GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
MACKEREL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Perdido Beach Resort Orange Beach, Alabama

JANUARY 27, 2016

VOTING MEMBERS
Pamela Dana.........................................................Florida
Martha Bademan (designee for Nick Wiley).......................Florida
Leann Bosarge........................................................Mississippi
Doug Boyd............................................................Texas
Roy Crabtree...............................NMFS, SERO, St. Petersburg, Florida
Myron Fischer (designee for Randy Pausina)...............Louisiana
John Sanchez.........................................................Florida
David Walker.........................................................Alabama

NON-VOTING MEMBERS
Kevin Anson.........................................................Alabama
Jason Brand..........................................................USCG
Dale Diaz.............................................................Mississippi
Dave Donaldson.........................................................GSMFC
John Greene............................................................Alabama
Kelly Lucas (designee for Jamie Miller).........................Mississippi
Campo Matens.........................................................Louisiana
Robin Riechers............................................................Texas
Greg Stunz...............................................................Texas
Ed Swindell.........................................................Louisiana

STAFF
Steven Atran.........................................................Senior Fishery Biologist
Assane Diagne.........................................................Economist
John Froeschke.......................................................Fishery Biologist/Statistician
Doug Gregory........................................................Executive Director
Karen Hoak.........................................................Administrative and Financial Assistant
Ava Lasseter.........................................................Anthropologist
Mara Levy..........................................................NOAA General Counsel
Charlene Ponce..................................................Public Information Officer
Ryan Rindone.....................................................Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
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Carrie Simmons..................................................Deputy Director

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Steve Branstetter................................................NMFS
Mark Brown.........................................................SAFMC
Cliff Cox..............................................................Destin, FL
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The Mackerel Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at the Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach, Alabama, Wednesday morning, January 27, 2016, and was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Chairman Pamela Dana.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES

CHAIRMAN PAMELA DANA: I would like to convene the Mackerel Management Committee, and I will start with Adoption of the Agenda, Tab C, Number 1.

MS. MARTHA BADEMAN: So moved.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Do I have a second? Okay, I’ve got a second. Then let’s move into Approval of Minutes. Has the committee had the opportunity to review the minutes, and, if so, are there any changes or can we approve the minutes as written?

MS. BADEMAN: Motion to approve the minutes.

MR. JOHN SANCHEZ: Second.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We have a motion to approve and a second. The minutes are approved. All right. Let’s move -- Ryan, I’m going to need your assistance here, but let’s move into Item IV, which is the Public Hearing Draft for Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendment 26, Changes in Allocation, Stock Boundaries, and Sale Provisions for the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic Migratory Groups of King Mackerel. You’ll find that in Tab C, Number 4. Ryan.

PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT CMP AMENDMENT 26 - CHANGES IN ALLOCATION, STOCK BOUNDARIES, AND SALE PROVISIONS FOR THE GULF OF MEXICO AND ATLANTIC MIGRATORY GROUPS OF KING MACKEREL

MR. RYAN RINDONE: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the committee is agreeable to it, what I would like to do is, as we move through Tab C, Number 4, to also go step-wise through the discussion in Tab C, Number 4(a), which is the CMP AP’s Summary Report. We can go action-by-action for what their discussions were for each action within the document. That way, you guys have an idea of where they stood and what their sentiments were. Does anybody object to that?

CHAIRMAN DANA: Seeing no objection --

MR. RINDONE: Also, committee members, the CMP AP elected a Chair and Vice Chair this time around, since they were recently
repopulated, and Martin Fisher was elected as the Chair, and he’s here today to answer any questions you guys might have about the AP’s discussions. Tom Marvel was elected to be the Vice Chair.

Starting with Action 1 in the document, which is on page 7, and this is to adjust the management boundary for Gulf and Atlantic groups of kingfish, the management boundaries have changed based on the results of the stock assessment, which suggested changes in the mixing zones.

The council’s current preferred alternative is Alternative 3, which would establish a single year boundary for separating the Gulf and Atlantic groups of kingfish at the Dade/Monroe County line, and it would make the Gulf Council the responsible management entity for management measures within the mixing zone throughout the Keys year-round.

When the AP discussed this, they agreed with what the council’s preferred alternative was and thought that having the Gulf Council be responsible for management throughout the Keys year-round was good for the gillnet fishery down there, and it also paired up well with the Spanish mackerel management, which is also at the Dade/Monroe line, and cobia as well. It kind of folded all the CMP species together with the same management boundary. Are there any comments or anything on Action 1? Are you happy with the current preferred?

Action 2 is on page 13 in the document, and this is a -- Actions 2 through 5 are South Atlantic-centric actions, but we do need -- Since we have a joint plan, we do need to go through those as well. Action 2 talks about updating reference points and revising the ACL and ACT for Atlantic group kingfish, and it’s broken up into Actions 2-1 and 2-2.

2-1 is on page 13, and this talks about revising the ABC for Atlantic kingfish. The South Atlantic’s preferred alternative is Alternative 2, which would revise the ABC for Atlantic kingfish for the 2016/2017 fishing season through the 2019/2020 season, based on the ABC levels recommended by the South Atlantic’s SSC for an ABC under a high-recruitment scenario, and this is also preferred by both the Gulf and South Atlantic APs.

The reason why this was selected is because the fishermen over there are reporting seeing what they describe as record numbers of smaller, like six to eight-pound, kingfish, and they think that there is a very large recruit class that’s coming through and so the dip in recruitment, which was shown in the stock assessment, they don’t think that that’s something that’s going to persist
through time. They think there’s a big year class coming through. You guys would need to pick a preferred. The AP agreed with the South Atlantic. Our AP agreed with the South Atlantic AP in selecting Alternative 2 as preferred. Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Okay and so we are -- We have the opportunity to select a preferred alternative, and, again, the South Atlantic preferred is Alternative 2 and the Gulf and South Atlantic AP also recommended Alternative 2 as the preferred. Do I have any motion from the committee? Martha Bademan.

MS. BADEMAN: I move that in Action 2-1 that we select Alternative 2 as the preferred alternative.

MR. SANCHEZ: Second.

CHAIRMAN DANA: I have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion? Seeing none, all those on the committee in favor of choosing Action 2.2.1, Alternative 2 as the preferred, say aye; all those opposed. The motion passes.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Moving on to 2-2, and this one is on page 15, this would revise the ACLs, commercial quotas, and recreational ACT for Atlantic kingfish. The South Atlantic’s AP recommended Alternative 2, which would revise the ACL and the recreational ACT, based on whatever is selected in Action 2-1, and where the ACL would be equal to the ABC, which would be as high as it could be set.

However, the South Atlantic Council, and the South Atlantic’s SSC, and the Gulf’s AP all preferred Alternative 3, which would establish the ACL equal to the deterministic equilibrium yield at F 30 percent SPR, which is 12.7-million pounds, for the 2016/2017 to 2019/2020 fishing seasons.

The reason why the Gulf AP, the South Atlantic SSC, and, ultimately, the South Atlantic Council selected this was as just a little bit of an insurance policy, in case the high-recruitment scenario turned out to be overly optimistic. This is what you guys have now selected as preferred in Action 2-1.

In the event that that high-recruitment scenario isn’t something that persists through time, having the ACL set at the equilibrium yield still increases the ACL for that entire fishery, but it provides a little bit of a cushion. Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Okay. On Action 2-2, we have an opportunity to choose a preferred alternative. Currently, Alternative 2 is the
South Atlantic AP recommended preferred. However, Alternative 3 is the South Atlantic Council preferred, as well as the South Atlantic SSC and the Gulf AP recommended. Does the committee have any -- Leann has a comment.

**MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** I just had a question, and this is a South Atlantic question and so you might not know this off the top of your head, Ryan, but what was the South Atlantic AP’s rationale for going a little less conservative? Do you remember?

**MR. RINDONE:** Yes, ma’am. Their rationale was the fishery is not overfished or undergoing overfishing and so their sentiment was let’s catch as much as we can and get as much as the stock assessment will allow us to catch, since the stock is not imperiled, according to the assessment.

**CHAIRMAN DANA:** Dr. Crabtree.

**DR. ROY CRABTREE:** I think in this case, given the uncertainty around the recruitments, we would be wise to be a little more precautionary and to make sure we keep this stock in good shape. I will make a motion to adopt Alternative 3 as our preferred under Action 2-2.

**MR. DAVID WALKER:** I’ll second that.

**CHAIRMAN DANA:** We have a motion and a second. Any discussion? Seeing none, any opposition? The motion passes that in Action 2-2 to make Alternative 3 the preferred alternative. Ryan.

**MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There is one more bit of business that we need to make sure that we take care of in 2-2, and this is the removal of Alternative 6. Currently, Alternative 2 is not listed in Chapter 2, but I can go down to the Considered but Rejected and pull it for you guys if you want.

This was removed by the South Atlantic Council at their September meeting and it fell through the cracks on us at our October meeting to remove as well, and it’s just another scenario that the South Atlantic Council felt wasn’t necessary to consider, and so, for parity in the document, the Gulf Council would need to remove Action 6 from Action 2-2 as well.

**CHAIRMAN DANA:** Is anyone prepared to make the motion to remove Alternative 6 in Action 2-2? Martha Bademan.

**MS. BADEMAN:** I move to remove Alternative 6 from Action 2-2.
CHAIRMAN DANA: We have a motion to remove. Is there a second?

MR. SANCHEZ: Second.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We have a second from Mr. Sanchez. Any discussion? Any opposition? The motion is approved to remove Alternative 6 from Action 2-2.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We’ll go ahead and move on to Action 3 now and Action 3 is on page 19, in Tab C, Number 4. This talks about an incidental catch of Atlantic kingfish caught in the small coastal shark gillnet fishery.

This is a fishery that exists only in the South Atlantic, and the South Atlantic Council preferred alternative is Alternative 3, which would allow the retention and sale of Atlantic kingfish caught with a gillnet as incidental catch in the gillnet portion of the commercial shark fishery for any vessel that has both a valid directed shark commercial permit and a valid federal king mackerel commercial permit.

