made and how the Science Center and the  
7 SSC will incorporate those recommendations, moving forward.  
8 With that said, Kevin.

9  
10 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Dr. Nance, for  
11 presenting the information. I wonder if you can go to the  
12 presentation, your presentation, and I had a question or two  
13 about a motion.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Where in the presentation, Kevin? Do you have  
16 a particular motion?

17  
18 **MR. ANSON:** It's the SSC motion to encourage the Southeast  
19 Fisheries Science to analyze how catch level increases could  
20 increase different fishing sectors.

21  
22 **DR. NANCE:** It's on Slide 35, Bernie.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Slide 35.

25  
26 **MR. ANSON:** I guess, Dr. Nance, if you could provide a little  
27 bit more clarification regarding the portion of the motion where  
28 it says, "with respect to the ability to redistribute fishing  
29 effort according to localized abundance and depletion patterns",  
30 and what's the basis of that statement in the motion?

31  
32 **DR. NANCE:** During our discussions, we were going back and forth  
33 with trying to look at the recreational and commercial effort in  
34 the uncharacterized bottom and trying to figure out, if you  
35 start to take fish off this one area, what's that going to do  
36 for impacting other areas that may be fished by other fishermen,  
37 and so this is more of a social and economic look at how changes  
38 in fishing patterns may impact other fishing sectors. If one  
39 group takes fish from one part, and you're redistributing that,  
40 how does that socially and economically affect other sectors of  
41 the fishery? That's where this motion came from.

42  
43 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. Can I have another question, or comment?

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Kevin.

46  
47 **MR. ANSON:** I guess I'm just a little concerned about that  
48 thought process originating and going directly to the SSC,

1 because it kind of, to me, that's kind of encroaching upon the  
2 council's territory. I mean, the SSC determines the science and  
3 how much fish can be caught, and then we put forward  
4 recommendations as to how the access then is carried out, who  
5 gets what and how they can catch them and when they can catch  
6 them and how many they can catch when they go catch them, and  
7 that's -- It just seems a little bit outside of the purview of  
8 the SSC at this stage.

9

10 **DR. NANCE:** I agree with that, Kevin, for sure.

11

12 **MR. ANSON:** If we really want to get down to where you're going,  
13 or the SSC is going, what those type of discussions,  
14 particularly when you look at the previous slide, where it talks  
15 about the distribution of effort, or at least where the red  
16 snapper are vulnerable off of each state, I mean, it just points  
17 more and more to each state being able to manage their own  
18 portion of the pie, and they manage to an F, and they manage the  
19 sectors within each state and within the amount of fish that are  
20 available off of their respective state, but, anyways, thank  
21 you.

22

23 **DR. NANCE:** Thank you, and I think Ryan --

24

25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Ryan.

26

27 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, all. Mr. Anson, the other thing that  
28 the SSC was interested in, with respect to this motion, was the  
29 potential for localized depletion, and so a lot of these areas  
30 where fishing effort is concentrated are not the secrets that  
31 maybe some fishermen wish that they were.

32

33 You know, for every secret spot you have, there's probably  
34 fifteen other people that have that same secret spot, and I'm  
35 looking at Emily, who I also share lobster spots with on the  
36 east coast of Florida, but the idea that there is certainly the  
37 potential for localized depletion, as fishing effort continues  
38 over the same natural and artificial areas, and so, as those  
39 areas are fished down to some lower threshold of fish density,  
40 and that fishing effort is then redistributed, as the search for  
41 fish continues, and what sorts of effects that might have on  
42 fishing effort on the whole, on the stock, on the percent of  
43 each region that may be vulnerable to exploitation, or the  
44 percent of the stock in each region that may be vulnerable to  
45 exploitation, et cetera.

46

47 There is certainly the potential for social and economic effects  
48 to be analyzed, if these patterns can be identified specific to

1 these regions, but the SSC acknowledged that sometimes those  
2 data can be sparse, and so they asked that any of those data  
3 gaps, if those data gaps could be identified, that that be  
4 noted, so that work on this can be examined in the future.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Ryan. Dr. Porch.

