

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

CORAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Tremont House

Galveston, Texas

OCTOBER 21, 2019

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 11 Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi
- 12 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 13 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
- 14 Phil Dyskow.....Florida
- 15 Susan Gerhart (designee for Roy Crabtree).....NMFS
- 16 Martha Guyas (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- 17 John Sanchez.....Florida
- 18 Bob Shipp.....Alabama

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- 21 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 22 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
- 23 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
- 24 Lance Robinson (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 25 Chris Schieble (designee for Patrick Banks).....Louisiana
- 26 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 27 Greg Stunz.....Texas
- 28 Ed Swindell.....Louisiana
- 29 Troy Williamson.....Texas
- 30 Lt. Mark Zanowicz.....USCG

STAFF

- 33 Zeenatul Basher.....Coral and Habitat Biologist
- 34 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 35 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 36 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 37 Ava Lasseter.....Anthropologist
- 38 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 39 Jessica Matos.....Document Editor & Administrative Assistant
- 40 Natasha Mendez-Ferrer.....Fishery Biologist
- 41 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 42 Ryan Rindone.....Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
- 43 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 44 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

- 47 Greg Ball.....Galveston, TX
- 48 Assistant Commander Jarrett Barker.....TX

1 Eric Brazer.....Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance
2 Donna Brooks.....FL
3 Glen Brooks.....FL
4 James Bruce.....MS
5 Nikki Bruce.....MS
6 Catherine Bruger.....Ocean Conservancy, St. Petersburg, FL
7 Leslie Clift.....FGBNMS, Galveston, TX
8 Ronald Chicola.....Ruston, LA
9 Chris Conklin.....SAFMC
10 Beth Dieveney.....FKNMS, FL
11 Michael Drexler.....Ocean Conservancy, St. Petersburg, FL
12 Ken Haddad.....ASA, FL
13 Peter Hood.....NMFS
14 Bill Kelly.....FKCFA
15 Larry Marino.....LA
16 Paul Mickle.....MS
17 Carole Neidig.....Mote Marine Lab, Sarasota, FL
18 Sinclair Oubre.....Port Arthur Area Shrimp Association, TX
19 Clay Porch.....SEFSC
20 Skyler Sagarese.....SEFSC
21 G.P. Schmahl.....FGBNMS, TX
22 Lisa Schmidt.....FL
23 Ed Walker.....
24 Bob Zales.....Panama City, FL
25 Mark Zanowicz.....USCG
26
27 - - -
28

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1
2
3 Table of Contents.....3
4
5 Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes.....4
6
7 Action Guide and Next Steps.....4
8
9 Coral Reef Conservation Program Update.....5
10
11 Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Expansion Update...13
12
13 Status of Coral Amendment 9.....27
14
15 Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Management Review.....27
16 Presentation.....27
17 Updated Maps with the Proposed Boundaries and Fishing
18 Effort.....36
19 Recommendations from Joint Coral SSC, Coral AP, and Shrimp
20 AP Meeting.....36
21 Recommendations from the Reef Fish AP.....40
22
23 Remaining Items from the Coral SSC, Coral AP, and Shrimp AP.....42
24
25 Adjournment.....43
26

27 - - -
28
29

1 The Coral Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at the Tremont House, Galveston,
3 Texas, Monday morning, October 21, 2019, and was called to order
4 by Chairman Tom Frazer.

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

10 **CHAIRMAN TOM FRAZER:** I will read the names of the committee
11 members. I serve as Chair, Mr. Dyskow serves as Vice Chair,
12 Leann Bosarge, Roy Crabtree, Dave Donaldson, J.D. Dugas, Martha
13 Guyas, John Sanchez, and Bob Shipp are members of the committee.
14 The first order of business is the Adoption of the Agenda, and
15 that's Tab N, Number 1. Can I get a motion to adopt the agenda?
16

17 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** So moved.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** It's moved by Dave Donaldson and seconded by
20 Mr. Dyskow. The next agenda item is Approval of the October
21 2018 Minutes. Is there a motion to approve those minutes?
22

23 **MS. MARTHA GUYAS:** So moved.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Motion by Ms. Guyas. Is there a second?
26

27 **MR. PHIL DYSKOW:** Second.
28

29 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Seconded by Mr. Dyskow. Is there any further
30 discussion? Seeing none, that motion carries. We will now move
31 into the Action Guide and Next Steps, and Dr. Mendez-Ferrer will
32 lead us through that.
33

34 **DR. NATASHA MENDEZ-FERRER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. During this
35 session, we will go over five items. First, we'll have a
36 presentation giving you an update on the Coral Reef Conservation
37 Program. Then that will be followed by a presentation on the
38 Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary expansion, and
39 they will give us an update.
40

41 We will also have an update on the status of Coral Amendment 9,
42 followed by another presentation on the Florida Keys National
43 Marine Sanctuary proposed expansion. Then we will go over some
44 of the remaining items and recommendations that were discussed
45 during the Joint Coral SSC, Coral AP, and Shrimp AP. Before
46 each one of these presentations, I will provide additional
47 background and guidance to the committee.
48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay, and so I think then our first
2 presentation will be by Dr. Basher on the Coral Reef
3 Conservation Program Grant Update. That will be Tab N, Number
4 4.

5
6 **CORAL REEF CONSERVATION PROGRAM UPDATE**

7
8 **DR. ZEENATUL BASHER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I started working
9 in the position of Coral Biologist last year, and so we have a
10 grant from the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation. I will give some
11 updates about what we are doing in the program and some of the
12 outreach materials we have developed as part of this grant.

13
14 The Coral Reef Conservation Program grant is given in two-year
15 cycles. It started out in 2009, and so I will just give you an
16 update for the last few years. In the 2011 starting grant
17 cycle, it was more focused on giving an emphasis on studying
18 deep-sea learning, and so we developed some products or outreach
19 materials which focused on deep-sea ecosystems, and I think it
20 might be like the big interactive poster of the ecosystems of
21 the deep and creatures of the deep, and we did some activities
22 like the wide-spread distribution materials for outreach and
23 started to produce more digital content for the general public.

24
25 For the 2014 to 2016 grant cycle, we focused more on the
26 expanding digital content, and we produced some materials on
27 coral, EFH, essential fish habitat, HAPC areas, spiny lobster,
28 and these are all on the website, and so we started developing
29 species distribution materials, and we started cooperating more
30 with our management partners for coral ecosystem management
31 efforts through various workshops and outreach materials.

32
33 For the current grant cycle, it just started in 2017, and it will
34 last until next year. It's a three-year grant, and, for this
35 particular cycle, it is more focused on endangered coral
36 species.

37
38 To do this, what we proposed in this grant cycle is focused on
39 more ESA endangered coral species, based on how they are
40 associated with defined ecosystems and what other associated
41 fisheries are -- How they are affected by climate change and
42 fishing. We proposed doing some comprehensive reviews of
43 scientific literature and spatial decision support tools and
44 engage stakeholders more broadly.

45
46 I think everyone in this room must be familiar with ESA species.
47 Like, in 2014, NOAA Fisheries published a Federal Register
48 notice listing seven coral species which are threatened under

1 the ESA Act. We developed some storyboards and tools to
2 increase awareness about them, which I wanted to share with you
3 in a moment.

4
5 The first task of our proposal was focused on assessing our
6 understanding and importance of the seven endangered species in
7 the Gulf, and we tried to identify the baseline information,
8 like abundance and distribution throughout the Gulf region, and
9 we created a Story Maps, through an extensive literature review
10 of the current distribution and their life history information
11 and potential threats they are facing throughout the Gulf. We
12 also try to maintain a database and metadata, so people could
13 know exactly where they could be found in the Gulf region.

14
15 One of the first outreach materials that is available on the
16 website, and you can visit the links later on, is a storyboard
17 about life history and climate change impacts on the ESA
18 species. This is about how each of the individual species or
19 all of the species as a whole and what is the life history and
20 what it looks like compared to other coral species, which are
21 not threatened, and how climate change is going to impact them
22 in the long run.

23
24 Another storyboard will be developed, which it explains what are
25 the causes and consequences of the decline of this coral reef
26 throughout the Gulf of Mexico region, and you can see all the
27 details and what we could find throughout the literature and so
28 like the published materials summarized in this particular
29 storyboard.

30
31 This storyboard, the corals in the Gulf of Mexico, this one is
32 focused more on individual species, and the first one I
33 mentioned is -- They are more collective information, and this
34 one is species-by-species, and it's particularly focused on
35 shallow-reef species and not deepwater ones, because we have
36 previously developed some storyboards which are focused on
37 deepwater species.

38
39 We also published like a series of pamphlets, and we just
40 focused on individual ESA species, and these are available right
41 now in that portal, and it's mentioned here that its available
42 soon, but, if you go to the portal, you can find them on the
43 website now.

44
45 We also, when we were developing this, we realized that these
46 pamphlets might not be useful for divers or users who are going
47 into the field and trying to find these corals, and so we plan
48 to develop like a dive booklet for these individual species,

1 which is like waterproof, and you could take it with you when
2 you go diving or snorkeling into these Gulf of Mexico areas, and
3 that booklet will have information about like what the corals
4 look like when they are healthy and when they are diseased and
5 how they are distributed to other regions and where you can find
6 them and what the depth range that they can be found is. That's
7 going to be available within the next few months, and I think it
8 should be available as a hard form, as a dive booklet, that you
9 can find probably distributed to the council meetings and other
10 meetings we are at in the future.

11
12 We started hosting the ESA coral database on our website, like
13 from last year, and it was previously hosted through NOAA, but
14 they didn't have any public interface through which people could
15 access it, and so we made it available online, and so now you
16 can go to the application and see exactly where these corals are
17 found, different ESA species, and this new application -- You
18 could search corals based on like a particular extent, if you
19 want to focus on some areas in the Gulf where your work is going
20 on, and you try to visit, and you can see the particular area
21 and how many coral species in the particular extent you could
22 see, and you could also search based on the years, like from
23 year X to X, to see how many corals were observed in that
24 particular year range.

25
26 Task 2 of the proposal is more focused on spatial management.
27 In this proposal, we plan to do like some comparative climate,
28 biological, and environmental data in a public interface, where
29 people could access the information throughout the Gulf, and
30 then we developed some models for coral distribution across the
31 Gulf, following the anticipated climate change information,
32 particularly from the literature, and how to incorporate that
33 climate change information into the model and see how the
34 distribution might change in the future.

35
36 We have some outputs, like white papers and learning models,
37 describing all of these things that I mentioned. The white
38 papers right now are in development, but the learning models --
39 Most of them are available online, and you could visit the
40 website here.