Those kingfish caught as incidental bycatch in that fishery would have to be sold to a federally-permitted seafood dealer, and, for shark gillnet trips in the Southern Zone on the Atlantic side, no more than two king mackerel per crew could be sold from the trip. For those trips in the Northern Zone, no more than three king mackerel could be sold. This is reflective of the recreational bag limits that are in those zones in the Atlantic side.

The Gulf AP’s sentiments on this were fish that get caught in gillnets historically have a tremendously terrible discard mortality rate and if those fish are dead anyway, they might as well be sold if they can be. They thought that by having such low bag limits per person for the allowable sale that it would prevent there from becoming a directed fishery for kingfish within the shark gillnet fishery. Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Dr. Crabtree.

DR. CRABTREE: We had quite a bit of discussion about this at the South Atlantic Council, and Ryan is right. Based on what I understand, these fish are largely going to be dead anyway and so it just doesn’t make any sense to waste them and we may as well let these folks bring them in. They’re not targeting them. It’s just incidental catch. I would make a motion that we adopt, under Action 3, Alternative 3 as our preferred.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Dr. Crabtree. We have a motion to
accept as the preferred Alternative 3 under Action 3. Do I have a second?

MS. BOSARGE: I will second it.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Second by Leann Bosarge. Any discussion on that motion? Any opposition? The motion passes that in Action 3 that Alternative 3 is the preferred alternative.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Moving on to Action 4, which is going to be on page 21 in Tab C, Number 4, Action 4 establishes commercial split seasons for Atlantic kingfish in the Southern Zone, and the Gulf AP’s preferred for this particular action was Alternative 1, which would not establish any commercial split seasons.

The AP’s reason for that was that if the pace of landings in the Atlantic needed to be reduced, then the South Atlantic Council might consider modifying things like trip limits, but the AP thought that if there ended up being a deliberate closed season in the South Atlantic, because harvest was met in the first season, and then the first season closes and then fishermen have to wait until the second season reopens, that it might cause more fishermen to travel.

If you look at the landings of kingfish in the South Atlantic, and you will be able to see this in Figure 2.4.1, which is on page 23, this shows the Atlantic monthly king mackerel landings for the Southern Zone from 1998 to 2004. You can see the dip that occurs at about August through November, and this is the time of the year when the water is a little bit warmer and the fish just aren’t really in that Southern Zone.

The South Atlantic’s thought was that these fishermen are likely going to travel anyway, but if they establish the split season, then it might allow for a little bit better seasonal management and ACL management of the fish which are already allocated to that zone, and it’s for that reason that the South Atlantic prefers Alternative 2, which would allocate the Southern Zone quota for Atlantic kingfish into two split seasons, 60 percent for the period of March 1 to September 30. Remember the landings tend to fall off after August. Then 40 percent for the period of October 1 through the end of February, and the landings over in the Southern Zone tend to pick up after November over there.

Any remaining quota from season one would automatically transfer to season two. Any remaining quota from season two would not be carried forward to the next fishing year. When quota for the
season is met or expected to be met, commercial harvest of king mackerel in the Southern Zone would be prohibited for the remainder of that season, whether it be season one or two, and the South Atlantic’s AP also recommends Alternative 2.

Alternatives 3 and 4 offer similar ideas, with a little bit different working, Alternative 4 being the most different, where it sets the seasons as being 50 percent for the first season and 50 percent for the second season. The first season would be from March 1 through the end of October, and the second season would be from the beginning of November to the end of February. Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Ryan. We have an action where the alternatives are differing between the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. Steve, do you have any input on this particular action? You don’t? Okay. Martha or Martin, do you want to provide any input from the Gulf AP on perspective? Martha.

MS. BADEMAN: Not really. Martin, I don’t know if you do want to come up and talk about this one. I don’t know that I agreed with the AP on this one. I don’t know that I do.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Martin Fisher, the Chairman of the Gulf CMP AP, is coming to the podium to shed light, bright light.

MR. MARTIN FISHER: Good morning and thank you, Madam Chair and council, for the opportunity to represent the CMP AP for the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. In reviewing Alternative 2, which is the South Atlantic, the split is 60/40, and I’m not really sure that when we discussed it that we fully understood that. We certainly don’t want to encourage effort shifting, and that’s why we came up with the motion we did.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Martha Bademan.

MS. BADEMAN: I guess where I kind of struggle with that is if we don’t -- If there is no split season and it’s gobbled up pretty quickly, I think you still end up in a situation, and maybe encourage a situation where people are traveling over to the Gulf because their quota is gone. There is no reason for them to come back and harvest in the South Atlantic.

MR. FISHER: To argue against the AP’s position, actually, in terms of common sense, if you have a split season with actual allocation differences, that would encourage a slow-down in the fishery rather than a derby fishery.
CHAIRMAN DANA:  Dr. Crabtree.

DR. CRABTREE:  Martin, when you speak of effort shifting, you’re talking about the traveling mackerel guys?

MR. FISHER:  Yes.

DR. CRABTREE:  I don’t know, and I mean we talked about this at the South Atlantic, too. My impression is the traveling guys are going to travel anyway. That’s what they do, and so I guess I don’t have strong feelings about it, but my inclination is to go along with the South Atlantic Council now, but --

CHAIRMAN DANA:  Leann and David, if you have comments -- Leann, I know you do, and, David, if you have comments on it, I would appreciate it.

MS. BOSARGE:  Well, you know we had a lot of conversation about this when we were dealing with changing our opening dates, possibly, of our seasons here in the Gulf. I think we eventually acquiesced, at least in the western Gulf, to what the South Atlantic wanted and we didn’t back up our opening date.

I have a little reservation, looking at this, but I don’t have enough knowledge of that South Atlantic fishery to really understand how this is going to play out on their side. They have the traveling fishermen that come over to the Gulf and fish over here.

Essentially, if they end up doing this split season, which coincides with the opening of the western Gulf season, does it ensure that they will come over here every year? In other words, if they are only fishing 60 percent of that quota in that first season, they know that they’re going to come over here, because they know that they’re going to fish that 60 percent out right before our season opens, whereas if they had the whole 100 percent in that first season, there may be some years where a few of them would stay in the South Atlantic, because they had a real good season and it didn’t taper off, whatever the case may be, during those months where ours open up.

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Are we ensuring that they’re coming over here every year if we go along with this one? I am trying to think of the worst-case scenario for the Gulf.

CHAIRMAN DANA:  Ryan.

MR. RINDONE:  Thank you, Madam Chair. Hopefully I can shed a
little bit of light. This is based on the behavior of the fishery, looking at CPUE over time, and the reason why a lot of those fishermen travel is because their catch per unit effort tends to go down quite a bit during that time period, from about August through November.

It’s simply because the fish aren’t there. The water is warmer and the fish have moved further up north, into what would be the Atlantic’s Northern Zone, and any fish that were in the mixing zone are in the Gulf still and they haven’t moved down into the Keys yet, and so it’s slim pickings down there, which is why those fishermen pack their boats up and travel to the northern Gulf, where there are a lot more fish to be caught.

That effort shifting, regardless of how the seasons are structured, is likely to continue, if for no other reason than the CPUE during that time -- If you look at 2.4.1, I think is the figure. If you look at that figure, the CPUE during that time just plummets and it’s just not profitable to fish over there.

CHAIRMAN DANA: David Walker and then Dr. Crabtree.

MR. WALKER: I was just going to ask Martin, do you remember how the vote went, how close the vote was on that Alternative 1 for the Gulf?

MR. FISHER: It was nine to one with one abstention.

DR. CRABTREE: Just to Leann’s point, I mean these guys are full-time mackerel fishing. That’s what they do, and if you look at that figure, you can see September, October, and November, there just aren’t fish there, and so they’re going to travel and they’re going to come over. They’ve been doing it for a long time. That’s what they do and I think they’re going to continue to do it either way.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Dr. Crabtree. Mark from the South Atlantic Council.

MR. MARK BROWN: Also, there is a group of those guys that go to North Carolina, too. They don’t just all go over into the Gulf. There’s some of them that migrate up the coast and follow those fish all the way up to Diamond Shoals.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Mark. Myron, do you have any comment on this?

MR. FISCHER: The local Louisiana fishermen have voiced themselves
for years that they feel, in their eyes, their language, that out-of-state boats come from the Florida Atlantic coast and catch all or part of the quota before they really get out and get what they feel is their fair share.

They would always like to look at a situation where every section of the ocean has its own quota, where they could fish the Western Zone, which is only allocated a little over a million pounds from basically Pensacola to Brownsville. They just feel it’s a lot of area for not that many fish allocated for those fish to be caught by out-of-state commercial fishermen.

I understand they’ve traveled and they’ve always traveled. They have traveled to Louisiana since the 1970s, different groups of them, but they just are struggling with the fact that they would like to have a season open when the fish are closer to Grande Isle, which would be in the fall, and to have some sizeable amount of fish. Early in the year, it’s very long runs and they have pretty small boats.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Myron. Is there any other discussion on this particular item? If not, is the committee prepared to make a motion or to act on a preferred alternative for 2.4, Action 4? David Walker.

MR. WALKER: I would like to make the preferred Alternative 1 in Action 4. I move to make Alternative 1 the preferred alternative.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We have a motion to make Alternative 1 the preferred alternative, which is no action. Do I have a second for that alternative? I have a second through Leann Bosarge. Any discussion? Dr. Crabtree.

DR. CRABTREE: I was going to make a substitute motion to adopt, in Action 4, Alternative 2.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We have a substitute motion to make Alternative 2 the preferred alternative, which is to allocate the Southern Zone quota for Atlantic king mackerel into two split season quotas, 60 percent to the period March 1 through September 30, season one, and 40 percent to the period October 1 through the end of February, season two. Is there a second?

MS. BADEMAN: I will second it.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We have a second by Martha Bademan. Any discussion? Myron Fischer.
MR. FISCHER: Yes, Madam Chair. Could you refresh us on what alternative our Gulf Panel recommended on these and then possibly what alternative the South Atlantic Panel recommended?

CHAIRMAN DANA: Yes, sir. The Gulf AP recommended Alternative 1, no action, by a vote of nine to one. The South Atlantic Council and the South Atlantic AP recommended as preferred the Alternative 2, which is the two-season split. I see Doug Boyd had a comment or question.