7  
8 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you, Chair. First of all, I wanted to thank  
9 Dr. Stunz for clearing the record, because it's not as though  
10 the Southeast Fisheries Science Center was requesting all this  
11 reanalysis and driving that. It's true that our analysts were  
12 talking to the lead analysts of the Great Red Snapper Count and  
13 just having discussions, but we certainly didn't make any formal  
14 requests for changing anything, and so I appreciate Dr. Stunz  
15 clarifying that.

16  
17 With respect to some of the changes that were made, I think  
18 there was a little bit of a misunderstanding in maybe what the  
19 reviewers intended, or how they expressed themselves with  
20 respect to that random forest issue, and the bottom line is that  
21 samples -- The sample design was based on the random forest  
22 analysis, and so, if you take samples in certain strata, you  
23 need to preserve those strata when you're doing the estimation,  
24 and the lead analyst, I believe, agreed with that, and so that  
25 reanalysis, I think, drove that ninety-six-million number, and I  
26 think that was appropriate.

27  
28 Also, I think it's important to point out that the State of  
29 Florida, in particular, had concerns about the estimates for  
30 Florida, and one of the biggest was that the Great Red Snapper  
31 Count put the majority of red snapper in Florida inside thirty  
32 meters in the Big Bend area, and, if you look at both the  
33 fishing data, and you look at Florida's data, and our own data,  
34 there aren't many red snapper there, and so something didn't  
35 quite jibe with all the other data that we have for that.

36  
37 That's why the State of Florida, in particular, and we also  
38 agree, wanted to see this poststratification analysis, and,  
39 obviously, the SSC agreed and passed a motion. I will leave it  
40 to John, if he wants to contribute any more comments.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think we're good. I do want to circle back  
43 to J.D. and then close out this item, and it's largely  
44 informational, and there is no action necessary on the part of  
45 the council at this point, but I think J.D.'s question had to do  
46 with are we actually using this information, and why we continue  
47 to not use it, and so, J.D., you can step in at any point, but I  
48 will just say this, and this is my take on your question, and

1 you can correct me if I'm wrong, and so the data from the Great  
2 Red Snapper Count have already been used, in the sense that they  
3 were -- They were used to establish the OFL, and that guided our  
4 current catch advice, but the data are continuing to be refined,  
5 and revisions to the dataset, to modify that catch advice, to  
6 make more informed use of that data, moving forward, and so it's  
7 not that it hasn't been used, and so I just wanted to make sure  
8 that I understand what you're asking, and so, J.D., if you want  
9 to pop back in..

10

11 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sure. I think I got some  
12 clarification from Dr. Porch, saying it wasn't the Science  
13 Center requesting anything, and it leaves me to ask the question  
14 or to believe that the State of Florida asked, and clearly  
15 somebody is asking for it, for the SSC to continue reviewing  
16 this.

17

18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Dr. Simmons.

19

20 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. At the  
21 beginning of this January SSC meeting, I reminded the SSC that  
22 the council had an outstanding motion from their April 2021  
23 meeting, and you probably remember, at that meeting, the Great  
24 Red Snapper Count had just been reviewed by the SSC as a draft,  
25 and I don't think that final report had been submitted yet, and  
26 that was submitted much later, as has been discussed earlier,  
27 and so there was a lot of discussion, during that council  
28 meeting, about other available data sources.

29

30 The council passed that motion to request the SSC to consider  
31 new information in the revised report, being the Great Red  
32 Snapper Count, to provide catch advice for red snapper, and it  
33 said for 2021 and beyond, and, as part of that discussion, the  
34 SSC should consider the existing ABC Control Rule, as well as  
35 the National Standard Guidelines, and that was a council motion,  
36 and so that is why the agenda was established the way it was  
37 during the January SSC meeting, with all the materials that were  
38 new, or we did not have time to adequately discuss during that  
39 March/ April SSC meeting last year, and so hopefully that helps  
40 a little bit.

41

42 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons.

43

44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right, and so, J.D., again, if you have  
45 any other questions about that, if we haven't answered them  
46 adequately, just let us know, and we'll make sure that we get  
47 back to you. Okay?

