

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Key West Marriott Beachside Hotel Key West, Florida

June 20, 2018

**VOTING MEMBERS**

- Phil Dyskow.....Florida
- Doug Boyd.....Texas
- Robin Riechers.....Texas
- Bob Shipp.....Alabama
- Greg Stunz.....Texas
- Ed Swindell (via webinar).....Louisiana
- LT Mark Zanowicz.....USCG

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS**

- Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi
- Glenn Constant.....USFWS
- Roy Crabtree.....NMFS
- Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
- Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- Tom Frazer.....Florida
- Johnny Greene.....Alabama
- Martha Guyas (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- Campo Matens.....Louisiana
- Paul Mickle (designee for Joe Spraggins).....Mississippi
- John Sanchez.....Florida
- Ed Swindell.....Louisiana

**STAFF**

- Steven Atran.....Senior Fishery Biologist
- Matt Freeman.....Economist
- Douglas Gregory.....Executive Director
- Morgan Kilgour.....Fishery Biologist
- Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- Ryan Rindone.....Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
- Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- Charlotte Schiaffo....Administrative & Human Resources Assistant
- Carrie Simmons.....Deputy Director

**OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

- Shannon Cass-Calay.....SEFSC
- Michael Drexler.....Ocean Conservancy, St. Petersburg, FL

1 Traci Floyd.....MDMR  
2 Susan Gerhart.....NMFS  
3 Peter Hood.....NMFS  
4 Walter Hoppe.....USCG  
5 Bill Kelly.....FKCFA, Marathon, FL  
6 Bart Niquet.....Lynn Haven, FL  
7 Captain Scott Pearce.....FL  
8 Clay Porch.....SEFSC  
9 Eric Raslich.....Key West, FL  
10 Lance Robinson.....TX

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PAGE 18: Motion to adopt the council's outreach plan on the use of venting tools and descending devices policy. The motion carried on page 18.

PAGE 18: Motion that staff work with GSMFC to develop a meeting of scientists, agency personnel, and stakeholders to develop an action plan that includes information dissemination and science and monitoring needs that ensure the policy purpose and objectives are both measurable and successful. The motion carried on page 19.

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1 The Outreach and Education Committee of the Gulf of Mexico  
2 Fishery Management Council convened at the Key West Marriott  
3 Beachside Hotel, Key West, Florida, Wednesday morning, June 20,  
4 2018, and was called to order by Chairman Phil Dyskow.

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

10 **CHAIRMAN PHIL DYSKOW:** I would like to call this meeting of the  
11 Outreach and Education Committee to order. I am actually here  
12 under false colors. I am the Vice Chair of this committee. Ed  
13 Swindell is the Chair, and I am temporarily sitting in for him,  
14 although he is online participating with us by phone, and so,  
15 anytime he has a question or a comment, I hope he feels free to  
16 participate.

17  
18 Also on this committee are Doug Boyd, Robin Riechers, Bob Shipp,  
19 Greg Stunz, and Lieutenant Zanowicz. Our council coordinator is  
20 Emily Muehlstein, and she does most of the heavy lifting on this  
21 committee, and so you'll be hearing a lot from her.

22  
23 That said, the first item is to adopt the agenda. Hopefully you  
24 have that in front of you and you're able to look at that, and I  
25 would like to ask for a motion to approve the agenda. Thank  
26 you. Is there a second? Doug Boyd seconds. Any discussion on  
27 the agenda, or any additions? If not, I don't know if we need  
28 to bring it a vote or just approve it without objection, and so  
29 I think we just approve it.

30  
31 The next item is to approve the minutes. Again, you have this  
32 in front of you, and are there any comments about the minutes,  
33 any additions, or do we have a motion to approve as-is?

34  
35 **MR. DOUG BOYD:** So moved.

36  
37 **DR. GREG STUNZ:** I will second it.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Okay. A second from Greg, and a motion from  
40 Doug Boyd. Any opposition? Seeing none, the motion passes. I  
41 am going to now pass on the agenda to Ms. Muehlstein, who will  
42 take us through the next item, which is the action guide.

43  
44 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you, Mr. Vice Chair. If you look  
45 at Tab O, Number 3, that is our action guide and next steps. At  
46 today's committee, we have two major action items. The first  
47 one we're going to be looking at is review of the council's  
48 outreach plan on descending and venting policy, and so, if you

1 remember, in January, you asked to convene the Outreach and  
2 Education Technical Committee. We have convened that group, and  
3 they reviewed the draft of the plan, and they have made some  
4 recommendations about how we should move forward, and so we'll  
5 take a look at the new draft plan and the recommendations from  
6 the technical committee and hopefully -- We're looking for the  
7 council to provide some guidance to staff, if you concur with  
8 the direction that we're going in, and provide us some  
9 information on the best path forward.

10  
11 The next item is the second sort of major action item on our  
12 agenda today, and that is review of an anecdotal data collection  
13 tool, and so the council, a couple of meetings back, had asked  
14 staff to develop a tool that would collect information from  
15 fishermen about interesting trends or anomalies that they're  
16 seeing in the behavior of the fish or the fish stocks in  
17 general, and so we have developed a draft of that tool. We have  
18 also come up with a mechanism through which we think we want to  
19 disseminate that tool and sort of the timing and who it's going  
20 to go to, and so we will discuss that, and we would like your  
21 thoughts on that tool and on our proposed dissemination of the  
22 tool.