MR. DOUG BOYD: Just a question. In either of these alternatives, it doesn’t appear, from the discussion, that the fishermen will not travel. In other words, they’re going to travel with either one of these alternatives and is that correct? Is that everybody’s assumption here?

CHAIRMAN DANA: That would be my assumption. Yes, Mark.

MR. BROWN: I would like to mention that the South Atlantic Mackerel AP is meeting next week in Cocoa Beach. I just wanted to bring that to your attention.

MR. RINDONE: I am going to that meeting too, by the way.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Ryan will be at that meeting. Ms. Bosarge and then Mr. Boyd.

MS. BOSARGE: What’s the size of this fleet? I mean how many boats or permits are we talking about, just out of curiosity, of the South Atlantic fleet?

CHAIRMAN DANA: Ryan, do you know the answer to that or Steve?

MR. RINDONE: Let’s see. I bet Kari MacLauchlin has an idea.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We’ll respond to that. We’re going to expert number two. When we get an answer, we will --

MS. BOSARGE: Okay, and I was asking because what I was -- It may turn out that eventually we go the Alternative 2 route. We may go it right now. I supported Alternative 1, mainly so that we could have some more conversation back and forth between the two councils on this alternative.

My fear is that maybe -- Yes, CPUE drops off, but if the bulk of the fleet goes to the Gulf when the CPUE drops off, well, if there is a handful of boats still over there, then obviously that means that their CPUE is going to go up, those handful.
There may be a handful that stick around and follow those fish over there. I don’t want to exacerbate the problem by actually having a closed season, you know they’re shutting their season down because they’ve hit their 60 percent quota for that first season, and now every one of them comes to the Gulf.

If that’s only two boats, if it’s a very small fleet, and it means that an extra two or three boats are coming to the Gulf, then that’s not really a -- You know it’s not a huge issue. That’s why I was wondering what the size of that fleet was.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Mr. Boyd.

MR. BOYD: A question. Does the Eastern Southern Zone primarily offload in central Florida or lower Florida? Where do those fish ultimately end up being offloaded? Do we know?

MR. RINDONE: I’m assuming you mean the east coast of Florida, the Atlantic Southern Zone. Most of those fish are going to be offloaded along the eastern coast of Florida if they’re caught over there. I know that David Krebs buys a fair number of those fish and there are a few other large dealers that have traveling trucks to pick those fish up.

MR. BOYD: Okay, and so is this split season possibly to help availability of the product during that whole season, rather than just in one particular timeframe and to help maintain market stability, or is that not what this is about?

MR. RINDONE: It will help with market stability, in that, in the past, if they had a banner season from the beginning of March until the slowdown occurs in late summer or early fall, they might have caught say 70 or 75 percent, maybe even 80 percent, of their quota during that time.

Then when the late winter/early spring season comes around towards the end of the fishing season, they might close before they actually got to the end of February. By splitting this up, it allows for a little bit more market stability for them and it gives them the opportunity to fish over there longer while the fish are present.

I just heard back from Kari MacLauchlin at the South Atlantic and she said there are about 550 permits registered to Florida East Coast vessels, but not all of those vessels are full-time, and that Cape Canaveral and Cocoa Beach are the primary landing spots for the east coast of Florida, and Sebastian probably, too.
MR. BOYD: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Martin Fisher.

MR. FISHER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Ms. Bosarge, I believe the traveling fleet that impacts Louisiana waters and Texas waters is about thirty to forty boats during the Western Subzone season.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Okay. Steve Branstetter.

DR. STEVE BRANSTETTER: Just a comment on this graphic, Figure 2.4.1, and then the landings tables in 2.4.3. Keep in mind that this document is getting ready to -- Right now, come November 1, the east coast of Florida becomes Gulf group, Gulf group king mackerel.

These are not -- What you’re seeing in this graphic from November through February is not Atlantic group king mackerel. It’s Gulf group king mackerel. Now, this document, and the most recent stock assessment, says that Gulf group king mackerel don’t go there anymore and so this is a little bit misleading.

Atlantic group king mackerel, the reason that drop-off starts occurring in July, August, and September, is those fish begin migrating to North Carolina, and you can see it in the landings. The Florida landings drop off just about August and the North Carolina landings begin to increase on Atlantic group king mackerel.

I don’t know how well this is going to track in the future if those Gulf group king mackerel don’t migrate around anymore, and I’m sure some will still do that, but this is a little bit misleading as to what we may be seeing in the future.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Okay. We have a substitute -- Excuse me. Ed Swindell.

MR. ED SWINDELL: Excuse me, but this still looks to me to be a year-long season and just broken by different dates. Am I wrong? I mean it’s a year-long season and the first half, the first part of it, if you’re going to carry over any leftover quota to the second, are you going to take any overage in the first half away from the season season?

Are you going to be able to react fast enough to stop the fishing if the 60 percent quota part is reached in September? Do we really believe that we have the ability to manage it that close? I really
don’t understand this. You know if you had one complete open season for the whole year, you’re still going to carry whatever overage you have in the first part to the second part, because that’s what would happen. I don’t really understand the need to close it on a day and you just start it up the next morning. Sorry. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Ed. Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: With respect to Dr. Branstetter’s comments about the figure, I don’t think that’s entirely the case, because the figure is tracking the landings by month and so it doesn’t really matter if they’re Atlantic fish or Gulf fish. It’s still the landings for that region that are being reflected in that table.

Since this issue was largely brought up to address a CPUE concern, where CPUE in that area, whether it’s Gulf fish or Atlantic fish or whatever fish, since that CPUE is dropping off, those fishermen are likely to leave that area for other areas where they’re going to be able to enjoy a higher CPUE, be it North Carolina or wherever. That’s the main story, if you will, that’s being told by Figure 2.4.1. It’s less about which migratory group and more about there are either fish there or there aren’t fish there. If there aren’t, then the fishermen are going to go where the fish are.

With respect to the accuracy that Mr. Swindell had expressed concern over, we have made changes in past amendments to the electronic reporting methods for the CMP fishery, for the fishermen and for the seafood dealers. By switching to more electronic methods, our precision has gone up considerably and, with that, our uncertainty in the landings has gone down considerably.

I would think that the National Marine Fisheries Service’s ability to track those landings is probably sufficient to be able to change the nature of the fishing seasons in the South Atlantic in this manner and not constantly have overruns or other problems of that nature.

CHAIRMAN DANA: David Walker.

MR. WALKER: I was just going to add that after public testimony -- Maybe we can move to full council and try to pick a preferred alternative after we hear the testimony from the Gulf.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We certainly can, but we do have a substitute motion, followed by a motion, and so the motion makers would need to table their motions, if that’s the desire of the committee. Otherwise, I would ask Dr. Crabtree if he has any final comments
before moving for a vote, if there’s no other discussion. So the
commitee then does want to move forward with a vote for a
preferred? Myron Fischer.

**MR. FISCHER:** Prior to the vote, if we cannot figure what to do,
I just want to remind everyone that our Gulf AP recommended
Alternative 1, whatever the consequences may be.

**CHAIRMAN DANA:** Thank you, Mr. Fischer. Okay. We’re going to go
ahead and take a vote on Action 4, that Alternative -- The
substitute motion is that Alternative 2 be the preferred
alternative. That’s to allocate the Southern Zone quota for
Atlantic king mackerel into two split season quotas, in a 60/40
split. A show of hands, all those in favor; those opposed. The
substitute motion fails.

We go to the original motion, which is in Action 4 to make the
preferred alternative Action 1, which is no action. It’s the
preferred alternative that the Gulf AP recommended. Any discussion
on Alternative 1 being the preferred? All those in favor raise
your hand, six; those opposed. The motion passes in Action 4 that
Alternative 1 is the preferred alternative. Okay, Ryan. Thank
you for the discussion, by the way. Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Ryan, the speed at which we move on these joint
amendments is about that of a turtle, usually, and so I would
venture to guess, you know depending on what happens -- You know
if they end up going to this split season, would you keep an eye
on, because, more than likely, something will play out and we’ll
get to see what really happens before -- Just keep an eye on it
and keep us updated on how things are changing, as what Dr.
Branstetter was talking about, and as there’s so many moving parts.
Okay?

**MR. RINDONE:** Yes, ma’am. Absolutely, and we get a pretty decent,
albeit anecdotal, barometer, if you will, from Myron and the guys
that he talks to down in Grand Isle, as far as the number of boats
that are from the east coast that have FL numbers on the sides of
their boats that make it over there.

It has been noticed, by folks that Myron talks to and the folks
that come to the AP meetings and talk about the AP meetings, that
the number of traveling fishermen has increased over the last five
years or so, especially. Martin, would you agree that that’s been
the general sentiment of the AP? We’re keeping tabs on it. It’s
difficult to quantify the number precisely, but we can certainly
work to try to have something more concrete.
CHAIRMAN DANA: Okay, Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: All right. Action 5 is on page 26 of Tab C, Number 4. This has been -- Action 5 used to be 5-1 and 5-2 and the South Atlantic and the IPT have done a great job of consolidating this into just one action, but, because it’s been consolidated, we need to approve the change in language, and that language change has been approved by the South Atlantic, and so if you guys would like to entertain that before we move forward.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Do I have a motion from a committee member to modify, in Action 5, modified to be one single action? Martha Bademan.

MS. BADEMAN: So moved.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Do I have a second? John Sanchez. Any discussion on that modification? Any objection to the motion? Seeing none, the motion passes. Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: Karen, the motion was to accept the modifications to the language in Action 5, as proposed by the South Atlantic and the IPT. In Action 5, as proposed by the South Atlantic Council and the IPT. That’s essentially what it was anyway.


MR. RINDONE: We still have to go through the Action 5 stuff. Action 5 establishes a trip limit system for the Southern Zone in the Atlantic, and we have four alternatives here. Alternative 1 would leave the trip limits for the Southern Zone as they are and so north of the Flagler/Volusia line, the trip limit is 3,500 pounds per vessel per day, year-round. Between the Flagler/Volusia lines and the Volusia/Brevard lines, or off of Volusia County, it’s 3,500 pounds per vessel per day from April 1 to October 31. Then from the Volusia/Brevard line to the Dade/Monroe line, the trip limit is seventy-five fish per vessel per day from April 1 through the end of October. Then from November 1 through the end of March, no trip limit is in place from the Flagler/Volusia line to the Dade/Monroe line.