48

1 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
2

3 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. I'm going to try to keep us on  
4 schedule here, and I'm going to turn it back to Dr. Nance for  
5 Agenda Item XII, which is a discussion of any remaining SSC --  
6 Sorry. We've got two hands. I don't want to get too far ahead  
7 of myself. I apologize to both Troy and Phil. Mr. Williamson.  
8

9 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** When we established the OFL, using the Great  
10 Red Snapper Count, as I recall correctly, the SSC used the  
11 bottom longline survey for establishing the ABC. After all of  
12 this reevaluation, are we looking at reevaluating the ABC?  
13

14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Troy, I will certainly let Jim weigh-in on  
15 this, and I had the opportunity to attend the SSC meeting, and I  
16 recognize that it's preferable to have the OFL and the ABC  
17 established using the same information, and so, in large part, I  
18 think, as they're evaluating these additional items, that that  
19 would probably be the approach that they go, but I will defer to  
20 Dr. Nance.  
21

22 **DR. NANCE:** Troy, the whole purpose is we're going to reevaluate  
23 the OFL and the ABC at our March 2022 meeting.  
24

25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks, Dr. Nance. Mr. Dyskow.  
26

27 **MR. DYSKOW:** Thank you, Dr. Frazer. I would like some  
28 clarification, and I have been patiently listening through this  
29 whole presentation, and I've seen a lot of finger-pointing back  
30 and forth, that it was this guy that asked for it, that it was  
31 that group that asked for it, and, as far as this reevaluation  
32 process, I think the way this was left is that it was Florida  
33 that requested this final reevaluation, and I have never heard  
34 of that before, and, since we have Jessica here on the line,  
35 Jessica, could you comment on that? Is Florida the one that is  
36 requesting this additional reevaluation?  
37

38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Phil, I don't believe that Florida  
39 specifically requested any reevaluation. I think that the data  
40 that were collected from Florida were not in complete agreement  
41 with those that were generated, or collected, in the Great Red  
42 Snapper Count, and I think that there was a working group that  
43 was put together to reconcile, in part, those differences, and  
44 that working group provided some suggestions regarding the  
45 reanalysis and the stratification, and so I think that's the  
46 genesis of the effort to reanalyze the data, and so, again, I  
47 would caution people -- I'm not sure that people are actually  
48 pointing fingers one way or another, but that is my recollection

1 of how we got to where we are, is an inconsistency in the output  
2 of the two different data collection efforts, and so does that  
3 sound consistent with the discussion of the SSC, Dr. Nance?

4

5 **DR. NANCE:** Yes, it does.

6

7 **MR. DYSKOW:** Excuse me, Dr. Frazer, but can I ask for more  
8 clarification, because I don't think my question was answered.

9

10 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Sure.

11

12 **MR. DYSKOW:** Who requested this working group?

13

14 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Clay, can you jump in here?

15

16 **DR. PORCH:** Just to clarify, it's not that any one group  
17 requested these analyses, but it's just part of the ongoing,  
18 evolving scientific discussion. You know, we looked at the  
19 information, and Florida did express some concerns, and I mean  
20 at the SSC meeting, looking at that estimate that most of the  
21 red snapper in Florida were inside of thirty meters in the Big  
22 Bend area, which just doesn't jibe with any other information.

23

24 The other parts about the random forest model were based on  
25 discussions that various analysts had amongst each other and at  
26 the SSC, and so it's not that anybody was really pointing the  
27 finger, in particular, but it's just part of the collective  
28 discussion, and then you saw the motion that the SSC made, and  
29 so I hope that makes it a little clearer.

30

31 **MR. DYSKOW:** It does, Dr. Porch, but I would like to ask one  
32 follow-up question, if Dr. Frazer will allow it.

33

34 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Absolutely. Go ahead, Phil.

35

36 **MR. DYSKOW:** Dr. Porch, does the typical stock assessment that  
37 is performed by the Southeastern Science Center undergo this  
38 same level of scrutiny?

39

40 **DR. PORCH:** I would say easily, especially red snapper. It's  
41 probably, overall, I would say even more, when it's a benchmark  
42 or a research track assessment.

43

44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Porch. I am going to go ahead  
45 and let Jessica McCawley and Andy Strelcheck add to the  
46 conversation. Jessica, you can go first.