41
42 All of the first is in Coral Amendment 9, and I think you will
43 know more in the next session of this meeting, and it was
44 submitted in 2018, and I think the FRN was issued in 2019, and
45 it's open for public comments until November.

46
47 One of the outreach products we developed as part of this
48 section is the HAPC Explorer, so you can see like habitat areas

1 of particular concern throughout the Gulf, and this application
2 gives you the locations and the boundaries and exactly where
3 they are throughout the Gulf, and you can see the portal that I
4 just mentioned here.

5
6 We have been doing some predictive modeling using the ESA coral
7 species, and so the information we gathered through the portal,
8 and the application that I just mentioned is the Coral Explorer,
9 and so we are using these models to create distribution maps,
10 and this is an example of like Elkhorn coral distribution, and
11 the purple points are the locations that we know there right
12 now, and it's observation data, and then there are heat maps,
13 and the red are the more probable locations, and the lighter
14 colors are the least probable locations.

15
16 We are developing these predictive models for all the species,
17 and it's available online, through the portal, and also through
18 a white paper, which will be published explaining all the
19 modeling process and everything else.

20
21 In Task 3 of the proposal, we focused on developing the baseline
22 or updating the baseline information we have on different coral
23 species, and so we wanted to do like a Gulf-wide review of
24 literature, in collaboration with our partners, to find how the
25 MPA or HAPC areas we have right now -- Like what kind of species
26 are mostly found in them, and so create like a hotspot map of
27 species throughout the regions and then compare that with some
28 of the regions which we plan to do for HAPCs later on, or the
29 Coral Committee decided on. We want to see how the MPAs are
30 helping protect these species and which areas might need
31 protection in the future later on.

32
33 This will give us information, like when you do the analysis,
34 finish the analysis, like hotspot maps throughout the Gulf and
35 species richness throughout the Gulf region, and it will give us
36 also information about our goals for conservation in the future,
37 which methods we could apply best to this information to get a
38 true analysis.

39
40 As part of this section, we also created some deep-sea coral
41 species learning models, and we realize that there is not much
42 information available for the deep-sea corals, and everyone is
43 focused on shallow and mesophotic coral species, and so we want
44 to raise some awareness about deep-sea corals, so that, in the
45 future, they could be considered in the management plans, also.

46
47 These are the focused plan for like how to compare the MPA or
48 non-MPA sites, and so we plan to use the data from Flower Garden

1 Banks and Stetson Bank and compare the data from south Texas and
2 Madison-Swanson or Steamboat Lumps sites, and then we will
3 compare the hotspot maps, to see different species -- What are
4 the different species that are protected through this MPA and
5 which needs protection maybe in the future.

6
7 Some of the deep-sea coral storyboards we have available on the
8 website are like lophelia and oculina and Swiftia and deep-sea
9 black corals. You can see in the details, like in these
10 storyboards, information about their life history and
11 reproductive behavior and where they could be found in the
12 distribution, also. We plan to have a few more deep-sea coral
13 species in the future.

14
15 While I was working on this, we realized that we created a lot
16 of data through the different processes and projects we have in
17 the council, and many of the data are just sitting there, and so
18 there is no information to the public or for anyone to know
19 where they are. I mean, even some of them are published to our
20 website, but they are like very deep down, and so you need to
21 dig through the website to find exactly where they are.

22
23 We tried to create a process which makes it easy for everyone to
24 find the data, through a public interface. Once we have that
25 information, we have the knowledge, and, once you have that
26 knowledge, the people are more happy to collaborate with us or
27 use the information to create an action plan for doing something
28 with it.

29
30 As a part of that process, we created a new GIS server on the
31 council website, and you can access all the geospatial data that
32 are producing as part of different projects, and it is available
33 on the website mentioned here.

34
35 We also have a public geospatial data portal, and so the one
36 that I mentioned previously is the GIS server, which is
37 accessible to council members or council staff that has some
38 special management capabilities, but this one doesn't have this.
39 It's only for the publication of data and making it available to
40 the public to use. We could utilize both portals
41 interchangeably, whenever you need it.

42
43 Finally, we plan to -- We will finish updating the coral portal
44 into a new interface, and so the new interface is more like
45 interactive, and it features like all the storyboards or the
46 learning models or different documents that are part of this
47 grant, and that will be available on the website, and, also,
48 there is a feature which you can see what are the downloadable

1 materials available throughout the portal website, and there is
2 a section there, a resource section, and there is also a section
3 where you could find the latest -- Which one is the latest model
4 coming out from us and what are the most accessible features or
5 stories in the portal.

6
7 The address is below for that, and in the presentation slide,
8 and so you can visit and give me feedback. We plan to make this
9 available to the public like after this council meeting is
10 finished.

11
12 As a summary, we have a lot of storyboards available, and we
13 have some pamphlets, which you can download now, the new coral
14 portal, and we have the new geospatial server, and so these are
15 all existing outreach materials we have, and the new things that
16 are coming are like the dive booklets for corals, and we have
17 some models coming out showing the distribution models of the
18 corals. Also, we have some white papers and storyboards of
19 additional coral species from ongoing analysis. I think that
20 will be all. Thank you.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Basher. There was a fair
23 amount of information in the presentation, and so does anybody
24 have any questions? Martha.

25
26 **MS. GUYAS:** Thank you for that presentation about all the stuff
27 you guys are working on. My question is about stony coral
28 tissue loss disease. Have you all thought about incorporating
29 that into some of these materials? I realize it's not in the
30 Gulf yet, but it's a major issue, and there's a lot of people
31 working on that problem right now.

32
33 **DR. BASHER:** We covered this issue like at the last AP meeting,
34 and, yes, we plan to incorporate some of the information in like
35 a storyboard, yes.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Are there any other questions?

38
39 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** I have an additional comment about the stony
40 coral tissue loss. During the last Joint Coral SSC/Coral
41 AP/Shrimp AP meeting, we had a presentation by Rob Ruzicka with
42 FWRI, and so a summary from his presentation is included in Tab
43 N, Number 5(a), if I'm correct, and we have been -- One of our
44 Coral AP members is also part of the Stony Coral Tissue Loss
45 Taskforce, and so they provide us with some updates via email,
46 and so, if any council member is particularly interested in
47 receiving these updates, just reach out to me, and I can keep an
48 eye out and forward the information.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Just as a follow-up, real quick, I would say
3 that the State of Florida is pretty invested in dealing with
4 this disease issue right now, and it's a priority for them, and,
5 if any of the council staff needs direct access, let's say to
6 one of the state agencies, I can certainly try to facilitate
7 that. Ms. Bosarge.

8
9 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** I had a question. I was at that meeting as
10 the liaison, and I had a question on the disease, and I didn't
11 really get a good answer, but you might be able to help me.
12 Obviously, the coral scientists are really focused on the coral,
13 right, and trying to figure out what this is and how it's
14 spreading and where it's coming from, and it seems to be very
15 significant, I mean to the point that they are harvesting some
16 of these corals to keep them, in case they are all obliterated,
17 so that they would have something to go back to and possibly
18 culture it.

19
20 My question is, is anyone doing a study that looks at is this
21 disease spreading from the coral to the fish? Is it
22 transferable in that method, because, in the lab, they saw that
23 it was transferable through seawater, in a lab environment, and
24 so the little fish that are pecking at this coral, which then
25 goes up the chain, is it transferable that way? What are the
26 effects on the fish? Are they getting sick?

27
28 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** I will answer that in a couple of ways. One,
29 you're correct is that the thinking is that it's a waterborne
30 pathogen, but the pathogen hasn't been identified, but there are
31 a number of groups, lab groups, working on the microbial aspects
32 of the disease and the coral microbiome, and I think, until they
33 nail that down, it will be difficult to relate that to how it
34 might be transferred to other taxa, and so I don't think anybody
35 is specifically working on that linkage right now.

36
37 I've got a couple of questions, if you will entertain me for a
38 minute. On the slide where you have the predictive models, and
39 maybe we can get to that, I am super intrigued with this
40 particular slide. What you're doing is you're taking
41 environmental variables, and you are correlating them, in some
42 way, with species distributions, and so two things. What are
43 the predictive variables, I guess, the predictive variables that
44 you're incorporating into the models, and that would be the
45 first question.

46
47 **DR. BASHER:** I think I made a list of like twelve different
48 variables, and I have the list, but not here, but I can give it

1 to you later on, and we tried to compile them into like a
2 uniform grid throughout the Gulf and then use that grid and
3 information compiled together and use the integrated model, and
4 so we used like a MaxEnt model to produce that.

5
6 There is independent variation and validation in what I am
7 planning to do, but the way that I plan to do it is we are
8 collecting ESA data through defined years, and so like some of
9 the data which is coming out, and I know those areas are
10 predicted to be where the corals are present, but we don't have
11 any points previously in these areas, and that's why I am
12 planning to use those points as validation for the model, to see
13 whether they --

14
15 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Go ahead, Dr. Simmons, and then I will follow-
16 up.

17
18 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** I was just going to suggest
19 that we could add those variables to the committee report for
20 everyone, once he looks them up, if you would like that.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Yes, that would be fine. I mean, again, I am
23 just interested in it, because I'm going to unpack this a little
24 bit. The model looks like it's specific to ESA corals, which
25 are largely shallow-water corals, and so would those same
26 predictor variables be used for the deepwater corals, and then
27 I was going to get specifically to how you might validate
28 whether or not the model is performing right for both of those,
29 and so a little more details on the specifics of the validation
30 would be helpful.

31
32 **DR. BASHER:** I haven't -- This is like the first initial run of
33 the model, and I haven't gotten to fine-tune it yet, and so I
34 don't think it will be applicable for the deepwater corals,
35 because most of the variables I am using are -- Many of them are
36 collected through satellite and remote sensing, and so those
37 wouldn't go very deep, and so it is limited in like how far it
38 could go in that.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** That leads right into the next question, and
41 so what's the level of granularity with regard to the map, I
42 guess, that you're working with?

43
44 **DR. BASHER:** I think it's 0.25 degrees. It's a quarter degree.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you. Then I have one more question
47 about the MPAs and the comparisons. Typically, when you
48 designate an MPA, or a HAPC or something like that, you're doing

1 it based on the recognition that it's already high value, and
2 so, when you're trying to determine whether or not they're
3 working or not, how do you identify an appropriate reference
4 site?

5
6 **DR. BASHER:** Primarily, it is based on all the data, wherever I
7 could get the data from, and so those are the sites that I
8 selected, and I can work with our partners and see whether we
9 have any data on it which we could utilize, and then we could
10 get data from these sites, particular sites, and see some of the
11 sites that are already designated MPAs and if it's working, and
12 so we want to see whether that's really working through like
13 what we are trying to protect and initially what we proposed in
14 trying to protect in those MPA sites and whether the species are
15 particularly focused on these particular areas or not, that they
16 may be moving around to other areas.