Alternative 2 would set, in the Southern Zone, the trip limit north of the Flagler/Volusia line at 3,500 pounds. For the area south of the Flagler/Volusia line, it would establish a year-round trip limit of seventy-five fish per vessel per day for Atlantic kingfish.

Alternative 3 says in the Southern Zone the trip limit north of
the Flagler/Volusia line would be 3,500 pounds. For the area south of that line, it would establish a fifty-fish trip limit from March 1 to the end of March and seventy-five fish for the remainder of season one, as designated in Action 4, and season one, in this case, ends at the end of September.

It has two options. Option 3a says that beginning on August 1 and continuing through the end of season one, if 75 percent of the season one quota has been taken, the trip limit would be fifty fish. Option 3b says at any time during season one if 75 percent of the season one quota has been taken, the trip limit changes to fifty fish.

Alternative 4 says that in the Southern Zone the trip limit north of the Flagler/Volusia line would be 3,500 pounds and south of that it would establish a fifty-fish per vessel per day trip limit for season two, as designated in Action 4. In this case, season two would be from October 1 to the end of February.

There are three options here. Option a says that beginning on February 1 and continuing through the end of February, if 70 percent or more of the season two quota has been taken, the trip limit is fifty fish. If it’s less than 70 percent, then it’s still seventy-five fish. Then it goes up to seventy-five fish.

Option 4b says that beginning January 1 and continuing through the end of February, so for two months, if 70 percent or more of that season two quota has been taken, then the trip limit stays at fifty fish. If it’s less than 70 percent, then it bumps up to seventy-five fish.

Option c says beginning February 1 and continuing through the end of February, and so back to just one month, if 80 percent or more of the season two quota has been taken, then the trip limit stays at fifty fish. If not, then it bumps up to seventy-five fish.

There are no prefers that have been selected as of yet for Action 5 by the South Atlantic Council. The AP did get to see Action 5-1 and 5-2 though and the AP’s general sentiments, and you can read this in Tab C-4(a), but I will summarize it. Generally, whatever the South Atlantic thought was best as far as their trip limits is what the AP was agreeable to. It’s their fishery over there, and if they think lower trip limits will help them, based on where the ACL is at certain points in time, then the AP was agreeable to that, and so whatever helped them prosecute their fishery better. Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Do we need to -- Since we don’t have input from
the Gulf AP or the South Atlantic AP at this point, or the South Atlantic Council, do we need to even select a preferred or can we defer on that? Martha.

MS. BADEMAN: I don’t think it’s really a good idea for us to do anything with this right now. The South Atlantic hasn’t chosen anything, and this is one of their actions, and so I don’t want to get in front of them. Also, because this is so dependent on the previous action, where right now we’re in conflict with them, I don’t think it’s worth trying to pick something at this point.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Mr. Gregory.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DOUG GREGORY: I just have an observation. With this Alternative 1, the current trip limit system, it reduces the trip limit off the east coast of Florida to seventy-five during approximately the same time that the landings went down.

Given that the two councils have different options right now, when this comes back, I think we ought to try to see if we can get a more detailed analysis as to what’s driving the landings. Is it the migration of the fish? Is it the trip limit? Is it the movement of the fishermen? I mean those are three variables all affecting this, and it would be nice to try to piece that out.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you. Unless I see any objection -- Doug Boyd.

MR. BOYD: I don’t have an objection. I have a question, and I’m sorry that I may just not understand, but we have a trip limit of 3,500 pounds north of a particular area, and then we have a trip limit of numbers of fish south of that area. How do those two things correlate and why is one in pounds and one in numbers of fish?

CHAIRMAN DANA: Ryan or Steve, do you -- Mark Brown, do you have any comment on that? Sorry to put you on the spot.

MR. BROWN: That goes back years back, when a lot of this management was being established, and the trip limit for the northern area, north of Flagler/Volusia, has been 3,500 pounds as far back as I can remember, and then management was altered in the southern areas to try to accommodate some type of a measure to -- Because there was such a number of boats that were fishing in a small area when the fish were migrating through there, to try to slow it down a little bit, but they shifted to a number of fish rather than to pounds, so they would have a general idea by just counting them, because it can be easier that way.
I also wanted to mention that the AP will be discussing this next week, about this management right here for Action 5, and also picking a preferred. They’ve had some meetings with fishermen. Ben Hartig had some meetings with fishermen down in the south Florida area, personal meetings, and so they’re going to bring it to the AP and they should have some decisions then.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Mark. Back to if there is no objection, I would like to move forward and get more clarification on this, but move forward to Action 6. Okay, Ryan. Action 6.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The South Atlantic is currently conducting public hearings on the entire document, and so we’ll be able to have more feedback in April as to what the public sentiments over there on Action 5.

Action 6 begins on page 29 of Tab C, Number 4. Action 6 is where we get back into Gulf territory, and Action 6 would modify the ACL for Gulf group kingfish. Both councils’ current preferred alternative is to set the Gulf migratory group king mackerel ACL equal to the ABC, as recommended by the Gulf’s SSC, for the 2015 through 2019 fishing seasons. That’s the 2015/2016 season through the 2019/2020 fishing seasons.

The ABC values are in millions of pounds whole weight. We have obviously moved past the 2015/2016 fishing season, and so the first ABC and ACL combination that you would see in effect would be the one for the 2016/2017 fishing season, if this document were to go final within a reasonable amount of time, in the first half of this year.

The IPT has discussed requesting a rerun of the projections from the Center once the document does go final, and then we could follow up, at a later date, with a framework action to modify the ABC and the ACL, based on that rerun of those projections, but obviously there’s a lot in here that both councils are trying to get accomplished, and so we didn’t want to slow the document up any by submitting that request.

CHAIRMAN DANA: John Sanchez.

MR. SANCHEZ: Thank you. What’s the timeframe for rerunning these projections, given recruitment discussions we had earlier, et cetera, et cetera?

MR. RINDONE: It would behoove us probably to wait until after the end of the 2016/2017 fishing season, to get the most accurate
picture. Actually, at the end of the 2015/2016 season, to get the most accurate picture, which would mean after July 1, when the 2016/2017 starts. That way, we can get the recreational and the commercial landings from the 2015/2016 season and know what’s been caught and what’s still in the water.

Then let the Science Center rerun the projections then and, Bonnie, last time I talked to anybody over in your shop, I was given about a two to three-month turnaround on being able to rerun that stuff. Dr. Ponwith, last time I talked to anybody over in your neck of the woods, they said about two to three months to turn around updated ABC projections for the SSC to look at?

DR. BONNIE PONWITH: Yes, I was just looking through the email to try and ground truth that. Let me continue looking to find that response and get you a more definitive answer.

MR. RINDONE: From my memory, it was approximately that. So if we requested it say August 1 or so, somewhere around then, then that would give them time to compile the data from the previous fishing season. The MRIP waves would be in and the commercial landings should be in, and so it should allow it to move forward. It’s a framework action that could be completed pretty quickly, as long as there’s not a whole lot of other stuff that gets pinned to it in the process.

For the rest of Action 6, the other thing that was being considered was a constant catch scenario. This would establish a constant catch scenario for the Gulf kingfish ACL for either a three or a five-year period, but doing this requires that the Science Center rerun projections for both scenarios, and they have to know what the allocations are actually going to be in order to be able to forecast what effort should do, in terms of how many fish the model says can be landed.

Since we’re talking about changing those allocation scenarios, even if it’s just a little bit, the Science Center can’t provide us with those constant catch scenarios yet.

The other thing that the AP had discussed was that they preferred being able to catch the fish which were available to be caught now, as opposed to foregoing fish in one year in favor of catching a little bit more the next year and having that consistency. They had remarked that they preferred being able to catch whatever could be caught now.

If Alternative 3 is something that the committee is not interested in pursuing, in favor of perhaps what the AP has recommended, then
the IPT would always appreciate thinning of the herd.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Ryan. We do have, in Action 6, a preferred alternative, which is Alternative Number 2. Is there any desire by the committee to act on staff and our Gulf AP’s recommendation to consider but reject Alternative 3? Is there any discussion on this action? Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: What the AP said was that they were okay with that declining and they would rather go ahead and catch as much as they can now, knowing that it would decline in the future? They were all right with that?

MR. FISHER: Yes, ma’am, but what was really important to the AP was the idea of annually updating the yield projections and the ABC projections by the SSC. As long as we were going hand-in-hand with more or less a current event look at what the landings were, so that we could go up or down as needed, then the answer would be yes.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Okay. Once again, in Action 6, we already have a preferred alternative. Does anyone have a desire to remove Alternative 3? If not, then we will move forward. Okay.

MS. BOSARGE: I mean if this isn’t something that the AP is interested in, and if they’re okay with it, which we have one representative here, then I don’t have a problem with putting it in the Considered but Rejected column, as long as you feel confident that your two parallel tracks that you were talking about will in fact be the case.

MR. FISHER: I think that would depend on how the council responds to the SSC projections and what you guys actually take action on in relationship to those.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Was that a motion, Ms. Bosarge, or --

MS. BOSARGE: That’s a good question. It sounds like there are some variables still. Let’s leave it in for now, and let’s make sure that the two parallel tracks do in fact happen. You can’t analyze it right now anyway, and so hopefully it won’t be any extra work on you at the moment, on staff, and so let’s leave it in for now.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Okay. Let’s move forward, Ryan, into Action 7.

MR. RIN DON E: Thank you, Madam Chair. Action 7 begin on page 31. Action 7 examines revising the commercial zone quotas for Gulf
migratory group kingfish, and there are four options here to
examine it. The reason for this particular action is because the
stock assessment indicated that the area off the southeastern coast
of Florida was in fact Atlantic migratory group fish and not Gulf
migratory group, and so that Florida East Coast zone that we had
over there, we no longer -- There is no longer a need for that for
the Gulf migratory group, and so doing away with that leaves us
with a chunk of our pie. You guys remember my awesome pie
discussions. They were delicious.