23  
24 Next, we will go over our communications analytics. We  
25 typically only host the Outreach and Education Committee about  
26 once a year, and so we kind of tend to do this on an annual  
27 basis, and so we'll just show you kind of a snapshot of how  
28 we're doing analytics-wise with our council communications, and  
29 then we will move to a discussion about our transition from  
30 paper regulations to the Fish Rules app, and there is no action  
31 required. It's just an update. Then we'll conclude just by  
32 looking over sort of any extra stuff that's in the report from  
33 the O&E Technical Committee. With that, I think we're ready to  
34 move on.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** The first item on the agenda is the Outreach  
37 Plan for Descending Devices and Venting Tools.

38  
39 **REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S OUTREACH PLAN ON THE DESCENDING AND**  
40 **VENTING POLICY**

41  
42 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you, Mr. Vice Chair. We will bring that  
43 up really quickly, and I think the best way to review this new  
44 outreach plan, because it looks significantly different from the  
45 one that you all saw in January, is to sort of couch the  
46 conversation in the advice and the conversation that we had with  
47 our technical committee.

1 We spent a greater portion of the day discussing this, and this  
2 really was the major item that was on the technical committee's  
3 roster when we decided to host that committee, and so what I  
4 would like to do is kind of go over the recommendations that I  
5 got from the committee and how we ended up where we are with our  
6 current proposal.

7  
8 The two main things that the committee did when we met, the  
9 technical committee, was they first reviewed an updated list of  
10 the efforts that each agency is already making regarding  
11 descending and venting, and so it sounds like there is a lot of  
12 agencies that are already doing work on this, and we wanted to  
13 make sure that we kind of had a comprehensive list of what was  
14 happening, and so it looks like Bernie has brought that up.

15  
16 We went through each state agency, and we also have  
17 representatives from the different Sea Grant agencies from  
18 across the coast, and then we did have some advocacy groups and  
19 some industry personnel that also attended that meeting and  
20 provided some information on the efforts that they are making  
21 for descending and venting devices to mitigate barotrauma.

22  
23 Some of the conclusions that we got out of the committee when we  
24 did this exercise was we found that many of the agencies are  
25 already working on their own efforts to promote the proper use  
26 of descending devices and venting tools. We also found that  
27 there are numerous regional differences across the Gulf that  
28 affect barotrauma and the success of venting and descending and  
29 that communication efforts need to be tailored to the specific  
30 differences of the specific regions.

31  
32 We also discovered that current communication materials all  
33 seemed geared to the private sector, and there was a discussion  
34 about the fact that there is a need to ensure that all sectors  
35 are addressed and not simply the private angling sector.

36  
37 It was also mentioned that venting and descending tools are  
38 important components of survival, but there are other things  
39 that play into the survival of a released fish, including  
40 handling time, dehooking, and some other factors, including  
41 water temperature, that are a little bit harder to control, and  
42 so it was noted by the technical committee that the outreach  
43 should include a more holistic approach that includes techniques  
44 that would minimize discard mortality in general and not just  
45 focusing on the use of these release devices.

46  
47 Then, finally, it was noted that there have already been  
48 numerous studies conducted across the Gulf that gauge angler

1 awareness and usage of barotrauma mitigation devices, and some  
2 of the results of those studies were that social norms are a  
3 driving force that motivate the use of descending devices, and  
4 it's also been shown that people have really good attitudes  
5 towards the use of these devices, but maybe are lacking in  
6 awareness of the tools and the ability to use those tools, and,  
7 from an outreach perspective, that's a great problem to have.  
8 If you don't have an attitude problem and you just have an  
9 awareness and an aptitude problem, that's an easier issue, I  
10 think, to tackle, in a lot of ways.

11  
12 Moving on, the committee then discussed the outreach plan as it  
13 relates to the use of our new policy, and they decided that,  
14 rather than create redundant materials, since all of these other  
15 agencies are already doing things, the Gulf Council should  
16 really take the lead role in displaying the Gulf-wide impacts on  
17 discards and documenting current research that is happening on a  
18 Gulf-wide basis and that the council should take a role in being  
19 sort of the central voice that coordinates our regional partners  
20 to create a unified approach to outreaching the use of these  
21 devices. Then we would also sort of curate our partners'  
22 outreach materials across the region.

23  
24 Basically, the idea here, and you can see it in the proposed  
25 outreach plan, is that we would create a best fishing practices  
26 website, and the first part is that we would sort of present a  
27 Gulf-wide view of the discard issue and how large of an issue it  
28 can be, and that sort of relates to what is in our Other  
29 Business. We have these tables where we're trying to sort of  
30 drill down how large of a problem the discards really are and  
31 what potential effect we can have on that if we all sort of  
32 start to culturally adopt the use of these tools.

33  
34 I think the Gulf Council would like to take on the Gulf-wide  
35 perspective, and then what we would also do is, in that same  
36 best fishing practices page, we would house all of the regional  
37 information that is being completed by our partners. That way,  
38 we kind of avoid redundancy, but we still make sure that all of  
39 the information is there in sort of a comprehensive way.

40  
41 The next thing that the committee discussed that made it into  
42 our outreach plan is the idea that the outreach plan should not  
43 simply focus on communications and that the council should  
44 actually serve as the lead agency responsible for promoting a  
45 holistic approach, to ensure that the goals of our policy are  
46 realized, meaning that the greater action plan should aim to  
47 increase stock productivity and to make more fish available to  
48 the fishermen.



1  
2 Rather than just look at this as an outreach endeavor, it's sort  
3 of a wider endeavor, where we're not just trying to promote the  
4 use of our policy and awareness of our policy, but we're  
5 actually trying to promote the behaviors and the end results  
6 that we're hoping for a part of our policy, and so the idea was,  
7 if we ended up doing that, that we should incorporate  
8 communications that promote the widespread and proper use of  
9 venting.