17
18 The sites which are not MPAs, I think some of the sites which we
19 are already considering being MPAs in the future, and so we have
20 to see whether it's worth protecting these particular sites and
21 what species are found there and whether they are commercially
22 important or not important species.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Great. Thank you. I think I have monopolized
25 the committee, and so I will stop, for the time being. Are
26 there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you, Dr. Basher,
27 for your presentation. Dr. Mendez-Ferrer.

28
29 **FLOWER GARDEN BANKS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY EXPANSION UPDATE**

30
31 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The next item on our
32 agenda is a presentation by Mr. Schmahl from the Flower Garden
33 Banks National Marine Sanctuary. He has presented this update
34 and the timeline for the release of the rule package at the last
35 Joint Shrimp AP/Coral AP/Coral SSC meeting, and so, after he is
36 done with this presentation and we address some of your
37 questions, I can also go over some of the motions done during
38 the meeting.

39
40 **MR. G.P. SCHMAHL:** Thank you very much. Good morning, and
41 welcome to Galveston. It's a nice day today. I appreciate the
42 opportunity to talk to you today. The timing is such that,
43 unfortunately, the process that I'm about to describe has not
44 come to a point where there is a defined action point for the
45 council. At this point, we're not asking for an action from you
46 or an official response, and you'll see why in a minute, but, as
47 you probably can appreciate, sometimes these processes take
48 longer than expected.

1
2 As you know, we have been in a process of a proposal to expand
3 the boundaries of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine
4 Sanctuary for a little while now. Just as a reminder, and most
5 of you know a good bit about the Flower Garden Banks, but, just
6 to remind you, it is a National Marine Sanctuary designated in
7 1992, and it right now is composed of three separate components,
8 the East Flower Garden Bank, West Flower Garden Bank, and
9 Stetson Bank, which was added to the sanctuary in 1996.

10
11 They are located about -- Stetson Bank is about seventy miles
12 offshore, and the Flower Garden Banks are about 100 to 105 miles
13 offshore, and they are located right along the edge of the
14 continental shelf drop-off in the northwestern Gulf of Mexico.

15
16 The reason that they were designated as a National Marine
17 Sanctuary primarily was the occurrence of an incredibly diverse
18 and incredibly productive and also very healthy true coral reef
19 community. It is one of the northernmost coral reefs in the
20 continental United States, and, surprisingly, even in this age
21 of significant coral reef decline around the world, it has
22 maintained its health and productivity over the time that we
23 have been looking at it, and we do have a long-term monitoring
24 program that dates back annually to 1989, and, in that time
25 period, one primary factor that's looked at for the health of
26 coral was just the living percent coral cover that has stayed
27 around 50 percent over that entire time, and it has actually
28 gained in living coral percentage over that period.

29
30 I think of primary importance to this body as well is that these
31 areas provide a very important habitat for a variety of fish
32 species of commercial and recreational importance, and they have
33 been shown to be nursery areas, and probably spawning areas, for
34 several species that are critically important economically to
35 the Gulf of Mexico and to this nation.

36
37 This is a map of the general area, and, as I mentioned, the ones
38 circled in yellow here are the East and West Flower Garden Banks
39 and Stetson Bank, but those are actually just three of dozens of
40 reefs and banks and topographic features that occur along the
41 edge of the continental shelf in the northwestern Gulf of
42 Mexico.

43
44 As you can see, where it goes from red to yellow and then to
45 blue, that's where the drop-off occurs, and the continental
46 shelf slopes gradually from the shoreline in various widths,
47 depending on where you are in the Gulf of Mexico, but in this
48 area around a hundred miles, until it gets to that shelf edge

1 and then drops off very quickly into the deep portions of the
2 Gulf of Mexico. Along this edge, there's a number of banks that
3 have been primarily formed by the geological formations of
4 underlying salt domes, or salt deposits, which that's another
5 fascinating story, but we won't go into that part of it.

6
7 Most of these areas are not true coral reefs, the areas that
8 we're looking at. There are a few, but many of these areas are
9 too deep for -- When I say true coral reefs, I am talking about
10 stony corals that developed, hard substrate reef structures over
11 time, but in the deeper -- That requires a lot of light, because
12 there's a symbiosis between algae that lives in those tissues of
13 those stony corals.

14
15 As you get deeper, the community changes, but they're no less
16 important. They're critically important, again, in terms of
17 fishery production, if nothing else, and they are primarily
18 composed of corals that we have termed mesophotic, or deepwater
19 corals, and these are gorgonians, which are the soft corals,
20 like sea whips and sea fans, and black corals, that can occur in
21 a variety of colors and shapes and sizes and sponges, bryozoans,
22 small stony corals, but these are typically not big head-
23 building corals, but small branching corals, like oculina or
24 madrepora, and so these are just two shots of what these areas
25 kind of look like.

26
27 These also have been recognized in a variety of ways as being
28 very important. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, in their
29 previous rendition as the Minerals Management Service,
30 designated many of the areas, the tops of these features, as no-
31 activity zones, and we're going to get into that a little bit
32 later, but, also, this council has designated a number of these
33 same features as habitat areas of particular concern, and that
34 was done in around 2006, and you'll see that there's a lot of
35 overlap. Most of the areas that we are talking about in our
36 expansion proposals are actually also habitat areas of
37 particular concern designated by this council.

38
39 Some of the threats, one of the biggest potential threats is the
40 oil and gas development in this area. This is one of the most
41 active oil and gas exploration and development areas of the
42 world, and there is the potential of accidents that can happen,
43 but, more relative to this group perhaps is large vessel
44 anchoring, and anchoring of all types, actually, and we're right
45 off the shipping fairway that occurs in that part of the Gulf of
46 Mexico, and there have been instances of very large ships coming
47 onto this relatively shallow areas to drop their anchors, which
48 cause incredible damage.

1
2 This actual slide is actually from the Dry Tortugas, but it just
3 kind of gets the point across that that's the size and the type
4 of ships and anchors that we're talking about and what we are
5 concerned about.

6
7 There is also incidents of impacts from fishing gear, discarded
8 fishing gear, lost fishing gear, and we have seen -- These are
9 from some of our ROV surveys that we have taken on some of the
10 banks of interest. Shrimp nets, and that's Stetson Bank, and
11 there's a variety of smaller anchor lines and anchors at a
12 number of banks and evidence of longline fishing lines at a
13 number of the bank features. I think we see discarded fishing
14 gear on almost every ROV dive that we do in these vicinities.

15
16 This has been a long process, and, actually, the idea for
17 expansion actually came up when we were reviewing and revising
18 our management plans, starting in about 2006 or 2007.
19 Identified in that process is something that we should consider
20 and look at, and we incorporated that into our revision to our
21 management plan in 2012, but this official process for expansion
22 kicked off in February of 2015, when we published a notice of
23 intent to develop a proposal, a formal proposal, and an
24 environmental impact statement, which we did. We came out with
25 this proposal in June of 2016, and this was released as a
26 proposal and Draft EIS, and we took public comments throughout
27 the summer of 2016.

28
29 As is typical in federal actions, we described a range of
30 potential alternatives, and I'm not going to go through all of
31 them, but the most limited alternative was the no action
32 alternative, which was the existing East and West Flower Garden
33 Bank and Stetson Bank, and it ranged to -- There were five
34 alternatives, and the fifth and most expansive alternative
35 included over forty-five additional reefs and banks that spread
36 from the vicinity of the Flower Garden Banks all the way east of
37 the Mississippi Delta to the areas known as the Pinnacles off of
38 Mississippi and Alabama and a number of true deepwater coral
39 sites on the shelf, and then even off the shelf, and it also
40 included some submerged cultural resources sites, or shipwrecks,
41 in a variety of locations.

42
43 Our preferred alternative was in the middle, and this was a
44 proposal to add fifteen reefs and banks, primarily to the east
45 of the existing sanctuary. In this map, Number 2 is a polygon
46 that incorporates the East and West Flower Garden Banks, and so
47 you get a reference point from that, and this area -- The total
48 area of this proposal was 383 square miles, and, as a point of

1 reference, the existing sanctuary is fifty-six square miles in
2 size.

3
4 From that period, we took public comment, of course, and we also
5 engaged in a formal process with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
6 Management Council, as we are required in the National Marine
7 Sanctuaries Act, and there is a section in the Act called
8 304(a)(5) that requires consultation with the appropriate
9 council, which we did.

10
11 I wanted to also mention that part of this proposal is not just
12 drawing boundaries, but, of course, what will happen with those
13 boundaries, and we propose to apply the existing regulations,
14 just as they are in the East and West Flower Gardens and Stetson
15 Banks, to the new areas. The regulations here are primarily
16 focused on impact and potential destruction to the seafloor, the
17 benthic features, and so anchoring is prohibited of any kind of
18 vessel.

19
20 Basically, collection or destruction or disturbance of any kind
21 of seafloor feature, especially coral reefs, but coral
22 formations or algal reef formations or even soft-bottom
23 formations in constructing anything on the seafloor or
24 disturbing the seafloor. Oil and gas development actually is
25 allowed inside the sanctuary boundaries, under current
26 regulations, but outside the no-activity zones that I mentioned
27 previously that had been previously established by what is now
28 the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

29
30 Any kind of discharge from vessels or any other source is
31 prohibited, and related specifically to fishing. Fishing is
32 essentially possession of or fishing with gear other than
33 conventional hook-and-line gear, and our definition of
34 conventional hook-and-line gear does include multi-hook gear
35 known as bandit rigs, and that is actually an allowed gear type
36 inside the current sanctuary, and it would be applied to the new
37 sanctuary as well. Other types of fishing, the use of fishing
38 gear is not allowed, including spearfishing, any kind of traps,
39 any kind of benthic longlines and things of that sort.

40
41 We did present this to the council, and many of you were
42 involved in those discussions, and we did receive back input
43 from this body in November of 2016, including some
44 recommendations and a white paper that went along with that.

45
46 I am just going to string it down to what I felt was the most
47 important recommendations here, and that was related
48 specifically to the allowance of historical fishing practices

1 inside the proposed sanctuary boundaries, and you recommended,
2 as you recall, to establish a tiered approach to implementation
3 of those regulations, and, specifically, relating back to the
4 no-activity zones that I mentioned previously.