We have to reallocate what remains of the commercial zone quotas
in the Gulf to the remaining Gulf zones. Currently, in Alternative
1, the Western Zone gets 31 percent of the commercial quota, the
Northern Zone gets 5.17 percent, and the Southern Hand Line and
Gillnet both get 15.96 percent each. It’s that 31.91 percent from
the Florida East Coast zone that we have to redistribute to the
remaining components.

Alternative 2 would revise those commercial zone quotas for Gulf
group kingfish by dividing the Florida East Coast Zone’s quota
into four equal parts. We call this equal reallocation, which
results in about 7.96 percent being added to the existing
allocation percentages for each of the four remaining zones.

You can see how all that shakes out in Tables 2.7.2 and 2.7.3. A
note on Table 2.7.3 is that it assumes that the ACL is going to be
equal to the ABC, which is what both councils currently prefer,
and that sector allocations would be represented by Alternative 1
in Action 8, which we haven’t got to yet, but that’s the
recreational and commercial reallocation. It assumes no
reallocation. You can see from all the options that everybody
still gets more fish, which is a great thing for the fishermen.

Alternative 3 would proportionally reallocate the Florida East
Coast Zone’s voided allocation to the remaining four zones such
that if you take say the Western Zone’s 31 percent and you divide
it by the sum of the remaining four zones, which is about 68
percent, then you get about 45.53 percent. That would be the
Western Zone’s new proportional allocation, and subsequent values
for the remaining zones.

Alternative 4, which is supported by the Gulf AP, would establish
a Western Zone allocation of the commercial ACL of 40 percent, 18
percent to the Northern Zone, and 21 percent apiece to the Southern
Zone Hand Line and Gillnet components. The AP’s rationale for
doing it this way is they wanted everybody to be able to get more
and everybody was going to get more regardless, because the stock
is healthy, but this really does help all -- They thought this
helps all four zones, but it especially helps the Northern Zone, which has a large number of permits which haven’t seen a lot of landings in recent history, the AP members discussed a few things that they thought might be the reason for that.

One was in the past, when the season opened on July 1, that the fish were caught before a lot of the dually-permitted vessels were able to get on the water and before the fish moved farther enough south, towards say Tampa Bay, for the fishermen down there to have a chance to get to them. That’s been rectified through changing the beginning of that fishing season to October 1, but they argue that 5.17 percent is still a small amount of quota and if they could have a little bit more, then that would certainly help them.

This year, during this year’s fishing season, we saw more boats with federal king mackerel permits off the northwest coast of Florida being able to fish, and the landings in that zone were landed more quickly than they have in years past, but we heard from a lot more fishermen that haven’t been fishing in the last several years that said I was finally able to get out on the water and catch some kingfish. Mr. Fisher can elaborate, if he thinks so, about why the 18 percent was picked for the Northern Zone by the AP.

MR. FISHER: Thank you, Ryan. Well, everything he said is true, and, in particular, the one thing that needs some light shown on it is when the zones got created, kingfish were a fairly depressed fishery. As the fishery came back, exactly what happens happened. The Northern Zone, from the Alabama line over to the Big Bend area, they pretty much catch up all those fish before they ever had an opportunity to get all the way down to the Lee/Collier line. The Northern Subzone, the Northern Zone of the West Eastern Subzone -- Whatever. I’m sorry.

It’s a very big zone. It goes from the Alabama line all the way down to Fort Myers. Historically, there was a very robust fishery in the Pinellas County area and north of Naples. Because of these changes, those fishermen never had an opportunity to contribute to the landings and so it’s always looked like why should those forty or fifty boats that are permitted in that area have access to fishery, because they haven’t caught anything. We couldn’t.

In the last twenty years, I believe there’s only been three years that the season has lasted into December, and only one year that we’ve actually had a spring season the following year. What’s interesting is -- Ryan, do you happen to have the vote? It says motion carried with one opposed, but I think it’s fairly obvious
that if the whole AP voted for Alternative 4 that they felt it was fair.

I might point out, on page 32 of your document, the current percentages are 31, 5, 15, 15, and 31, roughly. In Alternative 4, everybody gets an increase. It is true that by percentage, or by chunk, the Northern Zone gets a larger increase, but every single zone gets a substantial increase. The Western goes up 9 percent, the Northern Zone goes up 13, the Southern Zone goes up 6, roughly, and so everybody gets significantly more fish, and, because of the changes, we’re all going to get more fish. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANA: John Sanchez and Dr. Crabtree.

MR. SANCHEZ: Thank you, Madam Chair. I recall we had this discussion at length the last time we took up mackerel, and I mentioned then that during, I guess that meeting, at the time of the advisory panel, there was not a Keys representative there. I think since then there has been the appointment of some, and they are historical players in that, and so I am going to hold off a little bit on sharing zeal for going with that Alternative 4. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Dr. Crabtree.

DR. CRABTREE: I just want to see if I understand. It looks to me like all of the alternatives give everyone some more fish, but there are concerns about the Northern Zone, and so it seems to me that we’re kind of looking between Alternatives 2 and 4. Alternative 2 is easy to understand, because it divvies it all up equally, but, if I’m understanding where the AP was, the concern was that the Northern Zone -- One, it’s a big zone and there are a lot of fishermen in that zone, and that it was historically under allocated. We’re essentially taking Alternative 2 and modifying it a little bit to provide a little plus-up for the Northern Zone. Everybody is still getting more fish, but we’re trying to make up for I guess what we feel like is a historical under allocation for that zone. Is that roughly where you were coming from on 4?

MR. FISHER: Yes, sir. I think that’s what the AP recommends, and, Mr. Sanchez, those Key West people were actually there and I don’t -- Again, Ryan, do you know what the count vote was? Okay. Let me just say also that the Northern Zone is so large and when the fish migrate through the different areas of that zone, and I know this is not going to happen, but we really need to split that Northern Zone into two and give each an allocation.
Obviously that’s not happening, but the point of that is that by
the time the fish get to us, or south of Crystal River, it’s
usually fall and so any additional fish would be very helpful.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Myron Fischer.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Martin.
Historically, I defend the Western Zone, and, from a math or
science viewpoint, Preferred Alternative 3, which is proportional,
where everyone got an increase proportionally, based on the size
of what they had previously.

However, the components of the western Gulf that were at the
meeting discussed the fact of the need for the Eastern Zone, and
they actually talked to me after the meeting and they convinced me
that they would rather give up -- Mackerel fishermen seem to work
together and give up fish, more than any other fishery I’ve seen,
and I would support Alternative 4, based on the AP’s recommendation
and my communication with those who came home from the meeting
saying they thought it was the fair thing to do.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Ms. Bademan.

MS. BADEMAN: I attended the AP meeting, and I asked a lot of
questions about this action and about Alternative 4, because I
knew that they had discussed it in a previous meeting, and we were
kind of sitting here in October wondering exactly where these
numbers came from and why.

I think it was a really good discussion around the table. I think
just about everyone, except for one person, I think, rallied around
Alternative 4 as the preferred. It was a pretty diverse group,
and so I mean I’m inclined to support that at this point.

CHAIRMAN DANA: So is that a motion?

MS. BADEMAN: Sure. I will do it. I will move in Action 7 that
the preferred alternative be Alternative 4.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We have a motion in Action 7 to make Alternative
4 the preferred alternative. Myron Fischer seconds. Is there any
discussion? John Sanchez.

MR. SANCHEZ: I would like to offer a substitute that we make
Alternative 2 the preferred. If I get a second, I will offer some
rationale.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We have a substitute motion for Action 7 to make
Alternative 2 the preferred alternative. Is there a second? Seeing none, the substitute motion fails. Back to the original motion. In Action 7, the motion is to make Alternative 4 the preferred alternative. It is to revise the commercial zone quotas for the Gulf migratory group king mackerel as follows: 40 percent for the Western Zone, 18 percent for the Northern Zone, 21 percent for the Southern Line Hand Line Component; and 21 percent for the Southern Zone Gillnet Component. This alternative was also recommended by the Gulf AP to be the preferred. Any discussion? Seeing none, all those opposed, one. All those in favor say aye. The motion passes. Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That takes care of Action 7. Action 8 is on page 33 of Tab C, Number 4. This would revise the recreational and commercial allocations for Gulf migratory group kingfish. If you guys remember from October, we had talked about the increase in the recreational landings from the 2013/2014 fishing season compared to the 2012/2013 fishing season, how they went up about 53 percent, and so that was a pretty remarkable increase.

Some of that has to do with changes in MRIP and it could have to do with effort shifting from other fisheries to the recreational pursuit of king mackerel. In light of that, the CMP AP decided to stick with their previously recommended alternative, which was Alternative 1, which would not reallocate any of the kingfish between the recreational and commercial sectors for the Gulf. Alternative 2 would revise the recreational and commercial allocations for Gulf kingfish by dividing the stock ACL using one of the options below: 63 percent to the recreational sector and 37 to the commercial sector, or a 5 percent increase for the commercial sector; Option b would be 58 percent recreational and 42 percent commercial, or a 10 percent increase to the commercial; and Option c would be 48 percent recreational and 52 percent commercial, or a 20 percent increase to the commercial.

Alternative 3 would revise the recreational and commercial allocations for Gulf kingfish by transferring a percentage of the stock ACL to the commercial allocation annually, until such a time that the recreational sector lands 80 percent of its allocation, after which no additional allocation would be transferred from the stock ACL to the commercial allocation.

Based on the landings from the previous fishing year, the recreational sector landed 62.3 percent -- For the 2014/2015 fishing season, they landed 62.3 percent of their allocation. You
can see that in Table 2.8.1 and then Figure 2.8.1 on page 35. That shows the landings in a graphical form.

Alternative 3 has two options. One would transfer 2 percent of that stock ACL annually to the commercial allocation and Option b would transfer 5 percent.

Alternative 4 would conditionally transfer a percentage, chosen from Options a through d, of the stock ACL to the commercial sector, until such a time that the recreational landings reach a predetermined threshold selected from Options e through g. If this threshold is met, then the recreational and commercial allocations would automatically revert back to 68 percent for the recreational sector and 32 percent for the commercial sector, or our status quo allocations, in the following fishing year.