10  
11 We should also look into communication of the data on tool usage  
12 and the impact that it has on those dead discards and the  
13 incorporation of those results in a stock assessment, so that  
14 potentially we have downstream the ability to maybe have more  
15 harvestable fish, and we also -- It was mentioned that maybe the  
16 council should start playing a role in a group that would  
17 promote the development of new tools and techniques to increase  
18 survivability. With that, Bernie, can you bring up our proposed  
19 outreach plan?

20  
21 If you look at our outreach plan, it sort of highlights sort of  
22 the rationale that we're using, and there are two main pillars  
23 of this plan. The first one is promoting the widespread  
24 awareness of the council's policy by informing partner agencies  
25 and the media of our policy existence, and so there is a number  
26 of different mechanisms that we plan to use in order to sort of  
27 just promote the existence of the policy itself, but then the  
28 second pillar of this plan is promoting the actual use of these  
29 tools by serving as a unified voice that speaks across all of  
30 those fishing sectors and all of the regions in our Gulf, and  
31 so, with that, I think I will pause and take any feedback.

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Greg.

34  
35 **DR. STUNZ:** Emily, first, thanks for really -- It looks like you  
36 guys have done a lot of work, and I appreciate that. I think  
37 the committee, and me, certainly did not want a policy that we  
38 just made and didn't really move forward, and so this represents  
39 a great opportunity for engagement and outreach that I think a  
40 lot of people are behind, and so I appreciate everything you  
41 have done to move that forward.

42  
43 I wanted to comment on what you mentioned about all the  
44 different studies and information that is out there, and you're  
45 exactly right that there is a lot, and a lot of that is species  
46 and region-specific, because of the nature of the way that the  
47 fishery occurs and just the differences, obviously, among the  
48 region.

1  
2 I think the council and the work that you're doing on the  
3 council initiatives here could be sort of this warehouse, in a  
4 very meaningful and organized way, and collect that information,  
5 and maybe it's by species or by region and served back out,  
6 because, right now, it's at a lot of different places, but,  
7 also, I don't think we want to get in the business of  
8 reinventing all of that, certainly.

9  
10 A lot of really good stuff is out there by Sea Grant, a lot of  
11 good stuff in Florida, and, really, all of the states are  
12 producing things, and I think, by assembling that and putting it  
13 in one place, it would probably be the most useful way to go,  
14 and you kind of touched on that, but I just wanted to reiterate  
15 that I think that that's a good approach, because, right now, it  
16 isn't really collected in one area.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you for that comment, Greg. I would  
19 like to underscore that. This was the first meeting of the  
20 Outreach and Education Committee that I attended, as a new  
21 council member, and I wasn't impressed by the amount of  
22 material. I was overwhelmed by the amount of material in all  
23 five of the Gulf states, and somebody has to capture all of this  
24 in one location and be the leader, and we're the entity that I  
25 feel can do that best, but we don't need to create very much.  
26 It is all there. We just need to package it in such a way that  
27 people have universal access to it across the Gulf. Are there  
28 any questions on anything that Emily has covered so far? If  
29 not, please continue. Clay.

30  
31 **DR. CLAY PORCH:** Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to reiterate,  
32 especially in light of the conversation we had yesterday, how  
33 important this kind of information would be. In stock  
34 assessments, we typically look on a Gulf-wide basis, and, when  
35 it comes to things like the potential effect of release  
36 mortality, we have a lot of scientific studies, where we suggest  
37 that, okay, we've shown that venting works, and we've shown that  
38 descender devices work, but what is always missing is a sort of  
39 broad-brush look at how these are actually being applied.

40  
41 We know they work if they are used properly, but we don't  
42 actually know what fraction of the fishermen are doing it right  
43 or doing it at all, and so this kind of thing could get us a  
44 much better picture.

45  
46 For instance, we talked about red snapper, but we did have  
47 fishermen in the room that said that they thought that venting  
48 was generally fairly widely practiced, at least in their areas,

1 but they are only representing the areas where they actually  
2 fish, and, obviously, there's only a handful of them, typically,  
3 in the room, and what they see may not be representative of the  
4 entire Gulf.

5  
6 Something like this could get us a much better view of what are  
7 the standard practices across the Gulf, and that would help us  
8 decide how to adjust the release mortality rate, and, as we saw,  
9 that can be an important factor in an assessment and in these  
10 kind of analyses to decide whether you should or shouldn't  
11 require the use of various devices.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you, Clay, and you brought up an  
14 interesting point. We have tools, that have been developed by  
15 Sea Grant and others, to the extent that venting in particular  
16 is so thoroughly explained that anyone can utilize this that  
17 wants to, and the degree of utilization is what we want to  
18 increase, and so that's why I think this leadership position for  
19 the council is so important, because the tools are there. The  
20 will to use the tools needs to be enhanced.

21  
22 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DOUG GREGORY:** I think the opportunity, going  
23 forward, is to take a second look at the priorities of the  
24 research funding programs, like MARFIN and S-K and cooperative  
25 fishing, and make sure that the research to look into the  
26 effective of these be funded, when possible, and encourage  
27 researchers to do more of what they're doing.

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Madam Chair.