5
6 There are these areas on the tops of these features designated
7 by the Minerals Management Service originally, and, within those
8 areas, this council has found that application of that suite of
9 prohibitions and regulations for fishing would be appropriate,
10 but, outside of those areas, but still inside the boundaries, we
11 should make an allowance for historical fishing activities,
12 including anchoring and including the use of bottom longlines,
13 essentially though an endorsement approach.

14
15 Those people who did want to fish in there would have to go
16 through a process that demonstrated that they understood the
17 sensitivity of the areas and how they could reduce any kind of
18 impacts from fishing in those areas, and they would essentially
19 be signed-off on by the sanctuary. That was what I felt was the
20 basic take-away from those recommendations.

21
22 Again, just as a reminder, this is the preferred alternative in
23 the 2016 DEIS, fifteen reefs and banks and eleven polygons, and
24 you can see the polygons are not square boxes, and we tried to
25 tailor those boundaries to the features themselves, but they
26 still have some squared-off edges. A lot of times, we took into
27 consideration the pre-existing HAPC designations and things of
28 that sort, to correspond with those, where they made sense.

29
30 I am going to focus in on one bank, just to -- That is the one
31 that was circled in yellow there, and this is what we call the
32 Bright Bank complex. If you look at this, the purple area was
33 the area proposed as the boundary under the preferred
34 alternative in 2016, and, the areas that kind of stand out with
35 "NAZ" written on them, those are the no-activity zones described
36 by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management.

37
38 You can see the size of the no-activity zones in this case
39 compared to the overall proposal that we have put forward. If
40 you look closely, there is a lot of bottom features in that
41 purple area, and that, of course, is why we drew the boundaries
42 larger than the no-activity zones, and I must point out that
43 there is a lot of very important habitat outside of the no-
44 activity zones, and those no-activity zones were established on
45 a depth contour basis, looking at what they considered to be the
46 reef-building -- That was the area of reef-building coral areas
47 at the time. That is the difference between the no-activity
48 zones and the proposed boundaries.

1
2 We took this to our Sanctuary Advisory Council, and all
3 sanctuaries have an advisory council, and they are made up of
4 representatives of various constituencies, and this was the
5 group that worked with us. It was quite an involved process,
6 and it took over two years, and we had twenty-one meetings, I
7 believe, and they were quite lively at times, but they were
8 represented, and you probably recognize some of the faces there.

9
10 Scott Hickman and Buddy Guindon and Shane Cantrell were on this
11 boundary expansion working group, as well as representatives
12 from the oil and gas industry, representatives from the
13 recreational fishing industry, diving, and conservation.

14
15 After that process, they came up with a recommendation that
16 would revise the proposed boundaries and focus primarily on
17 those no-activity zones that I mentioned previously, and this
18 was primarily to strike a compromise between protection of the
19 most sensitive areas related to each of these features and, at
20 the same time, minimize the economic impact to the oil and gas
21 industry, to the commercial fishing industry, and other
22 potential users.

23
24 This recommendation, this is the overall picture, and I will
25 zoom-in on a couple, so you can see that in a moment, but reduce
26 the recommended size of the preferred alternative from 383
27 square miles down to about 160 square miles.

28
29 Again, I would like to kind of focus in on that Bright Bank
30 region that we looked at a moment ago. We brought that
31 recommendation back to this council, and, basically, it was sort
32 of asking the question of, okay, if we go along with this
33 approach with the recommendation of the advisory council, how
34 would that impact or how would that affect the recommendations
35 that you had made previously related to our boundary proposal?

36
37 Now, knowing that it, at this point, is still an advisory
38 council recommendation, we have not put this out as a formal
39 proposal yet, but we did receive a letter back from this council
40 saying that, if we did take the Sanctuary Advisory Council
41 recommendation approach, that the previous recommendation
42 related to the tiered approach for fishing regulations was not
43 really appropriate any longer, and I will show you why in a
44 moment, and so that basically kind of said, okay, if these are
45 the new boundaries, then it would not be necessary to do a
46 tiered approach and that those fishing regulations that I
47 described could be applied inside the entire boundary that was
48 being proposed for the sanctuary.

1
2 There was also a recommendation to consider an exception for the
3 use of spearfishing gear within those expanded boundaries, and,
4 also, the idea of an endorsement was still discussed and still
5 recommended, and there was concern about the use of the kind of
6 weights that are used in the bandit rig fishing method that
7 should be investigated.

8
9 Now I am going to look at the Bright Bank complex again, and so
10 this shows it a little bit different. It's a little bit more
11 difficult to see the original sanctuary boundary recommendation
12 and the preferred alternative in 2016. It still is drawn in
13 with a purple line. Kind of the outer kind of square rectangle
14 line, which is in sort of a light yellow or whitish color,
15 that's actually the boundary of the existing habitat area of
16 particular concern boundary for this particular bank complex.

17
18 The kind of lime green areas are the no-activity zones, as I
19 mentioned previously, and you notice that they are very
20 irregular, because they are based on depth contours, in this
21 case, the eighty-five-meter depth contour, and the depth
22 contours don't follow straight lines. We had a lot of input,
23 and I'm sure you've heard this a lot too, from our enforcement
24 people, from the Office of Law Enforcement and the Coast Guard,
25 that the best scenario from an enforcement perspective is a
26 box, or a rectangle, but, at the least, you need to have lines
27 that create a polygon rather than a very amorphous kind of
28 boundary.

29
30 It was really the work of the advisory council's boundary
31 expansion working group to take these no-activity zones and draw
32 polygons around them to describe that no-activity zone, but, in
33 that process, it did incorporate some areas that are outside of
34 the no-activity zone as well.

35
36 I will zoom in a little bit closer, and this is the Bright Bank
37 component of that bank complex, and the advisory council's
38 recommendation is that black line that is surrounding the no-
39 activity zone. The no-activity zone is in the lime green, and
40 the outer purple line is the original preferred alternative that
41 we proposed in 2016. You can see it's greatly reduced from that
42 original preferred alternative, and you can see a lot of the
43 benthic topography in that area.

44
45 Much of that area is still hard bottom, and it does support very
46 important mesophotic and deepwater coral communities, but,
47 again, this was the give-and-take, the compromise that we came
48 up with, in the boundary expansion working group and the

1 advisory council process, and I will say that our working group
2 did bring it to our full advisory council, which voted on it and
3 approved these boundaries.

4
5 Let me show you just a couple more examples, so you can see, and
6 the next one is a bank complex called the Bouma Bank complex,
7 and it's three banks that are connected by some ridges and
8 scarps. Again, just to give you an idea, there is the kind of
9 amorphous, ameba-shaped no-activity zones and then the polygons,
10 and some of these polygons are still quite complex, and they
11 might have twelve or fifteen or seventeen sides, in some cases,
12 and so they're still a little bit, from an enforcement point of
13 view, a bit difficult to deal with.

14
15 One final example is at McGrail Bank, and this bank actually
16 does have a true coral reef associated with it. On that bottom
17 lime green area, there is a -- It's a fairly deepwater coral
18 reef, about 140 or 150 feet, but it's up to like 20 or 25
19 percent living coral cover within that zone. In this case, it
20 is kind of an odd-shaped boundary, kind of a finger and a small
21 area off to the southeast.

22
23 Our intention as this point is now to move forward with a
24 promulgation of a proposed rule, and this will be the actual
25 regulations that will implement the proposal, and that rule
26 process -- I was hoping today that I could say it's out on the
27 street and ready for further comment and review, but it has not
28 quite cleared the interagency review process. It has cleared
29 the NOAA and Department of Commerce review, and it is in the
30 Office of Management and Budget right now, going through an
31 interagency process that you're probably familiar with as well.

32
33 We got some interesting comments from a variety of agencies, but
34 nothing that I feel is going to stop this process from moving
35 forward, and that's why I feel comfortable with reporting on
36 this, but our general approach is that we do intend to
37 incorporate the advisory council's recommendations to create a
38 new revised preferred alternative, and there are some very
39 slight modifications, but you will see that when the rule comes
40 out.

41
42 This is just a reminder of what it looks like on the bigger
43 picture, and so we will publish this notice of proposed
44 rulemaking, and I'm hoping that that will happen before the end
45 of this calendar year, and I have pretty high expectations that
46 it will. There will be a sixty-day public comment period with
47 at least two physical meetings for public comment, and then, of
48 course, we will take that comment and incorporate that into a

1 final environmental impact statement and a final rule.

2
3 This also requires that we finalize the consultation that we
4 began with this council, that 304(a)(5) process, and that will
5 mean coming back and responding to you, officially, of how we
6 took your recommendations and how we implemented them in the
7 final rule. That's the status, and I wanted to just make sure
8 that you were informed about what was going on with it, and,
9 like I said, I'm hoping to see an actual proposed rule be
10 published in the Federal Register over the next month or so.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, G.P. Before I open it up for
13 discussion, I just want to point out a couple of things that
14 G.P. did say. When we're talking about coral reef conservation
15 efforts, we certainly have tried to make this a very open
16 process and involve people that may be impacted by those
17 designations, whether they are the hook-and-line fishery or the
18 shrimp industry, and I just wanted to make sure -- It's taken a
19 lot of time to try to develop a lot of goodwill to move these
20 discussions forward in a productive way, and I think, on your
21 Slide 9, if we could pull that up, I just want to make sure that
22 we haven't implicated the wrong industry in this derelict net.
23 I will ask Leann if that in fact is a shrimp net.

24
25 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Tom. You must have heard me muttering
26 over here. Before I get to that, I wanted to say thank you to
27 Mr. Schmahl as well. I want to compliment you on the work that
28 you have done.

29
30 You have fishermen on your advisory council, and we had issues
31 with the size of the boxes as a council, and you managed to take
32 your expansion and shrink it from 383 square miles down to 160
33 square miles, while still protecting the coral that you wanted
34 to protect, but not closing as much bottom that is used by other
35 gear types where there wasn't coral there. We really appreciate
36 that, and I know I've been tough on you in the past, but I am
37 just as liberal with my compliments, and so thank you very much.
38 I really appreciate that.

39
40 I will address that, real quick, but I had something else. I am
41 not an expert on nets, but, in my opinion, if you look at that
42 net, that is probably not a shrimp net. If you look at the size
43 of the holes and the mesh in there, that had to be one hell of a
44 shrimp to stay inside that net. Those holes are really big, and
45 we have small holes, so the shrimp don't go out the holes of the
46 net. We want to keep them in.

47
48 Then the gauge of that webbing, like the thickness, in other

1 words, of that webbing, and do you see how thick that is? We
2 don't pull webbing that thick. That is not efficient. That
3 creates a lot of drag.