For Alternative 4, if Alternative 4 is to be preferred, the council must also select one of Options a through d and must select one of Options e through g.

For the conditional quota transfer, Options a through d, Option a would transfer 5 percent to the commercial sector. Option b is 10 percent and Option c is 15 percent, which was added at the previous council meeting, and Option d is 20 percent.

For determining the recreational ACL threshold, there are three options. Option e would revert to the status quo sector allocations if 80 percent of the adjusted recreational sector ACL was landed. Option f is 90 percent and Option g is 100 percent. Just to reiterate, the reversion back to the status quo allocations would occur in the year following the year in which the recreational ACL threshold was met.

Alternative 5 would establish a sunset provision for any change in sector allocations for Gulf migratory group kingfish. After the predetermined time period, any change in sector allocations would go back to the status quo, the 68 percent recreational and 32 percent commercial, and there are three options here for sunsetting after five years, ten years, or fifteen years. Again, the Gulf AP recommended Alternative 1, and the council has not yet selected a preferred alternative for this. Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Ryan. In Action 8, we have an opportunity to select a preferred alternative. At present, the Gulf AP recommended Alternative 1, no action, maintain the current recreational and commercial allocations for Gulf migratory group king mackerel at 68 percent recreational and 32 percent commercial. Are there comments from the committee? John Sanchez.
Thank you, Madam Chair. I will make a motion that we select Alternative 4 in 2.8, Action 8, as the preferred alternative.

We have a motion to select as the preferred Alternative 4 in Action 8 as the preferred, which is to conditionally transfer a certain percentage, Options a through d, of the stock ACL to the commercial sector, until such a time that recreational landings reach a predetermined threshold, outlined in Options e through g. If this threshold is met, the recreational and commercial allocations will revert to 68 percent for the recreational sector and 32 percent for the commercial sector. Is there a second? Ms. Bosarge. Then, as part of this, we need to select an option as preferred.

For discussion, I will go ahead and start with this and we can always, I guess, figure out exactly which option is more agreeable to everybody, but Option b and Option e.

Okay. Under the motion for the Preferred Alternative 4, the preferred option would be Option b, to transfer 10 percent of the stock ACL to the commercial sector. Then Option 3 would be to revert to the status quo sector allocations if 80 percent of the adjusted recreational sector ACL is landed. Leann, you seconded that and are you okay with those two options?

Yes, I’m fine with it.

Okay. Is there discussion from the committee? Martha Bademan.

I just wanted to ask Martin if he could talk a little bit about the AP’s decision here. I am looking back at my notes and I’ve got some -- It looks like the committee discussed -- The panel said if the council chooses to reallocate, doing some kind of sunset, and kind of where you came from with Alternative 1.

Sure. There was some presentation made, I believe by staff, that there was a huge increase in the recreational landings in a time zone, in 2014, I think that’s right. The AP feels -- I guess the best way I can represent how they feel about this is that we should give the recreational community the opportunity to catch their allocation and if the numbers coming out of that report for 2014 are real, then, with an increase in bag limit to three or possibly four fish, it’s very possible that the recreational community could catch their allocation and we shouldn’t stand in the way of that.
It wasn’t a unanimous vote. There was one opposed. I don’t remember the actual numbers. It would be nice to provide that. Furthermore, with the changes in regulatory action on other fisheries, kingfish is going to provide an opportunity to charter fishermen to be in the fishery a longer part of the year, and if we decrease that quota, that’s just going to take away from their opportunities to provide that to the recreational anglers who don’t have boats. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Martin. Dr. Crabtree.

DR. CRABTREE: I will probably abstain on this one, but I do think Martin and the AP is right. If you look at Table 2.8.1, there is a substantial jump in those recreational catches in 2014/2015. I don’t know what that means exactly, but it’s there.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Mr. Boyd.

MR. BOYD: I would offer a substitute motion to make Alternative 1 in Action 8 the preferred.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We have a motion, a substitute motion, in Action 8 to make Alternative 1, no action, the preferred alternative. Do I have a second? Myron Fischer seconds that. Any discussion? Leann Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: This was the alternative that I had added to the document to essentially set up a loan program, so that there wasn’t a hard shift of quota between commercial and recreational. I did that because if the shoe was on the other foot, I wouldn’t want to see a hard shift of quota from commercial to recreational, even though we hadn’t been catching it. I mean that’s just the nature of the beast.

What I was trying to do was set up something so that some of these fish that are not being landed could be landed with enough safeguards in there that if the recreational sector did get to the point where they had some increased demand for those fish, all bets are off. We don’t borrow their fish any more, the commercial side, that is.

Now, they did have a big spike in recreational landings last year, but, even with that huge spike, they only landed 62 percent of what they’re given as a quota, and we’re only talking about transferring 10 percent, and saying if they get all the way up to 80 percent, which would take another huge spike over and above where they’re at right now, if they get to an 80 percent threshold,
that’s it and no more transfers anymore. It goes back to the way it’s been for quite some time.

One year does not make a trend. It very well could be though that with everything going on with other species, snapper and this and that, that we’re starting to see a pick-up in demand, if you will, for the recreational angler catching these mackerel. That could be the case, but this has all the safeguards in place so that these fish still remain recreational fish.

I guess I can’t understand where the recreational angler loses in this scenario. The only thing I can think is maybe -- Would their season close early if you got real close to it or something, if we had borrowed 10 percent, or is it totally projected on your side, where -- Would there be a payback somewhere? I just can’t quite fathom where the downside is.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Martin Fisher, to the point.

MR. FISHER: Thank you. I can’t answer the question, but part of your question. You’re also considering raising the bag limit. So if you raise it to three fish and recreational anglers actually keep that extra fish, there is your 10 percent right there.

In the very first year, we could be in a problem where the commercial industry is going to be in conflict. We don’t need any more conflict. I appreciate where you’re coming from and, as a commercial fisherman, I would love to have more fish, but I think we need to play out the bag limit increase and see what that does to recreational landings before we start taking or sharing -- Sharing is the right word. Sharing some of their fish.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Martin. Ryan, to that point?

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The bag limit analysis is a little bit more complex than that. There were a couple of methods that were used to estimate how increasing the bag limit would actually affect recreational landings.

One assumed that recreational anglers who were catching two fish, but were discarding other fish, would then keep those fish they were discarding. The latter method suggested that anyone who caught two fish would also catch and keep three fish and would catch and keep four fish.

More of that is in Action 9, but it describes basically the variability in how much the recreational landings could increase, and they could increase anywhere from about I think it’s 2.1
percent, if everyone who is discarding that third fish kept that third fish, all the way to everyone who could possibly catch two fish would catch and keep four fish, which would increase the recreational landings by 21 percent over what they currently are.

It is variable, and the other thing to remember is that the number of fishermen, and you’ll see this in Action 9, in the tables, but the number of fishermen who are able to catch and keep two kingfish is a smaller percentage of the recreational fleet. It’s not that everyone is going out and catching and keeping two fish, but increasing the bag limit will increase recreational landings, to some degree.

**CHAIRMAN DANA:** Thank you, Ryan. Martha Bademan, to that point, and then John Sanchez.

**MS. BADEMAN:** I was just going to say I think this is a tough one. Before I was aware of this increase in landings, I mean I think I was pretty much ready to go with what you guys were suggesting, but the landings did give me pause, and I think, to summarize kind of where the AP was coming from, is basically the recreational fishery needs to stay open. We can’t have a closure. I think they were emphatic about that, in discussing this and in discussing the bag limit.

I don’t know. I guess the more conservative way to go would be to leave this alone and then maybe talk about the bag limit, but I don’t know. It’s a tough call. We don’t know what’s going to happen in the future.

**CHAIRMAN DANA:** John Sanchez, Myron Fischer, and David Walker and Doug Boyd.

**MR. SANCHEZ:** I don’t know what’s going to happen either. I certainly don’t have a crystal ball either, but clearly the history has been that the commercial side uses their allocation. We have kind of are held to optimize the yield and maximize this fishery for the benefits of the nation.

You have a side of the fishery that could use these fish, and it’s not a taking. Again, it is like a sharing. If ever a change in the bag limit were to warrant that, give these fish back and they need them again, then we do that. I think this option that we have on the table here allows the mechanism to do that very clearly, and it’s just a matter of there’s a component of the fishery that really could use these fish, and could have used them for many years, and it’s been underutilized and this kind of just maximizes that. That’s all it is.
MR. FISCHER: Leann, your method, your motion and method, I think is great, and I wish the Gulf Advisory Panel would have supported it. I spoke with some of the components about why and so this is anecdotal and I would like maybe Ryan to shed light on this and see where we could go with it, but their fear, the ones who spoke to me, was their fear was that we have this hidden buffer.

The fact that the recreational component doesn’t catch its quota leaves a buffer there, and that could be why the status of the fish are healthy. If we start shifting it to commercial and allowing the recreational to catch more fish, that we’re going to shrink this buffer of uncaught fish. They’re scared that it would have implications down the road for the future of the fishery.

I don’t know if this was presented scientifically. That’s, Ryan, what I was going to ask you, or Martin, if -- What you all could shed onto this.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Ryan, can you respond?

MR. RINDONE: Yes, and thank you, Madam Chair. From the perspective of the stock assessment, the stock assessment, when it provides projections of what the overfishing limit and the acceptable biological catch is going to be, for the ABC, unless there is an ACL established lower than the ABC, the assessment assumes you will catch every single pound that it’s allowing you to.

If it says in 2016 you can catch ten-million pounds, then it expects that in 2016 you’re going to catch every ounce of that ten-million pounds. Then that’s how it determines what you can have in 2017 and 2018 and beyond.

Whenever there is an underage, there is a surplus that’s left in the population. That perpetual surplus that we’ve had is why you have the declining projections that we saw in Action 6. You’re fishing down to an equilibrium yield, essentially. I know folks sometimes worry about the declining ABC projection, but that’s what that is. You’re fishing down the bonus. If there continues to be a bonus, then anytime you update your projections, you’re still going to have that.