30  
31 **MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** Kind of building on this conversation, I  
32 think this might be another area where it's something that we've  
33 been talking about in the past and that we're working on, Emily  
34 is, is that tool for a specific stock assessment that may be  
35 ongoing to try and involve more of the fishermen in the process,  
36 because, as Clay said, for physical space room and then for the  
37 monetary cost of actually having fishermen come to the meeting,  
38 there's just a handful of them, usually, and, as Clay said, that  
39 particular gentleman may just be fishing in one area, but, as we  
40 work through that process and try and get a vetted list of  
41 fishermen that we would push out some questions to during the  
42 stock assessment process, which is a long process, and just try  
43 and get some feedback from them, and that may be one of those  
44 anecdotal questions where we could get some qualitative  
45 information from them, to see maybe how many of them do use  
46 venting tools and how often and what depth of water are you  
47 fishing in when you use it and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.  
48 That might be another good use for our upcoming data portals,

1 for that.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You bring up an  
4 excellent point. For something we have talked about so much, we  
5 have very little actual hard data to support our assumption that  
6 venting tools and other devices actually are creating a  
7 difference, and we need better tools, and, rather than get hung  
8 up in the weeds right now, what the effectiveness of the tools  
9 to reduce discard mortality is and how effective they are, but  
10 we know, intuitively, that they are effective at a level, but we  
11 don't know what that level is, but certainly can do no harm in  
12 increasing the utilization, and I think that, at this point, has  
13 got to be the goal, until we get this information and these  
14 numbers. It's rare to have something that we have talked about  
15 so much that we still know so little about. Since Emily is  
16 staring at me, I guess that means she is -- I'm sorry. Did we  
17 have a question over here?

18  
19 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** That is Mr. Peter Hood from the Southeast  
20 Regional Office.

21  
22 **MR. PETER HOOD:** I was going to say that. I am Peter Hood with  
23 the Regional Office, but I just wanted to remind you, and I  
24 think you've got this in bits and pieces, but the Open Ocean  
25 Restoration Plan that is being developed right now has -- One of  
26 the projects that the fish team is working on is actually to do  
27 more -- It's kind of this holistic approach to looking at  
28 descender devices, and our plan -- The way things are working  
29 right now, we will have a draft plan probably somewhere around  
30 the beginning of 2019, and a final plan a few months later, and  
31 then sometime next summer the plan should be in place, and it  
32 will support things like research and outreach and things like  
33 that, and we plan on coordinating with Emily, and so I just  
34 wanted to make sure that you knew about that.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you. If there are no further questions,  
37 Emily, please continue.

38  
39 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Great. Thank you. The Outreach and  
40 Education Technical Committee did make two motions while they  
41 were discussing this outreach plan, and both of those motions  
42 seemed to speak to the conversation that we just had, and so I  
43 think the best thing is sort of we go one-by-one.

44  
45 The first motion that the technical committee made was to  
46 recommend that the council take responsibility as the Gulf  
47 coordinating body for reducing discard mortality through best  
48 handling practice issues, and, further, that the O&E Technical

1 Committee be charged with further development of the outreach  
2 plan in concert with the states, organizations, and other  
3 bodies. I think this motion speaks to the conversation we just  
4 had about the council serving sort of as that central voice.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Is there any discussion on this motion? Greg.

7  
8 **DR. STUNZ:** I don't necessarily disagree with this at all. I  
9 guess the question is does the council have the capacity do  
10 that? I mean, I certainly think that that would be a good idea,  
11 and I would be willing to make a motion as such, but I don't  
12 want to -- In light of workload and that kind of thing, but it  
13 does seem appropriate.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** I would defer that question to Emily, with the  
16 caveat that the very people that are producing these materials  
17 and developing them are the ones that passed this motion without  
18 opposition. Everyone that attended this meeting is looking for  
19 a coordinating body to communicate this message in a consistent  
20 and uniform way, and so I will now defer that question to Emily.

21  
22 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I think it's reflected in the draft outreach  
23 plan that is brought before you today. I do think that,  
24 especially if we sort of make this sort of a web-based tool  
25 right now, this is absolutely something that we can start to do,  
26 and that would be through hosting sort of a Gulf-wide  
27 perspective, like I outlined, and then making sure that we have  
28 all of our partner materials.

29  
30 As Mr. Dyskow mentioned, the committee all seemed pretty eager  
31 to have somebody take on that role as the lead, and I think we  
32 can produce some tools and some outputs that would certainly  
33 fulfill the needs for this.

34  
35 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Greg.

36  
37 **DR. STUNZ:** Emily, I would be prepared to make a motion, if  
38 needed. The question is I want to make sure that I make the  
39 motion that is most appropriate for what you are envisioning,  
40 but does that motion capture that?

41  
42 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I think potentially the best thing that we can  
43 do is we'll look at the second motion and then, in relationship  
44 to the outreach plan that we have presented, I think maybe --  
45 Because I feel like that outreach plan kind of speaks to this,  
46 and the best thing we can do is look at that outreach plan and  
47 just bless that as a council to move forward with that, and so I  
48 think, rather than make an independent motion, maybe -- What I

1 am trying to do with that outreach plan is speak to the motion  
2 that was made.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Any further discussion? Greg, was that a  
5 motion, or was that just a point of discussion?  
6

7 **DR. STUNZ:** Well, at this -- I think it's a point of discussion  
8 at this point, and then I will make a motion related to that  
9 regarding the plan when we're finished.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you.

12  
13 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay, and so then I think we can move on to the  
14 second motion that was made by the panel, which was to recommend  
15 that the council instigate a meeting of scientists, managers,  
16 and stakeholders to develop an action plan that includes  
17 information dissemination and the science and monitoring needs  
18 that ensure the policy, purpose, and objective are both  
19 measurable and successful.