47

48 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't know that I

1 have a lot of answers here. It looks like Luiz Barbieri is on  
2 the line, and he is really the expert on the types of questions  
3 that are being asked about the Florida information, and so I  
4 don't know if you want to go to him, and it was just a thought,  
5 but I don't have all the answers.

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I will see -- Again, I am trying to -- I am  
8 mindful of the time, right, here, and, if we need some  
9 clarification on process and how we got to where we are, I think  
10 we might be able to provide maybe a more concise explanation in  
11 Full Council, and so I will give Andy Strelcheck perhaps the  
12 final word here, before we move on to our next agenda item.

13  
14 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I guess, to add to this,  
15 and I am hearing frustration, obviously, with regard to the  
16 length of time it's taking to review this and the fact that  
17 people are asking questions, and there's more exploratory work  
18 ongoing, and I would hope that you could look at this as a good  
19 thing, right?

20  
21 I want to commend Greg and his team, and they have been willing,  
22 obviously, to continue to work on refinements and improvements  
23 to the analyses. As he has indicated, it's gone through a very  
24 rigorous peer review. There's a lot of people now that are  
25 looking at this, and eyes are on it, and people are looking  
26 under the hood, and they have questions, right, and so, to me,  
27 our goal is to have the best available science that we possibly  
28 can have to make decisions, and, in order for the Science Center  
29 to proceed with an interim analysis, in advance of any sort of  
30 research track assessment, we want to make sure that the numbers  
31 that go before the SSC are going to be utilized, obviously,  
32 appropriately and effectively to set OFLs and ABCs.

33  
34 I view this as a very positive thing, and, given the substantial  
35 increase in information and knowledge with regard to red snapper  
36 that has been provided from it, I think this extra level of time  
37 to go through the information is really important. Thanks.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Andy. All right, and so we are  
40 going to try to stay on schedule here, and I'm going to ask Dr.  
41 Nance if he would go ahead and discuss any remaining SSC  
42 recommendations, and that would be Agenda Item Number XII, and  
43 so, Dr. Nance, the floor is yours.

44  
45 **DISCUSSION OF REMAINING SSC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE NOVEMBER**  
46 **2021 AND JANUARY 2022 SSC MEETINGS**

47  
48 **DR. NANCE:** Thank you. I don't have any to present right now,

1 Mr. Chair. There will be a presentation tomorrow, during the  
2 Sustainable Fisheries Committee, on the bycatch, and that's our  
3 last remaining item from our January meeting summary.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Excellent, and so we'll go ahead and pick up  
6 the SSC report during that committee, and that will allow us to  
7 move into Agenda Item XIII, which is the discussion of any  
8 remaining Reef Fish AP recommendations from the January 2022  
9 Reef Fish AP meeting, and that's Tab B, Number 13. Mr. Rindone,  
10 if you want to lead us through that.

11  
12 **DISCUSSION OF REMAINING REEF FISH AP RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE**  
13 **JANUARY 2022 REEF FISH AP MEETING**

14  
15 **MR. RINDONE:** I hope that Captain Walker is still on.  
16 Otherwise, I'm going to say that everything that I say was his  
17 idea. Okay, and so Captain Walker was reelected as the Chair,  
18 and Captain Troy Frady was reelected as the Vice Chair. The  
19 Chair and Vice Chair were reelected because the AP was  
20 reappointed at the council's June meeting.

21  
22 We already talked about everything with gag, and we reviewed,  
23 with the AP, the progress that had been made on the scamp  
24 research track assessment, which is now transitioning into its  
25 operational assessment, and that is what will ultimately provide  
26 the catch advice that can be considered by the SSC and the  
27 council, and we expect that sometime in the late summer or early  
28 fall of this year.

29  
30 We already talked about greater amberjack and the AP's comments  
31 on that, and yellowtail snapper, and so the AP also discussed  
32 the Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting Program,  
33 or SEFHIER, and its proposed rule changes, and they discussed  
34 the COLREGS and the autofill reporting, and they had a motion,  
35 in the wake of all of that.