4
5 If I had to guess what kind of net that is, I would say that's
6 probably a cargo net. That is used a lot in your area too by
7 oil and gas and by shipping, offshore shipping, when they bring
8 these pallets offshore to the oil rig, because they have to get
9 everything via boat. Before they put that pallet on that boat,
10 they put it in a cargo net, because, when it gets to that oil
11 rig, it has to get picked up with a crane. If something falls
12 off the pallet here on land, you pick it up, and it's fine. If
13 you do that over water, and it's at the bottom, and you've got
14 to hire another boat to bring you another one, and that's very
15 expensive, and so I would say that's probably a cargo net, but
16 that's just my opinion.

17
18 There were two -- That's just minor, and I just don't want
19 people that maybe aren't as familiar with nets to really think
20 that that's a shrimp net, and so the transit -- We talked about
21 this a little bit at the Shrimp AP meeting and the Coral AP
22 meeting, and you were kind enough to give us the definition of
23 transit.

24
25 I just had a couple of comments on things you might consider as
26 you go forward with implementing this, and so the expansion
27 takes, yes, much smaller boxes, but those boxes are spread from
28 inside the Texas line, offshore waters of Texas, all the way
29 halfway down Louisiana, and so it's a much broader range that
30 you're covering now, and so there's going to be more boats that
31 are actually transiting through these areas. Not fishing.

32
33 I mean, we're going to transit over the top of these, and we're
34 not fishing, but we're going to be transiting, and so will
35 probably a lot of your commercial longline guys. They may not
36 be fishing there, but they might transit across those, and so
37 this transit is going to become more important, so that we don't
38 end up in violation, and your definition is possessing or using,
39 within the sanctuary, except possession while passing without
40 interruption through it, or, for valid law enforcement purposes,
41 any fishing gear, device, equipment, or means, except
42 conventional hook-and-line gear.

43
44 I would suggest striking "possession" at this point, because
45 you're going to have lots of people that are transiting through
46 here in possession of shrimp nets or bottom longline gear or
47 something like that that you prohibit. What you want to
48 prohibit is the use of it, and so I think that would be much

1 clearer for law enforcement, that it's fine if you have that
2 onboard, but you cannot be using, and I think that's how we've
3 approached some of our HAPC transit, and then you get into the
4 definition of what is using it. Personally, I would hope you
5 would say, as long as that gear is not in the water, you're not
6 using it. Then the very last thing is --

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Leann, can I just make a suggestion, real
9 quick, because I think we're going to go over the
10 recommendations. I think Dr. Mendez-Ferrer is, and that would
11 be, I think, in the recommendations coming from the Joint Coral
12 SSC and the Coral AP, right?

13
14 **MS. BOSARGE:** That is correct.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Sorry to cut you off like that. I could tell
17 that you were passionate about this subject. G.P., I didn't
18 mean to throw you under the bus either about the shrimp net, but
19 I think that we work really hard to maintain a good working
20 relationship between the coral conservation community and the
21 shrimpers, and I wanted to make sure that we maintain that
22 moving forward. With that said, Dr. Mendez-Ferrer.

23
24 **MR. SCHMAHL:** Actually, I appreciate that, because, now that you
25 mention that, that does look like a cargo net, but I will say
26 that we have seen some evidence of shrimping gear in some of
27 those areas.

28
29 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** Before we continue the discussion on the
30 transit language, can we open Tab N, Number 5(a) and go to the
31 second page, the top-half of the second page? We had this
32 discussion during the previous Coral SSC/Coral AP/Shrimp AP
33 meeting, what kind of effects it would have to delineate these
34 multiple no-activity zones and the potential enforcement issues
35 as vessels with fishing gear transit through the area.

36
37 There was a joint motion by all three groups requesting that the
38 sanctuary provide language on transiting through the sanctuary
39 no-activity zones, and Mr. Schmahl did provide the language
40 that's included there, which says possessing or using within the
41 sanctuary, except possessing while passing without interruption
42 through it or for valid law enforcement purposes, any fishing
43 gear, device, equipment, or means, except conventional hook-and-
44 line. My understanding, and correct me if I'm wrong, is you can
45 transit through these areas as long as the gear is properly
46 stowed.

47
48 **MR. SCHMAHL:** Yes, that is correct. Sometimes these regulations

1 are written kind of backwards, because they are prohibitions
2 rather than allowances, but that is what it says. You can
3 possess prohibited gear, as long as you are transiting through
4 without interruption.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Bosarge.

7
8 **MS. BOSARGE:** Then that just gets into the question of what is
9 properly stowed, and that's where we end up having to litigate
10 with law enforcement, because there are different definitions of
11 that all across the Gulf, depending on what you're looking at.
12 Do you have to deck your doors, do you have to disconnect your
13 nets, or is it just getting the gear out of the water? That is
14 why I was hoping that maybe you could clarify that, to just say
15 properly stowed means that fishing gear is not in the water.

16
17 **MR. SCHMAHL:** I will get with our General Counsel on that,
18 because the properly stowed language doesn't actually exist
19 there, but I know what you're saying. It does just in general,
20 and so it probably does cause confusion on the enforcement side,
21 and so I will talk to how that can be clarified, to make it
22 clear.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Leann, I'm just going to ask a question here.
25 I have been trying to make sure that we follow through with the
26 recommendation that's coming from the SSC and the AP. Do you
27 want to provide specific language in the way of a suggestion to
28 G.P. and his group to bring forward? Do we want to do that in
29 the form of a letter? G.P., I would ask you if you feel that's
30 something that you need to move forward.

31
32 **MR. SCHMAHL:** I am not sure that I need exact language. I
33 understand the intent very clearly, and I think -- Like I said,
34 when it comes to the actual language part, I usually leave that
35 to our General Counsel, but you're certainly welcome to propose
36 language as well.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Bosarge.

39
40 **MS. BOSARGE:** I don't want to give exact language. I will leave
41 that up to the attorneys, because they have more things to think
42 about than just what's on my mind, but, yes, probably in the
43 form of a letter would be good, and, to repeat what I said
44 earlier, when I was going on and on, it was that I think I would
45 remove the word "possession".

46
47 It's not the possession that you have an issue with, but it's
48 using that type of gear. You are going to have people

1 transiting with that gear on the boat, now that you're expanded,
2 more than likely, and so using the gear within the sanctuary,
3 and I would clarify that using means the gear is in the water,
4 and so that would be just as valid for a shrimp net as it would
5 be for bottom longline gear. As long as you don't have that
6 fishing gear in the water, you're not using it. It's on the
7 boat.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Are there any other questions? Seeing
10 none, I just want to clarify real quick. We will, if it's okay
11 with the council, or I guess the committee at this point, our
12 intent would be to provide a letter to G.P., just a general
13 letter, asking him to follow through with the recommendations
14 that came from the SSC and the AP. Okay. Seeing no objections,
15 that's what we will do.

16
17 I think we're actually at a breaking point, and so I have a
18 couple of things that have come to my attention. It's been
19 raining quite hard, and, if you might have parked your car along
20 the street, then you should go look at it, because it's in
21 danger of floating away, and so it is close to 10:15, and we
22 will reconvene at 10:30. Thank you.

23
24 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

25
26 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We are about ready to get started, but, before
27 I do that, I wanted to acknowledge Dr. Farron Wallace, who is
28 the new Director of the Galveston Lab here for the Southeast
29 Fisheries Science Center, and so, Dr. Wallace, if you're still
30 around -- He is walking around somewhere. There he is.
31 Welcome.

32
33 **DR. FARRON WALLACE:** Thank you very much. I am really happy to
34 be here in Galveston, as the Lab Director, and I'm very much
35 looking forward to working with all of you. I come from the
36 North Pacific Council, and I've been on the SSC there, as Chair
37 and Vice Chair and member for a little over sixteen years, and
38 so I have a lot of experience in the council process, but this
39 is something quite new to me, having all these different states
40 part of this, and it makes it certainly much more complicated,
41 but I am looking forward to it, nevertheless.

42
43 The last ten years of my research has been focused on AI,
44 artificial intelligence, and electronic monitoring and trying to
45 automate that process, and so I'm already developing a lot of
46 collaborations here, and I'm looking forward to innovating
47 electronic monitoring.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** All right. Well, congratulations again, and
2 we look forward to working with you. All right. We're going to
3 pick up now with the Coral Committee, and I will hand it over to
4 Dr. Mendez-Ferrer to lead us through Action Item Number VI.

5
6 **STATUS OF CORAL AMENDMENT 9**

7
8 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. For Action Item
9 Number VI, Ms. Gerhart will give us an update on the status of
10 Coral Amendment 9.

11
12 **MS. SUSAN GERHART:** Thank you. As Dr. Basher already said, we
13 have put out the notice of availability on Amendment 9 for
14 comment, and that published on September 26, and the comment
15 period is sixty days, going until November 25. We have not
16 published the proposed rule yet. That is in the Department of
17 Commerce Policy Office for review right now.

18
19 Just to remind the council a little bit about these comment
20 periods, at this point, we do have two different comment
21 periods. One is on the amendment itself, and that's what the
22 notice of availability was for, and then the other comment
23 period is on the proposed rule that implements the amendment.
24 There is two different laws that require us to have these
25 comment periods, and so that's why there is two different ones,
26 and it can be confusing sometimes to people.

27
28 They generally overlap with each other, but sometimes they do
29 get a little separated, and the proposed rule does get a little
30 delayed, as in this case. Regardless, any relevant comments
31 that we get on the amendment or the proposed rule will all be
32 addressed in the final rule, and so we'll be putting out a
33 bulletin when that proposed rule does go out, letting people
34 know what the comment period is, and that's it.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you, Ms. Gerhart. Are there any
37 questions? Seeing none, we'll move right along. Dr. Mendez-
38 Ferrer, Agenda Item Number VII.

39
40 **FLORIDA KEYS NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY MANAGEMENT REVIEW**
41 **PRESENTATION**

42
43 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The next agenda item,
44 we will have a presentation by Ms. Beth Dieveney from the
45 Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. She will present the
46 draft environmental impact statement with the proposed
47 alternatives and the preferred alternatives and the proposed
48 fishing regulations with the Florida Keys proposed expansion.

1
2 This expansion does include some areas within the council's
3 jurisdiction. A similar presentation was given at the Joint
4 Shrimp AP/Coral AP/Coral SSC meeting in September, as well as
5 the Reef Fish AP meeting in October, earlier this month.

6
7 The APs and SSC comments have been included in the meeting
8 summaries, and, based on the recommendations of this group,
9 staff has prepared some maps summarizing commercial reef fish
10 activity and shrimp effort in the Florida Keys region, including
11 the sanctuary boundary, and the committee is requested to review
12 these materials along with the AP and SSC recommendations and
13 provide direction to staff regarding the comments on the Florida
14 Keys National Marine Sanctuary expansion, so that we can provide
15 them in a letter. Just to let you know, the public comment
16 period for this DEIS ends on January 31 of 2020.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We will get that presentation up on the board
19 for you. All right. It's all yours.