20  
21 This motion is somewhat related to our outreach plan, but it  
22 also goes a little bit further, and so there was a long  
23 discussion by the technical committee regarding the idea that  
24 maybe communications are not the only thing that we need to  
25 accomplish here, and so I think the idea is that we not only  
26 just promote the use of these tools, but that we also sort of  
27 work with some of our partner agencies and some of the  
28 appropriate persons throughout the Gulf to make sure that there  
29 is some scientific follow-up that will study the prevalence of  
30 the use of these tools and to also ensure that it makes its way  
31 into the stock assessment, so that we have that measurable  
32 outcome that we're looking for as a council.

33  
34 This isn't written directly into the outreach plan, because I  
35 figured that we could have some discussion on this. I have  
36 spoken offline with Dave Donaldson of the Gulf States, and it  
37 sounds like maybe the best way to do this is to host a general  
38 session during one of the Gulf States meetings so that we can  
39 invite people that are more than just the communicators.

40  
41 In other words, this motion is almost outside of the breadth of  
42 what just pure communications personnel can do. This would  
43 involve some scientists and some strategic thinking about, Gulf-  
44 wide, what we need in order to go from the promotion of the use  
45 of these tools into the incorporation of some meaningful  
46 information into an assessment, and I think that does go beyond  
47 just the communications personnel around the Gulf, and so I will  
48 stop there, with that motion on the board.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Mr. Director. I can still call you that.

3  
4 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREGORY:** For two days, yes. I brought this  
5 up at the technical committee, but this goes beyond what the  
6 council typically does, but I think this concept fits perfectly  
7 with what a group called the Fisheries Forum does, and they are  
8 still around.

9  
10 We also don't have a budget for this sort of thing, but I know,  
11 if we go to the Fisheries Forum and ask them to do something  
12 like that, that would really be a national forum and not just  
13 the Gulf of Mexico. They will want some funding, and so I would  
14 think -- Our next five-year grant begins in 2020, and we could  
15 try to build something into that grant to do this.

16  
17 We don't have the funds in our current grant earmarked to do  
18 anything like this, but I think the Fisheries Forum type of  
19 concept would be ideal for this, and they have addressed a  
20 number of issues on behalf of the councils over the years, and  
21 they have even done special meetings for councils over the  
22 years, particularly the Mid-Atlantic and the New England  
23 Council.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Robin.

26  
27 **MR. ROBIN RIECHERS:** Kind of to that point, but also stepping  
28 back one possible location for finding some of this information,  
29 and I will ask you, Emily, but the Open Ocean group, if they are  
30 going to do this and publish it in a draft restoration plan, are  
31 certainly going to address some of those issues and get a lot of  
32 input across the Gulf on those issues, as well as even beyond  
33 the Gulf.

34  
35 I don't want to reinvent what they're already going to do, from  
36 a process standpoint. I would rather kind of tag on to that,  
37 and I will let you speak to that, and then, if I need a follow-  
38 up, and I think I want to follow-up the conversation about where  
39 the meeting may be most appropriate.

40  
41 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I certainly agree. I want to avoid redundancy  
42 in any capacity we can, and I guess maybe what that would mean  
43 is we would have a larger seat at the table when it comes to  
44 working with the Regional Office and sort of what they're  
45 looking for in that Open Ocean plan, and I would be fully  
46 comfortable with sort of substituting this idea with kind of  
47 joining in on the effort that's already being done, if that's  
48 the most appropriate path forward.

1  
2 **MR. RIECHERS:** I guess I will now follow-up to Doug. First of  
3 all, I am -- Peter, I'm a little -- Unfortunately, you moved the  
4 timetable on the Open Ocean draft restoration plan, and that's  
5 the first I've heard, and I thought we were going to get one in  
6 the fall, but is yours a separate one, or is it the first one  
7 that is coming out? Do you know?

8  
9 **MR. HOOD:** I want to be very careful, because I don't want to --  
10 I am a member of a team, and I'm just not exactly sure what all  
11 is going on, but I did, today, ask for sort of what is the  
12 timeline for our fish project, and that's what I related. There  
13 will be a draft ready sometime in probably next January. We are  
14 working on the draft right now. Glenn may have some information  
15 on that, too.

16  
17 **MR. GLENN CONSTANT:** Open Ocean TIG is going to put out two  
18 separate draft restoration plans. One is going to be those  
19 projects led by the Department of Interior, which is Gulf  
20 sturgeon and birds. Everything else, including this fish and  
21 water column invertebrates work, which is the pot of money that  
22 the descender device project comes into, is going to be led by  
23 NOAA in a separate part of that plan, and so around January,  
24 but, to your point about connecting to them, I think there is a  
25 strong interest in not having redundancy and a strong interest  
26 in having the council, where appropriate, lead that effort, and  
27 so I think some more discussion in the interim, between the next  
28 meeting, might be in order, and I spoke to James Rinehart  
29 briefly via email communication, and he is interested in finding  
30 the right way to get you more involved in that, and we share the  
31 council's interest in eliminating redundancy and getting the  
32 right kind of data.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** I would be remiss if I didn't point out that  
35 many of the committee members recognized the difficulty in their  
36 second motion, the one we're talking about now, and the key  
37 point that we want to preserve, even if the actual steps we take  
38 are different, is we want to make sure that this policy is  
39 communicated, which is Motion 1, but also that it is measurable,  
40 the objectives are measurable, and successful, and so, how we do  
41 that, I think there was a degree of flexibility, but there was a  
42 concern that if we don't do that that we're missing the  
43 important purpose of this entire process. Robin.