From the perspective of that buffer safeguarding the fishery, the way the assessment has projected the fishery could operate is that you could catch everything and it would still be safe, because you have a buffer, albeit a small one, between the overfishing limit and the ABC. There is still a buffer built in there to prevent
things from going awry and overfishing occurring, but the model expects you to catch all the fish. When you don’t, it’s a de facto extra buffer on top of the one which already exists.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Ryan. Let’s move forward. We’ve got David Walker, Doug Boyd, and Ed Swindell.

MR. WALKER: I was just going to add with the increased bag limit and so many concerns in the eastern Gulf with the declining biomass of red snapper and the declining CPU and people wanting more fishing opportunities, it makes sense to me to go with 1. I also understand what John is saying that they would like to have more fish, but I mean it’s -- It creates more opportunities for the recreational fishery to catch a fish. Not everybody likes to catch a red snapper.

You know a lot of times -- There’s times when I can anchor up the boat and the guys are catching red snapper and I will run to the back of the boat with my fly line to catch a king mackerel. I mean it’s pretty exciting to catch a fifty or sixty-pound king mackerel, and I think when we get to Other Business, I think Martin might have something on that too, but I speak in favor of Alternative 1. The AP had discussion over it and they all agreed on it, and so I would like to support Alternative 1.

CHAIRMAN DANA: I am going to call on Doug and then Ed and then I want to wrap this up.

MR. BOYD: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I might point out that my name is not listed on the agenda for the Mackerel Committee, but I am on the Mackerel Committee. I think that was inadvertent and that was brought to my attention. I just wanted to clarify that, in case somebody is asking.

Martin has really said everything that I would like to say to point out why I support this substitute motion. I won’t go back over those, other than to say we have had -- We have recommended a change in the bag limit for the recreational fishermen, to allow them the opportunity to use their quota.

We have seen an increase in the catch rate, based on some MRIP recalibrations, and I think we ought to allow the recreational fishermen time to see whether they are going to catch their quota or not, and so I support the substitute motion. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Doug. Ed and then Leann. After that, we’re calling the vote.
MR. SWINDELL: Thank you, Madam Chair. Is there any particular reason why the recreational landings increased so significantly this last season?

CHAIRMAN DANA: Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: It’s an interesting question that I don’t have a definitive answer to. Obviously there have been changes to the MRIP calibration methods and the way in which the landings are received and processed, but it could also be the result of an effort shift and more recreational fishermen going after king mackerel because we’re in a good enough position with kingfish that they’re open year-round for recreational fishermen in the Gulf.

There are certainly many more species which don’t have that luxury, and so certainly hearing from the public during public testimony would be a good thing. That might be a good question for you guys to ask some folks, is are you catching more kingfish? See if, even just anecdotally here, that there’s an increase in effort for last year compared to the previous years.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you. Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: It doesn’t sound like there’s going to be the support to make this the preferred right now. Since this joint amendment does move slowly, it’s something though that we can keep an eye on. I’m sure we will get another year’s worth of data before we finalize this amendment. Let’s see what happens with those recreational landings, you know and see if we see a spike above where we’re at again right now.

If we did see another huge spike, then we don’t probably need to spin our wheels on something that won’t go anywhere, but if we see something staying about where it is, or even going back down, then I would like to keep an open mind and see if this is something that we can implement.

You know another thing, and this doesn’t support my case, but, Ryan, you know you did that increased bag limit analysis, and that was based on what the recreational sector was before. If we see that these landings stay high on the recreational side, do we need to rerun that analysis? Would it have an effect?

MR. RINDONE: No, ma’am. The analysis is done based on just the data and not based on increases or decreases in recreational effort. Again, it’s assuming that -- There are two different scenarios that were presented, but it’s assuming that the people
who are fishing, be there more or less of them, but the people who are out there, there’s a certain proportion of them which will catch two kingfish.

Of those who catch two kingfish, a certain proportion of them will keep them and some won’t, and so it’s assuming the ones who will would also keep three, if they caught three, and would keep four if they caught four. That’s how those changes are made.

The number of fishermen fishing is less of the driver than the proportion of fishermen who are capable of actually landing that, and so, if you have more fishermen out there fishing, then you just add that proportion to it and then it would increase.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Okay. I am calling the vote. We have a substitute motion on the table for Action 8, which is to make Alternative 1, no action, the preferred alternative. That is to maintain the current recreational and commercial allocations for Gulf migratory group king mackerel at 68 percent recreational and 32 percent commercial. I have a second. All those opposed, two opposed; in favor, five. The substitute motion passes. Okay, Ryan, Action 9.

MR. RINDONE: Before we go to Action 9, if the committee’s preferred recommendation to the council is to make Alternative 1 the preferred in Action 8, then, it being no action, would the committee be interested in moving Action 8 to Considered but Rejected? If your preferred thing is to not do anything with this, then the action kind of doesn’t serve a purpose anymore.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Doug Boyd.

MR. BOYD: I would have no problem with that if Mara was okay with it. I don’t know if we need this in there for a range of alternatives. Since it’s a whole action, I wouldn’t think we would need it, and we would need the alternatives underneath the action, but I would rather check with her first.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Actually, I would rather -- I would like to hear from Mara, but public testimony might shed light too, and so maybe this is more appropriate of a removal of Action 8 at full council. Mara, do you have any comment or do you want to pass?

MS. LEVY: I mean you have the option to move the entire action to Considered but Rejected if you don’t want to pursue it. I mean I think that’s up to you all.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Leann.
MS. BOSARGE: Obviously I don’t want to remove it. I mean I just said I would like to see what happens in the future, and I don’t want to put words in Martha’s mouth, but it was something that Martha, before we saw the spike in the last year’s landings, was mulling over, at least. I would like to wait and see how future landings play out.

If at that point it looks like we’re on a trend, an upward trend, in recreational landings and that this, like I said before, just going to be spinning our wheels, then at that point I don’t think I have an issue with not examining this further, but, at this point, with only one year of landings, I don’t think it’s something that we should do away with at this point.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Let’s move forward to Action 9, Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Action 9 is that bag limit study and that’s going to be on page 38 of Tab C, Number 4. This looks at modifying the recreational bag limit for Gulf group kingfish, and both councils’ preferred alternative is Alternative 3, which would establish a four fish per person recreational bag limit.

The Gulf AP recommended three fish and their rationale for that was let’s have an increase from two to three and see how that goes, see how that impacts recreational landings, especially in the wake of the marked increase in recreational landings for the previous fishing season. Is that about right, Martin?

CHAIRMAN DANA: Is there any motions or does any committee member want to make a preferred alternative? Wait. We have a preferred alternative, Number 3. Martha Bademan.

MS. BADEMAN: We have a preferred, but I will make a motion to change our preferred in Action 9 to Alternative 2.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We have a motion in Action 9 to change the preferred alternative from Alternative 3, which is to increase the bag limit to four fish per day per person, and to change that to Preferred Alternative 2, which would be to increase the bag limit to three fish per person per day, which is the Gulf AP’s preferred, or recommended preferred. Do I have a second? Leann Bosarge seconds. Is there discussion? Martha Bademan.

MS. BADEMAN: I mean just to kind of circle back to the conversation we had about the last action, the take-home that I took from that AP meeting was, whatever happens, we really, really do not want the recreational fishery to close.
We have this spike in landings and we’re not really sure what’s going on with that, and so I think that’s kind of where they landed with three fish. I think we can start there and see what happens. If we need to come back in a couple of years and we want to raise it to four, then so be it, but let’s start with three and see where it goes.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Further discussion? Doug Boyd.

MR. BOYD: A question for Ryan. Ryan, if we went to four fish, if the preferred alternative stayed the same, is there a projection that we would use up the entire quota in the recreational sector?

MR. RINDONE: No, I don’t think so. I mean, looking at the data, and even considering that 62 percent of the recreational ACL was landed last year, if you look at Figure 2.9.1, you get an idea of the number of kingfish harvested by mode, by the recreational sector, from 2011 to 2013. Most folks aren’t catching one. Then you have some folks that catch one, and even fewer folks that catch two. The likelihood of somebody catching and keeping three for both methods is predicated on them catching at least two. You have a smaller fraction of the recreational fishing population, be they headboats, charter or private, that are even catching two to begin with, much less keeping them.

I think if you went to -- Whether you go to three or four, I think that you’re going to be okay. It’s just that the big caveat about our August meeting to October was when we received the notice of the big increase in the recreational landings and we could no longer increase the commercial side up to 20 percent and the bag limit for the recreational side to four fish and still be okay. That’s not true anymore, and we covered that at the last meeting, too, but whether you go three or four, I think you’re going to be fine, based on the analysis presented in the action.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Ryan. Mr. Boyd.

MR. BOYD: Thank you, Ryan, and just a follow-up. I am kind of on the fence about that. I understand Martha’s concern for making sure that we have a consistent long season, but it appears that it wouldn’t make any difference and we could see, if we stayed at the alternative of four, we could see what’s going to happen and see if there is a larger shift and watch it play out over the next year, and so I would stay with the current alternative as the preferred.
CHAIRMAN DANA: Any further discussion? Mr. Swindell.

MR. SWINDELL: My question previously about why the sudden increase is I guess I was a little concerned that if we don’t really understand why we had a sudden increase, what makes us think we’re not going to have another sudden increase, and to then, on top of that, put in another known increase of another bag limit increase, I guess I’m a little bit concerned.

You know we’ve got a resource that seems to be healthy and doing well. I don’t know anything about when the last biomass assessment was done, or when one is scheduled to be done, but I mean we’re going on probably old data. When was the last assessment for this fishery done?

CHAIRMAN DANA: 2014?

MR. RINDONE: It was 2014, using 2013 data.

CHAIRMAN DANA: It was 2014, using 2013 data.

MR. SWINDELL: Well, that’s pretty recent. So you’ve got a good handle then, I guess, on where we are and so that’s encouraging, but I guess I am still real iffy then about why we had this sudden big increase, all of a sudden, in the recreational landings.

I hate to see it happen again. I guess I’m real cautious. Here we’ve got a resource and I don’t want to damage the resource. I just want to make certain that we still have a good fishery to continue, and everybody seems to be somewhat happy with what they’re doing and the recreational people are probably happy they’re catching two. I’ve never been out where I caught two and I think it’s good. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, Ed. Martin, to that point, and then David Walker.