20
21 **MS. BETH DIEVENY:** Good morning, and thank you for having us.
22 As Natasha noted, I'm going to be giving a presentation, just
23 background of our current action in the Florida Keys National
24 Marine Sanctuary and the opportunity for consultation by the
25 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

26
27 The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, this is an existing
28 image of the boundary and all of the marine zones that exist
29 within the sanctuary. The sanctuary was established in 1990 by
30 Act of Congress. In 1997, the first regulations, sanctuary-wide
31 regulations, and marine zoning plan was put into place, with one
32 update in 2001, when the Tortugas Ecological Reserve was added,
33 and our management plan, which are the non-regulatory
34 activities, was updated in 2007.

35
36 The management of the sanctuary has not been reviewed or
37 comprehensively updated since 1997, and so this action today
38 that's out for public comment right now represents that suite of
39 updates of our boundary, sanctuary-wide regulations, marine zone
40 and regulations, as well as management plan.

41
42 Why create a blueprint? Our draft environmental impact
43 statement we're also referring to as a blueprint for restoration
44 for the future of the Florida Keys. As you all well know, a
45 healthy environment depends and is supporting a healthy economy.
46 The natural resources in the Florida Keys are impacted by
47 several threats, which I will share in later slides, and it's
48 important to plan for the future. How can we protect these

1 resources to protect the environment and the economy?

2
3 This slide just gives a few high-level statistics of the
4 different uses in the Florida Keys, their value for recreation,
5 commercial fishing, recreational fishing, tourism, ecotourism,
6 diving, and snorkeling. The economy of Monroe County truly
7 depends on a healthy marine environment, 5.1 million visitors.
8 60 percent of the Monroe County economy is dependent upon
9 healthy resources.

10
11 As I noted, the natural resources of the Florida Keys are
12 impacted. In 2011, the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary
13 released a condition report, and this is a tool that the
14 sanctuary system uses system-wide, and we look at all the
15 various data and monitoring and information to assess the status
16 and trends of the resources, living marine resources, habitats,
17 water quality, and, in the Florida Keys, we also have maritime
18 historical resources.

19
20 In 2011, looking at the whole suite of monitoring data, research
21 data, the status of resources, and the trends were really to the
22 fair, poor, and trends declining. Since the condition report
23 was released in 2011, the Florida Keys has also been hit by many
24 other impacts, including Hurricane Irma, drought, elevated
25 salinity, Florida Bay seagrass die-off, and you've heard a lot
26 about the coral disease outbreak, and so these are other threats
27 that are impacting the resources in the Florida Keys.

28
29 We really look at how we can manage those resources and manage
30 the uses at a local level to enhance the resilience of resources
31 and enhance the overall health of those resources, and some of
32 the images here include research activities, outreach activities
33 to boaters, and we also have a voluntary boater education
34 course, restoration activities, marine debris removal, mooring
35 buoys that we provide service for, facilitating use and also
36 protecting benthic habitats.

37
38 In light of the condition report and the status of resources,
39 our Sanctuary Advisory Council -- As G.P. noted, all sanctuaries
40 have volunteer community members serving on our advisory
41 council. We have twenty members and twenty alternates that
42 represent a whole suite of uses, commercial fishing,
43 recreational fishing, diving, citizen-at-large, research,
44 education, South Florida ecosystem, and so a whole suite of
45 individuals representing these different sectors sit on this
46 advisory council, and they initiated a process to review our
47 regulations and management plan.

48

1 They also involved community members, an additional thirty-five
2 community members that sat on different working groups to look
3 specifically at the marine zone aspects of our management, and
4 over seventy meetings were held in the span of 2013 to 2014, to
5 solicit this input and recommendation. Over 200 recommendations
6 came to the Superintendent, that is then translated into the
7 restoration blueprint that is out for public comment.

8
9 This slide just highlights the Sanctuary Advisory Council goals
10 that they set for this process, and, really, it's twofold. How
11 do we protect the resources for the future as well as allow uses
12 to continue in the Florida Keys?

13
14 I think you're familiar with this role that you play. This
15 outlines section 304(a)(5) from the National Marine Sanctuaries
16 Act, which really outlines the opportunity for the regional
17 fishery management councils to consult on any fishing
18 regulations that may be part of this draft environmental impact
19 statement, and I have this up here really noting that the goals
20 and objectives of this process should also inform the
21 consultation process, and we are -- Unlike Flower Garden Banks,
22 we're in the very first stage of this consultation process with
23 the Gulf Council.

24
25 Now I'm going to walk through just a few select elements of the
26 proposal that are most relevant to this council. The proposed
27 action in the draft environmental impact statement, we have four
28 alternatives, status quo, no action, and a range of three action
29 alternatives. Alternative 3 is our preferred, and they are
30 incrementally more protective of the resources as well, in some
31 cases, more restrictive on the regulations and the uses.

32
33 Each of the alternatives includes a suite of components, the
34 management plan, which are the non-regulatory activities,
35 boundary expansion, sanctuary-wide regulations, and marine zone
36 and zoning regulations. I am not going to highlight too much of
37 the management plan activities, but just to note that's where
38 our engagement with the Water Quality Protection Program, South
39 Florida Ecosystem Restoration Taskforce, our partnership with
40 the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement on enforcement activities,
41 research, restoration, and so those non-regulatory actions that
42 are really key for managing these resources are found there, but
43 I am not going to go into detail there.

44
45 First, sanctuary boundary, and so this slide shows the proposed
46 sanctuary boundary that is included in both Alternative 2 and 3
47 and is our preferred, and the existing sanctuary boundary is
48 shown in red, and the two sections -- We have two sections that

1 we are proposing to expand the boundary to along the southern
2 edge of the sanctuary, and that is to align our existing
3 sanctuary boundary with the area to be avoided, and we have
4 regulated the area to be avoided since 1990, and that's an area
5 that prohibits vessels over fifty meters from entering.

6
7 The reason behind that initial regulation was because of several
8 large vessel groundings on the reef, and so that expansion just
9 provides -- It aligns our boundary, regulatory and geographic,
10 but it also provides some additional protection in that outer
11 reef area.

12
13 Second on that slide is connecting the Tortugas, and so the
14 Tortugas Ecological Reserve South is a distinct unit, and the
15 proposal is just to expand to encompass that reserve and provide
16 additional protections for the habitats in that area and
17 facilitate connectivity.

18
19 This slide shows our sanctuary boundary proposal in Alternative
20 4, which is our most protective. The only change here is a
21 proposal to include a distinct unit at Pulley Ridge, and the
22 intent here would be to align the sanctuary boundary with the
23 existing and proposed expansion at Pulley Ridge, sanctuary-wide
24 regulations as well as no anchoring for all vessels, but no
25 additional fishing regulations, from the sanctuary perspective,
26 in that area.

27
28 Sanctuary-wide regulations, we do have several proposed new or
29 modified sanctuary-wide regulations in the proposal. However,
30 none of those proposals really address fishing activity
31 directly, but I do have, on the next slide, highlighted a
32 definition that is in our existing regulations for traditional
33 fishing and what that means, which would apply across the
34 sanctuary, and so this definition stands for sanctuary-wide
35 regulations, traditional fishing activities that would still be
36 allowed, and the underlined text is proposed new text, simply to
37 clarify the authorities that manage fisheries as well as some of
38 the potential gear and changes through that.

39
40 Now the rest of the presentation is really focused on the marine
41 zone components, which is probably the most complicated and
42 complex portion of the proposal. We have fifty-seven existing
43 marine zones in the sanctuary, and each of the proposals does
44 increase that number of marine zones.

45
46 We have used marine zones since 1997 as a management tool to
47 protect resources and to manage uses, et cetera, and the
48 proposal continues to use marine zones as a management tool and

1 continues to use the same type of marine zones. We have marine
2 zones that separate conflicting uses, fishing and diving, and we
3 have marine zones that are really targeted to protect shallow-
4 water habitat and dependent species, nesting and roosting birds,
5 nesting turtles, and the like, and so the next slides really
6 just highlight those marine zones, each region that has some
7 impact on fishing activity.

8
9 This is the image showing in the Upper Keys Region, and the dark
10 gray, the solid gray, are existing marine zones that are no
11 fishing, and the solid blue are the proposed changes or new
12 marine zones that would be no fishing, and the hatched marks
13 have restricted fishing, and so they allow certain types of
14 fishing, but not all types of fishing, and that is status quo.

15
16 In the Upper Keys, and I don't have a pointer, but I will just
17 highlight that the dotted white line, which may be difficult to
18 see, is state boundaries, and so state waters, and 60 percent of
19 the sanctuary is within state waters, and federal waters is the
20 ocean side of that.

21
22 In the Upper Keys, just to highlight the furthest north and
23 ocean side marine zone, Carysfort Sanctuary Preservation Area,
24 that's an existing zone, and the proposal is to expand that to
25 capture deep-reef habitat that is not well protected in our
26 current marine zones. It's very healthy, and it can serve to
27 replenish the shallow deep reefs, and so just to give you an
28 idea of some of the intent of that proposal in federal waters in
29 the Upper Keys.

30
31 In the Middle Keys, the same legend applies. The dark gray
32 filled in is existing, and the blue is proposed new.
33 Significant in the Middle Keys is a proposal from Long Key State
34 Park to the deep reef, and this is proposed to meet our
35 Sanctuary Advisory Council goal to protect large contiguous
36 habitat in each of the region as a no-take area, and so this is
37 proposed to meet that goal in the Middle Keys. We have been
38 hearing public comment on this zone related to some areas of it
39 being important for permit fishing as well as lobster fishing.

40
41 In the Lower Keys, all of these marine zones are within state
42 waters, and there is two areas that I will highlight. The large
43 shoreline to deep reef zone, that has been in existence since
44 1997, the Western Sambo Ecological Reserve. The proposal is to
45 extend to capture deep-reef habitat, an area that, through our
46 state research partners, has shown to be important habitat for
47 the lobster life cycle.

48

1 The other zone that I will just highlight in this slide is the
2 hatched zone just near the existing black sanctuary boundary on
3 the south side, and that is an area called Western Dry Rocks.
4 There is no zone in that area currently, and the proposal is to
5 create a marine zone there to protect fish aggregations, and
6 several different fish have been shown to aggregate there for
7 potential spawning activity, and so the proposal is to include
8 that with trolling only, to still allow a certain level of
9 fishing, but intending to protect the fish spawning there. We
10 have heard public comment that trolling may not be sufficient to
11 protect the spawning fish.