44  
45 **MR. RIECHERS:** If I can follow-up to the conversation we've been  
46 having and going back to maybe the appropriate place here, I  
47 guess the only thing I will say is, at least from my  
48 perspective, I think suggesting that it go to the Fisheries



1 Forum, while that would create a national conversation, and I am  
2 not against a national conversation about this issue, I think,  
3 going back to our notion about trying to progress this along, as  
4 opposed to kind of just basically talking about it in our  
5 separate silos in each state and each organization doing what  
6 they're doing -- All of that is good, and it's appropriate that  
7 each group would do that, but, if we're really going to try to  
8 get a handle on what is happening in the Gulf, I think Gulf  
9 States may be the more -- It may be both quicker and a more  
10 appropriate venue for the local discussion of this. Again, I am  
11 not opposed to the Fisheries Forum, but I think our dollars and  
12 effort would be spent a little closer to home, and it might help  
13 us out a little bit more.

14

15 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Dave.

16

17 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Robin, I can kind  
18 of see it as a two-step process, where we have a -- In talking  
19 with Emily, we were looking to do something at our next March  
20 commission meeting, which will be in Louisiana, and then,  
21 following up, in the longer term, doing a Fisheries Forum,  
22 because I think that might be a good national discussion, but,  
23 to kind of kick it off with the commission and then go from  
24 there, based on those discussions.

25

26 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you. Are there any other questions? If  
27 not, I will turn it back over to Emily.

28

29 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It looks like, sort of  
30 based on our agenda, really the only thing that I am looking for  
31 from you guys is approval of the policy that we put before you,  
32 or the outreach plan that we put before you, and, again, that  
33 sort of speaks to the first motion, which would promote the  
34 council's policy and the use of these devices. I have heard  
35 some guidance about sort of the second motion from the technical  
36 committee, and I don't know if we need a motion or not.

37

38 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Well, I think -- Thank you, Emily. I think it  
39 would be appropriate for us to consider adopting our first  
40 motion, which simply states that the council will take the  
41 coordinating responsibility for all of these materials that a  
42 lot of people have spent much time and effort developing, so  
43 that those tools are available throughout the Gulf region.

44

45 The second motion, and, again, I will preface it by saying that  
46 many of the committee members were concerned that that would get  
47 swept under the rug, and what they want to make sure is that we  
48 have a process whereby we can measure the results of the

1 increased participation in decreasing releasing mortality  
2 through venting tools and descending devices.

3  
4 I think, number one, if someone is of the opinion, we could  
5 simply initiate a motion to adopt that. The second motion, I  
6 think we have a bigger challenge, and it might be necessary to  
7 come up with a substitute motion to determine the next steps  
8 going forward. Greg.

9  
10 **DR. STUNZ:** If the committee so feels, I am happy to make that  
11 first motion, if Emily would help me craft it just a little bit.  
12 I move to -- Now I'm confused of exactly what you want this  
13 motion to say.

14  
15 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I think you want to adopt the outreach plan,  
16 which sort of outlines that we will be taking on that central  
17 voice, and so that's the first one. We can adopt that plan, and  
18 then we know that we're in accordance with this first motion  
19 from the technical committee, and that seems to follow the  
20 wisdom of the committee's discussion so far.

21  
22 **DR. STUNZ:** I move that we adopt the outreach plan policy on the  
23 use of venting tools and descending devices.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** We have a motion. Do we have a second?  
26 Robin, were you seconding it? We have a motion and a second.  
27 Is there any discussion regarding this? **Hearing none, I guess**  
28 **the next step is a vote, and is anyone opposed? Hearing no**  
29 **opposition, the motion passes.** Emily, I am turning it back over  
30 to you. Robin.

31  
32 **MR. RIECHERS:** I think Emily had just suggested that we now try  
33 to work with the second motion, and I am going to let them get  
34 this first one out, but I think, at least from my perspective, I  
35 would move that staff work with Gulf States Marine Fisheries  
36 Commission to develop a meeting of scientists, managers, and  
37 stakeholders to develop an action plan that includes information  
38 dissemination and science and monitoring needs. You could  
39 actually take that whole section there. Go ahead and take it  
40 all the way.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you, Robin. That is in the form of a  
43 motion, and so, as soon as that is crafted and we can read it,  
44 the next step will be to look for a second. Again, while that's  
45 going up on the board, what the committee really wanted was to  
46 make sure we had something that was going to allow us to measure  
47 our success or failure, or measure our results, and let's put it  
48 that way, and that's what this is intended to do. If that is

1 your motion -- Go ahead, Robin.

2  
3 **MR. RIECHERS:** Well, I think the question here is who is going  
4 to work to -- **Just to ask staff or to direct staff to work with**  
5 **or direct the council to work with.**

6  
7 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Any other changes, Robin? Is that your  
8 motion? We have a second from Doug Boyd. Do we have any  
9 discussion?

10  
11 **MR. ED SWINDELL:** What is meant in this motion as the managers?

12  
13 **MR. RIECHERS:** I will try to answer. I wasn't involved in the  
14 meeting that created the motion, and so I will let someone who  
15 was there correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe what they would  
16 be referring to is state fisheries managers, state fisheries  
17 staff, and it could also apply to managers at the commission  
18 level who might be in the purpose of disseminating this.

19  
20 Frankly, other outreach and education kinds of managers,  
21 including Sea Grant, et cetera, and I think it's anyone who  
22 could be considered a person who is in the normal contact with  
23 the groups who you would be trying to disseminate this to, and  
24 so it's a broad term as it's used here, but certainly fisheries  
25 organizations probably are kind of at the top of that heap, but  
26 there is a host of others who could be part of that. Emily.