36  
37 The motion was that, in agreement with the Data Collection  
38 Advisory Panel, the Reef Fish AP recommends the council take  
39 whatever necessary action to work with NMFS to revise the  
40 SEFHIER program to allow vessels to move within a predefined  
41 demarcation line without declaring. If a vessel intends to fish  
42 inside or landward of that predefined demarcation line, the  
43 requirement to hail-out would apply. If seaward of a predefined  
44 demarcation line, regardless of the intent to fish, the  
45 requirement to hail-out would apply, and this carried  
46 unanimously. I will let Captain Walker expand on their intent  
47 behind all of that, Mr. Chair.

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Captain Walker.

2  
3 **MR. WALKER:** Thanks, Ryan. Yes, we had rather vigorous  
4 discussion on this issue, after hearing a presentation about the  
5 issue, and it was mostly from the charter guys, as you might  
6 imagine, that are disenchanted with some of the hail-out  
7 requirements, as it regards to moving around before you actually  
8 pick up your charter and go out, but I think you guys are all  
9 aware that we have to -- When you leave your house dock, you  
10 have to do a thing, a declaration, and then, if you go to the  
11 fuel dock, you have to do another declaration, and then another  
12 one, and it gets to be too much, really.

13  
14 The guys on the AP expressed frustration with NMFS kind of, and  
15 they called it difficult, to make us a line that we could  
16 operate inside of without having to do all of these short little  
17 hops and do log-ins and log-outs all along the way. We wanted,  
18 or the panel mostly wanted, to have either the COLREGS line, or  
19 any line that NMFS found suitable, that we could operate behind  
20 before we have to do all these requirements.

21  
22 This was pointed out, that the Data Collection AP felt the same  
23 way, and we were in lockstep agreement with the Data Collection  
24 AP on this motion, as well as I believe two others that are  
25 associated with the for-hire requirements, as far as electronic  
26 reporting go.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Captain Walker. Do we  
29 have any other questions? Kevin Anson.

30  
31 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I may be reading this wrong,  
32 but, in the second-to-last sentence of this motion that is  
33 displayed currently, shouldn't it say, near the end of that  
34 sentence, "hail-out would not apply"?

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I am going to ask Mr. Rindone and Mr. Walker  
37 to read it closely.

38  
39 **MR. RINDONE:** No, sir, Mr. Anson. The intent was that, if  
40 you're seaward of that predefined demarcation line, then the  
41 expectation was that you're in a predictably fishable area,  
42 where other people may also be fishing, but, inside of that  
43 line, if a vessel is going to pick up or drop off a charter, or  
44 pick up fuel, bait, ice, haul-out for repairs, whatever the  
45 situation may be, that the vessel can move freely inside that  
46 area, since it's not fishing in the conduction of other things  
47 that it needs to be moving around for, but, seaward of that  
48 line, the intention would be that the vessel would still have to

1 hail-out, and, Ed, if I have missed that, say so.  
2

3 **MR. WALKER:** No, I think you're exactly right. Seaward would  
4 put you out where we would expect reporting to take place, but  
5 it's the moving around inshore that we're trying to address  
6 here. It's not uncommon for a charter boat guy, like myself, to  
7 be required to do five different reports on a half-day charter,  
8 but, yes, the wording is correct, I believe.  
9

10 **MR. RINDONE:** Just to note that it was the AP's intent that,  
11 whether seaward or inside of that predefined demarcation line,  
12 if you fishing, you would need to hail-out, and the presumption  
13 would be that, if you were inside that demarcation line, fishing  
14 and have not hailed-out, you're in trouble.  
15

16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I think -- I'm just looking at the agenda,  
17 over the next day or so, and so I think this issue will come up  
18 again, and so we can defer the discussion to the Data Collection  
19 Committee, most likely. Again, I want to try to keep us on  
20 time. Is there any other questions related to the AP report?  
21

22 **MR. RINDONE:** We have some more motions to go through.  
23

24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Go ahead, Ryan.  
25

26 **MR. RINDONE:** Also, on the draft framework action for  
27 modifications to location reporting requirements for-hire  
28 vessels, the Reef Fish AP discussed this, and they had a few  
29 motions here. I guess these would be -- We could cover these, I  
30 guess, in the Data Collection.  
31