12
13 In the Tortugas region, which is much more in the jurisdiction
14 of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, the proposal
15 here -- The gray is existing, and the blue is proposed new for
16 the preferred alternative, and the Tortugas Ecological Reserve
17 is proposed to be extended west by one mile, to protect
18 additional habitat, as well as area that has shown to support
19 additional fish spawning activity. The Tortugas Ecological
20 Reserve South, Riley's Hump, is a very important fish
21 aggregation site and providing a little bit of additional
22 protection there.

23
24 Second is that corridor between the Dry Tortugas National Park,
25 which is not within the sanctuary boundary, and Tortugas
26 Ecological Reserve South, and that has shown also, by our state
27 research partners, to show fish moving, transiting, between the
28 park where no fishing is allowed and parts of the park where no
29 fishing is allowed and the Ecological Reserve South to spawn,
30 and so the proposal is to provide protection for fish as they
31 move between their home range and their spawning range.

32
33 This slide, I just wanted to include this. This is the total
34 area and percentage of the sanctuary that is currently zoned in
35 square miles and the changes in Alternative 2, 3, and 4, and I
36 have also divided this by what is included in state waters
37 versus federal waters, and so this is the total marine zones,
38 and so this includes all the idle speed no wake or no motor
39 areas as well, and it just really is reference.

40
41 We have tried to do a very good job of getting this information
42 out to the public. We have a website devoted to this at our
43 floridakeys.noaa.gov website, where the public can see the
44 document and see supporting material and all of the working
45 group and advisory council process to get to this draft, and
46 there are also maps there, static maps, that show each of the
47 individual marine zones and the changes between the
48 alternatives, and then there is an interactive map, where the

1 public can go in and choose where they want to look and learn
2 more about the zones and the differences across alternatives.

3
4 I just want to note that, following our briefing to the Shrimp
5 AP, we do have requests to put a layer that shows contour lines,
6 and so we're working on that. As well, many have been
7 interested in the actual coordinates of the marine zones, and so
8 we are -- You can find them on the interactive map, but it's a
9 little clunky, and so we have worked to get status quo and the
10 preferred for the ocean side zones, basically the zones that I
11 showed you today, and not all the island contours, the shallow-
12 water island contours, but basically those of interest to you
13 here.

14
15 This slide just is a capture of all the different briefings and
16 meetings we're doing with the different fisheries entities.
17 Like with you, we also will be consulting with the South
18 Atlantic Fishery Management Council, and so we have been meeting
19 with several of their advisory panels as well. With this
20 council and the South Atlantic Council, we'll be briefing the
21 Joint Spiny Lobster Advisory Panel in November, and also our
22 state partners, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

23
24 Finally, this is a list of our current planned, and many have
25 already taken place, information sessions for the public in the
26 Florida Keys and the public comment opportunities, both on the
27 mainland and in the Florida Keys, coming up. We are taking
28 public comment through January 31, 2020, through oral public
29 comment, written public comment, and regulations.gov. Thank
30 you.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you very much for that presentation. Do
33 we have any questions at this point on the presentation? Kevin.

34
35 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, and thank you for coming today. I
36 am just curious. I think I have it in my mind what it is, but,
37 on Slide 11, the goals of the Sanctuary Advisory Council are to
38 facilitate public and private resource use, and could you
39 describe what private resource use is? I think I know what it
40 is, but --

41
42 **MS. DIEVENEY:** I think all uses from the community, from
43 fishing, recreational fishing, commercial fishing, research,
44 diving, snorkeling, the community members who live in the
45 Florida Keys, the whole suite of uses.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Any additional questions? Ms. Bosarge.
48

1 **MS. BOSARGE:** I just wanted to say thank you. The Shrimp AP did
2 request a lot of the things that you put in this presentation,
3 and it's very helpful when you have the existing boundaries
4 versus the alternative, rather than just the alternative. Then
5 it's hard to really compare what the expansion is, and so we
6 appreciate that.

7
8 In your DEIS, if you can get those lat/long coordinates in
9 there, that's really, along with the depth curves, in fathoms
10 and not meters, and that's really how we, as fishermen, kind of
11 orient ourselves to where you're at. Otherwise, it's just a box
12 on a piece of paper, and that helps us. We can put that in our
13 computer plotters and other things and see exactly what our
14 historical effort is in that area, because just a little shift
15 this way or that makes a big difference, but, if those two
16 things could go in your DEIS, and maybe present it here at a
17 later date, that would be wonderful.

18
19 Then my only other comment was on the 79 percent landed in
20 Monroe County of the fish or shrimp that are caught down there
21 in the Keys. I don't know, but it just seems -- It strikes me
22 as -- I would think it would be less than that.

23
24 Shrimping, as far as pounds go, is one of the largest components
25 of what you catch down there, to go on with your lobster and
26 crab, and, yes, we used to land those in the Keys, but we don't
27 anymore, and your shrimp docks are pretty much gone down there.
28 A lot of that is being landed farther up the Peninsula, or even
29 in Bayou La Batre and in Biloxi, and so in Mississippi and
30 Alabama, and so just maybe look into that.

31
32 **MS. DIEVENEY:** Thank you, and, yes, as soon as we have the -- It
33 will be on the interactive map that we're hoping to add a layer.
34 On the interactive map, you can change between charts, Google
35 imagery, just a plain blue background, and so you can change the
36 background, and you can see the unified reef tract map as well,
37 and so it will be hopefully an added layer there, and then I do
38 have the coordinates that we're just trying to figure out how
39 best to put them into a document to put them online. When those
40 are available, I will make sure that Natasha knows, and we'll
41 get the word out to the public, and, yes, I will work with our
42 economist to verify that number.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you very much. I think, in an
45 effort to keep us moving along, I'm going to move. Since we're
46 on the topic of fishing, I will have Natasha go through the
47 updated maps within the proposed boundaries.

48

1 **UPDATED MAPS WITH THE PROPOSED BOUNDARIES AND FISHING EFFORT**
2 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JOINT CORAL SSC, CORAL AP, AND SHRIMP**
3 **AP MEETING**

4
5 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now I will be showing
6 you some of these updated maps with fishing effort and the
7 delineations of boundaries proposed with the Florida Keys
8 National Marine Sanctuary. I will also go over some of the
9 recommendations by the SSC and the APs.

10
11 First, if we go to Tab N, 5(a), on page 3, there was a joint
12 motion by the Coral SSC, Coral AP, and Shrimp AP requesting that
13 the council include all relevant information regarding shrimp
14 effort point data. When we had this meeting, we presented some
15 heat maps with shrimp data that were only for the Gulf
16 jurisdiction, and so what I will be showing you today includes
17 data that is along the South Atlantic Council jurisdiction. I
18 will go over the other two motions as I am explaining the maps
19 to you.

20
21 I will start with the shrimp data, and, to help guide you, you
22 will see a tiny pink shrimp on the upper-left corner, and
23 hopefully this won't be too confusing. There are a lot of data
24 on these maps, and so feel free to stop me if you have any
25 questions.

26
27 For the shrimp data, we are including shrimp ELB from vessels
28 with federal shrimp effort, and I do have to mention that this
29 is not representative of all the shrimp fleet. It only accounts
30 for a third of the shrimp fleet in the Gulf, and, when we're
31 looking at this data in Florida, it might not be as
32 representative of the pink shrimp fishing industry in the area.

33
34 These data points are collected every ten minutes, and the
35 points that you will see represent active tows. The timeframe
36 that I will be including here is from 2004 to 2017.

37
38 For some guidance, the green region is the Gulf Council's
39 jurisdiction, and the purple boundary that we see here is the
40 current Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary boundary, and
41 this color will remain consistent throughout the rest of the
42 presentation. A slightly darker blue, at the south of the Keys
43 boundary, is South Atlantic Fishery Management Council
44 jurisdiction, and, as you may see, the dashed-gray line
45 represents the boundary for the Florida state waters.

46
47 Also, and this will be consistent throughout the rest of the
48 presentation, the blue squares that you will see here are areas

1 that are designated as no fishing allowed, and so this is for
2 Alternative 1, where we currently are. If we go to the next
3 slide, this is, again, pointing you towards the Keys boundary,
4 and so the purple is the current boundary, and the dashed-blue
5 line is the preferred expansion, and we are including Pulley
6 Ridge and the proposed Coral 9 kind of for guidance.

7
8 One of the requests was to include the fathom lines, and this
9 blue squiggly line that you will see is the thirty-five fathom,
10 and we didn't include the twenty-fathom line, because, as you
11 will see later on, there are a lot of data, and we thought that
12 it might be confusing to see so many things on these figures.

13
14 If we go to the next slide, here we go with the shrimp ELB data.
15 These are all the tow points in the dark blue. As you can see,
16 in the northern portion, and so right here, that purple circle
17 in the Dry Tortugas area -- That is the Dry Tortugas, kind of
18 for guidance, and those blue squares are the current Tortugas
19 Ecological Reserves, where no fishing is allowed. We see a
20 large concentration of shrimping efforts in that kind of
21 northern boundary of the Keys.

22
23 If we go to the next slide, now the dashed line is showing the
24 areas that will be included in the expansion. On the next
25 slide, you will see a zoomed-in view of where we currently are.
26 Then, moving along, basically, west of that upper blue polygon,
27 it's what would be included in the expansion. Then, on the
28 southern blue polygon, that one-mile expansion that Ms. Dieveney
29 was talking about, that would be also that kind of western
30 boundary of Alternative 3.

31
32 Now, at the request of the Shrimp AP, we included some data, and
33 we started looking more at like the northern Keys area, and this
34 is only Alternative 3. As you can see, the purple line here is
35 the current southern boundary for the Keys sanctuary, and then
36 the dashed-blue line would be what is included in the expansion.

37
38 Another way of looking at these data, instead of just looking at
39 the blue lines showing all the area that is being used, it's to
40 create heat maps, which basically categorize the pixels, and, in
41 this case, these grids are three-kilometer-square grids, based
42 on the amount of shrimping effort or points that are being
43 recorded in that area, and so, to give you an idea, that square
44 that I have on the left side, those blue dots are representative
45 of those slides that I showed you earlier.

46
47 If we aggregate them, the lighter colors would be the least
48 amount of points. As we go darker, the higher the points that

1 are being recorded, indicating that that area has been more
2 frequently used.