27  
28 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Well, and I suspect -- Mr. Swindell, for  
29 clarification, if you would like, we could probably switch that  
30 term with "agency personnel", because that's sort of another  
31 general, broad brush.

32  
33 **MR. SWINDELL:** I don't know that we need to change it, but I was  
34 just wondering just what was envisioned as managers. I have no  
35 problem with it. I think it's broad enough that it will include  
36 almost anybody that you want to include from those  
37 organizations, and so I would support the motion. I know I  
38 can't vote on it, but I do support it. Thank you.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** All right. We have a motion proposed and a  
41 second. We've had discussion. **Is there any opposition to this**  
42 **motion? Seeing none, this motion passes.** Emily, I am passing  
43 it back to you.

44  
45 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I suppose, for this agenda item then today, the  
46 only remaining question I have is -- It sounds like, based on  
47 the discussion, that we're also encouraged to work with the Open  
48 Ocean TIG folks, and I don't know if that's going to be

1 something that we can incorporate into this Gulf States or if  
2 it's something that we would do separately, but I guess it just  
3 -- I guess I would like to mention that, since we had that  
4 conversation, that I will certainly entertain a greater  
5 relationship in that arena, and we can always talk about that  
6 down the line, once we kind of initiate conversation.  
7 Otherwise, I am done with that action item, and I guess I would  
8 ask the committee if they are as well.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Any comments regarding that? If not, we have  
11 a few other items on the agenda, Emily, that are still in your  
12 court.

#### 13 14 **REVIEW OF ANECDOTAL DATA COLLECTION TOOL**

15  
16 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. I will take them. Bernie, if you can go  
17 ahead and bring up our draft anecdotal data collection tool, and  
18 then we can look at what this is. Just a little background on  
19 this tool. We have been back and forth in conversations about  
20 creating some sort of data collection portal or tool that can  
21 gather information from fishermen about what is happening on the  
22 water.

23  
24 In the conversations that we've had, it's pretty clear that we  
25 are not looking for trip-level data. I don't really want to  
26 know how many fish you've caught and how big they were each  
27 time, but what we're more looking for is information on sort of  
28 anomalous situations that are happening, like I'm seeing this  
29 weird trend that is not always happening, and we're looking for  
30 kind of general awareness information from our anglers, knowing  
31 that that information is not going to be quantitative in nature,  
32 but it's going to be more qualitative.

33  
34 The idea that we came up with was that this tool and the  
35 information that we collect would somehow then be incorporated  
36 either into the stock assessments directly or basically be  
37 presented to the stock assessment scientists so that they're  
38 aware, in case there is anything that comes up and they're like  
39 what are these trends in data and what is happening, and they  
40 can kind of groundtruth what they are seeing in the scientific  
41 data with the information that we're getting from our fishermen.

42  
43 We have created this tool in order to hopefully collect this  
44 kind of information, and I know there is a PDF of it in the  
45 briefing book, if that's easier, because I don't know if we need  
46 the live version.

47  
48 The idea is, and what we sort of discussed based on those

1 conversations, and I talked to some of the stock assessment  
2 scientists and our stock assessment coordinator at our office,  
3 is maybe the best way to approach this tool is to disseminate  
4 this tool to kind of the general public before we have a stock  
5 assessment that is on the roster.

6  
7 In other words, let's use yellowtail as an example. If we know  
8 we have a yellowtail stock assessment coming up, we will present  
9 this tool, and we will sort of push it out in our normal  
10 dissemination channels, and we will say, hey, we're about to do  
11 a stock assessment on yellowtail and let us know if there is  
12 anything going on with yellowtail that you know of, and so,  
13 hopefully, those fishermen will come back and they will give us  
14 some of that information.

15  
16 We will then sort of compile all that information, like we do  
17 with our public comments that we hear, and we will present that  
18 information to the stock assessment panel at their data  
19 workshop, and so, right now, at the data workshop, the stock  
20 assessment folks invite the fishermen to sort of serve as the  
21 liaison to kind of groundtruth any trends in data or anything  
22 that's happening, and so this might be a way for us to  
23 incorporate this qualitative data into the stock assessment  
24 process, so that the scientists that are doing that assessment  
25 will then be able to kind of groundtruth what is happening.

26  
27 Bernie just brought up a PDF of the tool, and it's called  
28 Something is Fishy, and so it will be Something is Fishy with,  
29 and that would be whatever stock we're going to try and collect  
30 that data on at the time, and, if you can scroll down, Bernie,  
31 it gives a brief description of what kind of data that we're  
32 looking for. We are not looking for that trip-level data, and  
33 we talked a lot about what kind of information that we wanted to  
34 collect from our anglers.

35  
36 We are asking for their email address and their name and their  
37 association with the fishery, and we based these categories sort  
38 of off just the general categories that we use at the council  
39 level, and then we didn't want to collect too much data or  
40 information on the fishermen. We didn't want to make that  
41 barrier to submitting information too high, and so we've sort of  
42 settled on this, and then, if you scroll down, we'll start to  
43 collect then that species information, or that information, and  
44 the first thing you will see is Item 5, which is a certification  
45 that the information you provide, or you are about to provide,  
46 is accurate to the best of your knowledge.