32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, and that was my point.  
33

34 **MR. RINDONE:** So there's those, and you guys have already heard  
35 about the vermilion snapper, and then there were some Other  
36 Business motions that the AP discussed, three exactly, and I  
37 will go through those really quickly for you guys,  
38

39 With respect to leasing federal commercial fishing permits, the  
40 AP recommends that the council initiate -- Bernie, this is under  
41 Other Business. There we go. The Reef Fish AP recommends that  
42 the council initiate an action to allow the leasing of federal  
43 commercial fishery permits from one entity or vessel owner  
44 directly to another entity or vessel owner.  
45

46 The next motion was that, with respect to modification of the  
47 commercial gray triggerfish trip limit, the AP recommended  
48 raising the commercial trip limit for gray triggerfish to

1 between thirty-two to forty fish, and the purpose of this was to  
2 allow the commercial sector the ability to actually land its  
3 ACL.

4  
5 Then, with respect to recreational data collection programs, the  
6 AP discussed the idea of these -- Of mobile-application-based  
7 data collection efforts, like iSnapper and the different apps  
8 that are used by some of the Gulf states for private angling for  
9 red snapper, and they recommended that the council establish a  
10 more real-time data collection system for the private  
11 recreational sector and have it implemented in a mandatory way  
12 within the next three years. I don't know if Captain Walker has  
13 anything to add to any of that, but that's all that I have.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Captain Walker, do you have anything to add?

16  
17 **MR. WALKER:** No, and I think that pretty well sums it up. In  
18 regard to triggerfish, it should be pointed out, I think, that  
19 they haven't been catching their ACL anyway, and so I believe  
20 the limit is currently sixteen, as far as commercial triggerfish  
21 go, and so the AP felt that it was fine to consider raising it  
22 to allow them to catch their ACL, as pointed out, but, other  
23 than that, I think that's perfect.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Captain Walker. We've  
26 got ten minutes before we're scheduled to start our closed  
27 session, and we have two Other Business items that I think, in  
28 combination with questions, might take that time and more, and  
29 so I am going to start and allow Andy Strelcheck, real quick, to  
30 provide a two-minute update about the settlement agreement that  
31 he talked about earlier, and, if there are questions on that,  
32 we'll have to hold them until Full Council. Andy, go ahead.

33  
34 **OTHER BUSINESS**  
35 **UPDATE ON SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT**  
36

37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Tom. Many of you are likely aware  
38 that, back in September of 2020, Texas filed a complaint in the  
39 U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas. In  
40 part, the complaint essentially stated that NOAA Fisheries used  
41 incorrect data when determining the amount of the Texas 2019  
42 overage.

43  
44 In proceeding with, obviously, the complaint, we worked with  
45 Texas to settle the case, and we agreed to use Texas 2019 and  
46 2020 landings estimates to determine applicable paybacks for the  
47 2020 and 2021 private recreational fishing seasons. In turn,  
48 Texas agreed to dismiss their complaint against us and provide

1 us with more timely landings data each year, prohibit harvest in  
2 state waters when they determine their private quota is met, or  
3 projected to be met, and, also, we agreed upon a methodology,  
4 moving forward, for estimating landings for 2021 and beyond.

5  
6 Just real briefly, the main point of issue between the State of  
7 Texas estimates and NOAA Fisheries' was how they were estimating  
8 the average weight of red snapper, and so, overall, I see this  
9 as a good outcome for both parties and something positive that  
10 will allow for us to move forward with agreed-upon approaches  
11 for those estimated landings in the future, and we did make  
12 adjustments, based on this agreement, to the Texas paybacks for  
13 prior seasons, based on this agreement, and that was published  
14 in late December, and so that's all. Thanks.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. Thanks, Andy, for that update. Kevin,  
17 I know we had another agenda item as well that you wanted to do,  
18 and we're going to go ahead and move that to Full Council, and I  
19 didn't forget about it, and we'll just make sure that we add it  
20 to the agenda at that point, and so, with that said, I think  
21 we'll bring this committee to a close for the day, and I will  
22 turn it back over to the Chair.

23  
24 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on January 25, 2022.)

25  
26 - - -  
27