3

4 We can move on to the next slide, and here is what the heat maps
5 look like. Again, when looking at this, we see the darker shade
6 of brown, or shade of orange, in that kind of northern portion
7 of the Keys boundary -- This is Alternative 1, and I am kind of
8 going through the same cycle, the same order, of the slides that
9 I showed you earlier, but just in this case with the heat maps.
10 Moving on, Alternative 3 -- Feel free to stop me if you have any
11 questions or if you want to look closer to some of these areas.

12

13 This is Alternative 1, and you can take a closer look at where
14 the data are being more frequently collected. We can see -- If
15 you can point to that dashed line next to the -- This was an
16 area of concern during the meeting, because, as you can see,
17 shrimping effort is being reported in this area, and so the
18 Shrimp AP was concerned about how the fishing regulations would
19 be affected if this were to be included in the expansion. The
20 same thing applies to the area to the right of the blue square,
21 and you see like that triangle area, and that would be a new
22 area proposed in the expansion.

23

24 We have very limited -- For the shrimp ELB, we have very limited
25 data in areas that are part of the South Atlantic, and so, if
26 you see those little yellow squares, to give you an idea, those
27 represent one to ten points of data that we have recorded, but,
28 then again, keep in mind that this is only a third of the shrimp
29 fleet.

30

31 To kind of summarize, the Shrimp AP had two specific motions,
32 and they were to -- The first one was to oppose the proposed
33 northwestern expansion of the Florida Keys National Marine
34 Sanctuary boundary, and they were also not in favor of the
35 southern boundary. If we go to the next slide, the black arrows
36 are the areas kind of delineating what they were referring to.
37 I can stop here if we want to have discussion on the shrimp data
38 before I move on to the VMS data.

39

40 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Leann.

41

42 **MS. BOSARGE:** Natasha, thank you for putting this together,
43 because, at the Shrimp AP meeting, we, unfortunately, didn't
44 have the South Atlantic data in it, and we had a limited amount
45 of the shrimp effort data, and a lot of the conversation during
46 that meeting kind of focused around the data that we had and the
47 data that we were missing and then even the heat maps.

48

1 Not the whole shrimp fleet shrimps in the Keys, right? It's a
2 little different down there. It's tougher to shrimp down there,
3 and it's not like it is in other parts of the Gulf, in the
4 western Gulf, where you have a lot of flat mud bottom that is
5 open to trawl. You've got to know what you're doing, and there
6 is limited areas you can trawl.

7
8 It's a smaller sub-section of the fleet that shrimps down there,
9 and the way that we choose what boats these electronic logbooks
10 go on is based off the major shrimp ports, right, and we try and
11 pick boats out of those major shrimp ports randomly, obviously,
12 within the spectrum, to get a good coverage.

13
14 Well, most of the major shrimp ports are, I would say, Texas and
15 Louisiana. In Mississippi and Alabama -- In Mississippi, we've
16 got Biloxi, and that's a major shrimp port. In Alabama, you've
17 got Bayou La Batre, and then, when you get into Florida, there
18 is a handful, but, as I mentioned earlier, a lot of that pink
19 shrimp harvest is actually offloaded maybe in Tampa or Bayou La
20 Batre or Biloxi.

21
22 The point I'm making is the Shrimp AP had an issue with using
23 these heat maps. You don't have a great coverage of the portion
24 of the fleet that actually shrimps in the Keys, and so, to give
25 you an example of what this would be like for something that
26 you're more familiar with, and it's not a perfect example, but
27 imagine if, when we looked at recreational landings, we just
28 looked at like the intercepts and then the effort surveys that
29 were actually turned in and we didn't extrapolate it to get the
30 full spectrum of what recreational landings were and we just
31 looked at the intercepts.

32
33 It would be real hard for us to tell what was really going on
34 out there. Well, this data is not extrapolated. It's just the
35 raw data, and it's not extrapolated to the whole fleet, and so
36 that's why the Shrimp AP really had an issue looking at it from
37 a heat map perspective, because then it makes you think that,
38 oh, well, there is only one tow there. Well, we can bring you
39 our data and show you where, just in one boat, we've got -- Year
40 after year, we're towing there, but that boat may not have an
41 ELB on it.

42
43 The Shrimp AP really wanted to use the other map that we have,
44 and, Natasha, I think you have it in there, that it doesn't
45 color-code it and it just shows you where we're shrimping, and
46 that's really a better way to look at it, if it's not
47 extrapolated, and so that's all I will say on that.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Thank you. Lance.

2
3 **MR. LANCE ROBINSON:** Thank you. I'm not on your committee, but
4 I did have a question. On your maps showing just the current
5 status, it looks like there's some trips that are logged inside
6 of the sanctuary, and it doesn't prohibit fishing in there, and
7 is that correct?

8
9 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** If we're talking these maps, we have to take
10 into account the size of the grid, and so, within those three-
11 kilometer squares, it's kind of counting -- That's why there is
12 some overlapping, and you will see that when I start showing the
13 VMS data, and it doesn't mean that they are fishing within the
14 no-fishing zones, but it just means that it's the way that the
15 data were analyzed.

16
17 **MR. ROBINSON:** But is fishing allowed within that area? It's
18 not in that no-fishing zone, the dark-blue area.

19
20 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** Yes, if we're talking about the general
21 boundary. Then, yes, fishing is allowed.

22
23 **MR. ROBINSON:** Thank you.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Ms. Gerhart.

26
27 **MS. GERHART:** Thank you. Natasha, you might have said this
28 already, but this covers a fourteen-year period, correct? Are
29 the numbers of effort there -- Are those annual averages, or is
30 that a total for the full fourteen years?

31
32 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** If I am correct, it's the total of that.
33 They haven't been averaged, and maybe Basher -- It's the total?
34 Okay. Thank you.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Are there any other questions? Seeing
37 none, Natasha, carry on.

38
39 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REEF FISH AP**

40
41 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** Okay. So now I will go through another set
42 of maps, and these are shorter, with the VMS data. As you may
43 know, the vessel monitoring system units are required on all
44 vessels with commercial reef fish permits, and these log the
45 location of the vessel once per hour, and it's not once an hour,
46 but it's within the hour, and your location will be recorded.

47
48 Different than what I showed you with the shrimp, which were

1 active tows, with the VMS, these points include both fishing and
2 non-fishing points. The data that I will be presenting includes
3 fishing using all bottom-tending gear, such as bottom longlines,
4 automated reels, and, in this case, the timeframe would be from
5 2007 to July of 2015, and the grid size is a little larger.
6 This one is five-kilometers squared.

7
8 To guide you, you will see a little fish with a hook, and so,
9 hopefully, as you're reading these maps later on, this can help
10 orient you to the type of data that you are seeing.

11
12 Here you have, again, the purple boundary is the current Florida
13 Keys status quo boundary, and the blue polygons that you will
14 see are no fishing, and, just like with the shrimp, the lighter
15 little pixels would mean less VMS points recorded in that area.
16 The more that they are recorded within the pixels, the darker
17 the color would be, and, in this case, we're using a yellow to
18 red color-coding.

19
20 If we go to the next slide, here is Alternative 3 with the blue-
21 dashed line, and now we see that Tortugas corridor. Like I had
22 mentioned earlier, you see some background pixels kind of
23 reporting fishing in areas that normally are currently with the
24 regulation of no fishing, but that's because of the grid size,
25 and it doesn't mean that fishing is actually happening there.

26
27 This is a zoomed-in version of kind of what are the areas that
28 are being used. Again, Pulley Ridge and Proposed Coral 9 are
29 included, and, kind of to remind you, Pulley Ridge does have
30 fishing regulations, and so no fishing with bottom-tending gear
31 is allowed.

32
33 With the Proposed Coral 9, similar regulations would apply, if
34 it were to be implemented, with the exception of bottom
35 longline, and that would be allowed.

36
37 With the blue-dashed lines, you see the areas that would be
38 within the Gulf jurisdiction that would be included now as part
39 of the Keys Sanctuary, and now these are the fishing efforts
40 that are happening further north in the Keys. The Reef Fish AP
41 did not have any motions when this information was presented to
42 them.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. At this point, I'm going to try to keep
45 us moving along, in the interest of time, and we can revisit
46 some of the AP motions at Full Council, should we choose to do
47 that, and so I think are there any other -- Are there two more
48 items, Natasha?

1
2 **REMAINING ITEMS FROM THE CORAL SSC, CORAL AP, AND SHRIMP AP**
3 **MEETING**
4

5 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** There are two more items that were brought
6 up during the Joint Coral SSC, Coral AP, and Shrimp AP. If we
7 go back to 5(a), one of the motions was the assessment on the
8 Kemp's ridley, and I don't know if we want to have any more
9 discussion, since it was addressed earlier today.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** No, I think we can move on from the Kemp's
12 ridley.

13
14 **DR. MENDEZ-FERRER:** Okay. Then the last motion by the Coral AP
15 and Coral SSC was to have the Gulf start working on Coral
16 Amendment 10.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Martha.

19
20 **MS. GUYAS:** I have stuff about the sanctuary, but I understand
21 we're running a little bit behind, and so we can address that
22 later, if you would like, but I also could talk about Amendment
23 10, if you want.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** We can talk about the sanctuary stuff later,
26 probably in Full Council, when we come back to the committee
27 report, and I would also, I guess, in the interest of time, let
28 people know that there is a motion that was made by the Coral AP
29 and the Coral SSC, and I think we can visit that also in Full
30 Council. Carrie.

31
32 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think
33 Ms. Dieveney is leaving today, if I'm not mistaken, and so, if
34 you do have specific questions on the sanctuary expansion, you
35 probably should ask those today.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Fair deal. Martha.

38
39 **MS. GUYAS:** Mine is not a question, but it was just going to be
40 something that we may want to consider for a comment, and so I
41 can throw it out there now and just have people think about it
42 and just leave it there.

43
44 Pulley Ridge, one of the regulations that we have there now, and
45 then I think proposed for the expansion is no anchoring by
46 fishing vessels, and is that correct? I just wanted to note
47 that this -- I guess Alternative 4, and it's not the preferred
48 alternative, but there potentially could be an opportunity there

1 to expand that no anchoring to all vessels, and that was
2 something that we talked about when we were talking about Coral
3 Amendment 9, and I think it was a point of frustration for the
4 council, if not the committee, and so I just kind of put that
5 out there as maybe this could be an opportunity there, but think
6 about it, and we'll come back to it by the end of the week.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN FRAZER:** Okay. Thank you. No other questions specific
9 to the sanctuary at this point? Okay. Seeing none, I think
10 that we will move on. Are there any other remaining items?
11 Okay. Is there any other business for this committee? Seeing
12 none, we will adjourn the Coral Committee.

13

14 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on October 21, 2019.)

15

16

- - -