MR. FISHER: I think we’re going to see another spike in 2015, because the water temperature has been a lot higher this year. Off of Pinellas County two weeks ago, a headboat had thirty head of kingfish on the boat, and I know a lot of my friends have been recreational fishing all the way past Thanksgiving, which is very unusual, and it was not problem to catch two fish in ten minutes, and so I think you’re going to see an additional spike.

CHAIRMAN DANA: David Walker.
MR. WALKER: I like the alternative of going to three fish and just seeing -- The problem is if you go to four fish and you have a problem, you will go back to two fish. It seems like it will be a lot easier for recreational fishermen to fall back one fish than telling them they’ve got to cut back to two fish on the king mackerel, and it’s conservative, too.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you, David. Any further comments? We have a motion on the board for Action 9, to make the preferred alternative Alternative 2, which is to increase the bag limit to three fish per person per day. Any opposition, one; all those in favor, five in favor. The motion passes.

I think that wraps up our discussion on Amendment 26. We have a short amount of time remaining. Ryan, why don’t you go through the recommendations made by the CMP Advisory Panel, if we’re ready.

OTHER BUSINESS
RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE CMP ADVISORY PANEL

MR. RINDONE: Sure. Before we abandon 26, I want to just say that we’re going to public hearings the last week of February and the first week of March, and we have nine locations. We will write that up and we’re going to get that back to the South Atlantic as quickly as we can for their meeting, which is the second week of March.

They’re hoping to try to take final action on some things there. Obviously if we have some thing which we haven’t had parity on yet, it might take a little bit longer to match everything up, and so it may be June before we can truly go final with this, just to give you guys an idea of timeline.

For the remainder of the items which the CMP AP discussed, they had several things under Other Business that they wanted to talk about.

They were concerned about the recreational bag limit for cobia. A lot of the AP members felt that cobia might be in a little bit of trouble, and so they made a motion that cobia be considered a species of high concern by the Gulf Council, and urged the council to consider reducing the possession limit to one fish per person per day, which is what they had recommended back in March. They said that this limit should sunset in five years, unless deemed otherwise necessary. Madam Chair.

MS. BADEMAN: I was just going to ask a question. I mean I’ve been hearing a lot of this as well, and I don’t know if other council members in other areas of the Gulf are. I’ve just been getting a lot of calls and email and questions about cobia. We’re already at one in Florida, but I’m just curious.

CHAIRMAN DANA: I’ve heard talk about in the northwest Florida area, but then other parts of the Gulf I’ve seen increased numbers, and so it may be migration patterns and it may be premature to act, but yes, Florida is already at one fish per day, per person. Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: My question is when was our last updated assessment on cobia? Do you remember?

CHAIRMAN DANA: 2011, and I know it’s the lower priority on the review list.

MR. RINDONE: It was 2012 was when the assessment was done. The assessment was published in 2013, but it used 2012 data, and it did Spanish mackerel and cobia. It’s not currently on our list to be updated, but we are going to get updated MRIP projections of multiple stocks as a function of the effort from the Science Center, which will be done in 2017. We could get updates about cobia at that time as well.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you. If there’s no other comments, maybe we will move forward. Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: Another thing that the AP discussed was the possession of the recreational bag limit of king mackerel on a commercial vessel when the commercial king mackerel season is closed, and with this particular issue, the current federal regulations prohibit the possession of the bag limit of kingfish on a commercial vessel if the commercial season is closed and on dually-permitted for-hire vessels, unless that vessel is acting as a charter or headboat.

The AP members thought that this rule prevented them from retaining recreationally-caught kingfish for personal consumption. Like if they’re on their commercial boats when the recreational season is closed, but they’re recreational fishing with their families or what have you.

The AP made the following recommendation, that the council remove the prohibition on retaining recreational king mackerel bag limits on vessels with commercial kingfish permits, or dually-permitted charter vessels, when the king mackerel commercial season is
closed, but while the king mackerel recreational season is open. This carried unanimously.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Martin, do you have any comment on this?

MR. FISHER: I would like the support of the committee with a motion to take it up to the full council for a vote, because it’s the only fish that’s left in all the fish that you guys manage, I believe, that’s fished commercially and recreationally where you cannot retain a recreational bag limit when the commercial season is closed.

As a king fisherman myself, as a commercial fisherman, and I also am a recreational fisherman, I like to take my son out, or my family out or friends, and go catch some kingfish and put them in the smoker. The fact that I can’t, just because I have a kingfish permit on my boat, and there is no other fish that is under the same rule and regulation, seems prohibitive to me.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Martha and then Leann.

MS. BADEMAN: Those of you around the table that have some institutional knowledge here, why is this rule different for mackerel than other species? Does anybody know?

MR. FISHER: Years ago, the state had a rule that you could sell the recreational bag limit of kingfish when commercial was closed if those fish were caught in state waters and you had an RS. In 2013, in September, as you pointed out to me at the meeting, Martha, the state changed that rule and you can now have -- How does this work? Commercial quantities. If you have commercial quantities of any fish, you’re allowed a recreational bag limit of other fish. Prior to that time, you were not. I believe that had a lot to do with it.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: I think this is something that I would support taking to the full council. I can think of some commercial fishermen in my hometown that this affects. Essentially they have center-console outboard boats and, because that boat has a permit attached to it, they can’t go recreational fishing. We’re denying them access, essentially, to recreational fishing for king mackerel unless they go get on a charter boat, or go get on somebody else’s boat. They can’t take their boat out and go recreational fish with their family for king mackerel at this point, the way this is structured.
CHAIRMAN DANA: So is that a motion?

MS. BOSARGE: Yes, sure. That’s the motion, to take this to the full council to have a discussion and see if we can come to a consensus on this.

CHAIRMAN DANA: We have a motion that the council remove the prohibition on retaining the recreational king mackerel bag limit on a vessel with a commercial king mackerel permit, or a dually-permitted charter vessel, when the king mackerel commercial season is closed, but while the king mackerel recreational season is open. Do I have a second? It’s seconded by Martha Bademan. Any discussion? Dr. Crabtree.

DR. CRABTREE: You might give some thought about how you want to do this. Maybe you could do it through a framework or do you want to add an action in Amendment 26 that does this? I don’t know if we make this change if that would have to go to the South Atlantic for approval or if we can do that on our own. There’s some questions for Mara to figure out, unless maybe Ryan knows the answer.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Could we, if this motion passed, could we then defer to staff at full council to have a process?

DR. CRABTREE: I think you could. I just wanted to get people thinking about how to do it.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Okay. We have a motion that has been seconded. Any opposition? The motion passes. Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Another thing that the AP discussed was modifications to electronic reporting. The AP members cited a need for completely electronic reporting for all commercial fisheries.

They thought we have all these tablets and iPads and all this software that’s available for tabulating all sorts of data, and that, with the current technology, that fishermen should be able to electronically submit logbooks when fish are sold to the dealer, thereby decreasing the amount of time it takes for commercial landings to be compiled for the assessments. They thought it should be borderline instantaneous, with networking and with what we’re capable of, from a software perspective.

When a no-fishing report needed to be submitted, the permit holder could go to a website and fill out the appropriate form, as applicable. The AP recommends that the council develop a dealer-
based point of sale electronic logbook reporting system for the
commercial fishing sector, incorporated in the present IFQ
reporting system or trip ticket program.

They felt that both the IFQ system, state trip ticket programs,
anything could be folded into some sort of electronic system, where
perhaps you had a form which auto populated all the information
for multiple different forms and satisfied the reporting
requirements of all parties concerned.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Martin, we’re running over time, but do you have
a comment?

MR. FISHER: Yes, I do, if I may. Just I will fill in a couple of
blanks. The key words are “point of sale” and “logbook”. This is
about filling out the logbook that we now, as fishermen, have to
do by paper. We already have to meet with the dealer and give
them all the information, except for two blocks on the logbook
page. That goes into the electronic trip ticket program.

The IFQ page could be modified to add a page that was non-IFQ fish,
but it would populate the logbook for the Science Center. There
is absolutely no reason in 2016 that we do not have electronic
reporting for our logbooks.

It takes eighteen months for the CPUE averages and numbers to come
from the time I fill out a page and it goes through all the
different vetting things it has to do and then Bonnie, or Bonnie’s
staff, actually gets the numbers and can crunch out a CPUE. We
could have that CPUE in almost real time. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Perhaps I can make the recommendation to have this
particular motion referred to the Data Collection Committee for
their consideration. I think that’s a more appropriate avenue,
but it’s a worthy motion to consider. Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: I would second that motion. That was my thought,
too, that maybe that’s something we could add to a Data Collection
agenda at some future meeting to take a look at.


MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We will make sure that
that’s get passed along to the Data Collection Committee for a
future time. The last item that the AP discussed was the
incidental catch of kingfish in the Spanish mackerel gillnet
fishery.
One AP member noted that the need for a way to sell kingfish, which are infrequently landed in Spanish mackerel gillnets, if the zone he’s fishing in is closed, he needed some avenue for that. According to anecdotal information, this bycatch typically doesn’t total more than about a thousand pounds of kingfish per year per Spanish mackerel gillnet fisherman. It’s an occasional interaction between kingfish and the Spanish mackerel gillnets.

Other AP members though were concerned that with some sort of incidental catch allowance that a bycatch fishery could be created amongst the Spanish mackerel gillnet fishermen for kingfish and that, if that bycatch allowance was too high, then that directed bycatch fishery could become a realized thing.

The AP ultimately recommended to allow the retention and sale of the recreational bag limit of king mackerel caught in the Spanish mackerel gillnet fishery, even when the commercial fishery is closed. That motion carried seven to three, with the dissenting votes being those who were most concerned about the establishment of a bycatch fishery. Madam Chair.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Thank you. Any discussion on that item or motion? Any desire to act on it? Okay. Seeing none, I appreciate all your time, Martin Fisher. You’ve been standing there like a trooper and I appreciate it.

MR. FISHER: Thank you very much and thanks for the opportunity.

CHAIRMAN DANA: Unless there is anything else, I think this concludes the Mackerel Committee’s meeting.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned at 10:30 a.m., January 27, 2016.)