47  
48 I know that there is some conversation about whether fishermen

1 would report one direction or another, hoping that it's going to  
2 influence an assessment, and so we've added this in there, and I  
3 think the technical committee was pretty supportive of having  
4 that there, and then, simply, it's to describe your observation,  
5 and, again, I think, when you say describe your observation,  
6 that's a way to really make it clear that we're looking for just  
7 sort of a qualitative type of information that we can then  
8 summarize and present to the panel. Then, if you scroll down,  
9 Bernie, I believe that's all we're asking for, and so it's  
10 pretty simple.

11  
12 Then there is the general location. The other thing that we've  
13 done here is went back and forth on whether or not we just  
14 wanted state level or if we wanted regional or what we wanted to  
15 do, and what we settled on, sort of as a staff, when I kind of  
16 talked to some of the SEDAR staff as well, is that the best  
17 thing that we can do is use the same quadrants that we use in  
18 our -- I believe these are from the shrimp data quadrants. That  
19 might be the most useful way for us to collect that information  
20 about where these observations are happening.

21  
22 Then you can choose your location, and it's a very general  
23 quadrant of where you are fishing, and we also have the ability  
24 to upload photographs, if that is something that is valuable,  
25 and then this follow-up is this contact piece, and that is  
26 please let us know if we may contact you regarding your  
27 submission, and so, in other words, if we get a submission and  
28 it is something that is of interest to either the scientists or  
29 the managers, we will have permission to follow-up with that  
30 angler regarding what they are seeing, and so I think that that  
31 might be a valuable tool both in gathering more information and  
32 also in building our relationships with our anglers.

33  
34 There is the tool and a little bit of an overview about how we  
35 propose that we should use it, and I was just hoping for some  
36 feedback from you all on the tool itself and also on how we plan  
37 to sort of push it out, and there is the live tool.

38  
39 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Greg.

40  
41 **DR. STUNZ:** Emily, I think this is great. This is good. Just  
42 as an example, the cobia discussion we've just been having, and  
43 that's kind of stemming from something, and that sort of  
44 happened organically, and, obviously, we didn't have this in  
45 place to do that.

46  
47 I think about things like the gray snapper discussion that we  
48 can have and all the nuances with that, and that would be ways

1 to generate more information, and so I think it's a good idea,  
2 and I would definitely say test it and see how it goes. I am a  
3 little bit concerned that it might flood your email box, and so  
4 that's, obviously -- I guess you would just kind of have to see,  
5 because I could see where this could really turn into -- They've  
6 got to go through some steps in here, and I think that's good,  
7 and so that curbs just somebody like they might post on the  
8 webpage or something. Anyway, I support this.

9

10 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Robin.

11

12 **MR. RIECHERS:** I support it as well, and I think it's well done.  
13 I think the difficulty, having worn a hat like this before,  
14 where we take qualitative information on surveys and then trying  
15 to actually turn it into some useful information, either by  
16 summarizing it in some way or trying to see how many people have  
17 done that through time, using key words, algorithms, which are  
18 now available -- The good news is they are now available out  
19 there with different software packages that you can do, but I  
20 think that's the real difficulty.

21

22 You are getting a lot of information, and it's qualitative in  
23 nature, and how you turn it into something that is truly useful  
24 to management, and, also, because that's the part where there is  
25 an expectation that you're going to use it somehow, when the  
26 people deliver it to you, and then, if you don't meet on that  
27 expectation somewhere down the road -- You're building a certain  
28 amount of trust there, but it can go away quickly if you don't  
29 use it in some way, and so I think that's going to be the  
30 difficult part. It's certainly worth giving it a shot and  
31 seeing how it works.

32

33 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Paul.

34

35 **DR. PAUL MICKLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for recognizing me. I'm  
36 not on the committee, but I think it's a wonderful thing, and I  
37 do want to mention that my wheels are spinning now about how  
38 useful this can actually be, and the SEDAR process invites  
39 fishermen, both commercial and recreational, to the SEDAR  
40 process, and that's where they get some of this on-the-water  
41 qualitative stuff, and that's been a really good -- I think the  
42 scientists would agree that that's hugely beneficial, and this  
43 just widens that and provides more.

44

45 One of the interesting things I hear when I go to SEDARs is  
46 that, at least from the recreational side, is that they will  
47 change targets on the fisheries. They will start targeting  
48 something else, and that's a lag when it shows up in the data,

1 right, and so, also, this could be very beneficial in validating  
2 some of the MRIP data of that question in the interview, if you  
3 all have ever been interviewed, of what were you targeting.

4  
5 Maybe this could be brought in to actually validate that and  
6 provide that secondary qualitative level of validating that  
7 actual data, that quantitative part of MRIP, and so it gives  
8 that extra confidence level with some data points, and that  
9 qualitative kind of fits in there to give it a little more  
10 strength, and that's highly beneficial, but there is lots and  
11 lots of uses that I could already kind of spin on, but thank  
12 you.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Madam Chair.

15  
16 **MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, sir. I'm not on your committee. Dr.  
17 Mickle, the way you summarized this was exactly how I had hoped  
18 it would play out. That was the goal of the idea, was to try  
19 and get a broader scope of fishermen that you could possibly get  
20 some information from during a specific stock assessment, and so  
21 not just general, but here's what we're looking at and tell us  
22 what you think and what you've seen.

23  
24 Hopefully it can be interactive, where, if they're -- As they're  
25 going through that workshop, if there is a question that they  
26 have, that could be pushed out. You may get some responses  
27 back, but I did have a couple of -- A little bit of feedback for  
28 Emily.

29  
30 I just want to make sure -- You know, we talked before about  
31 maybe having a vetted list of fishermen that we push this out  
32 to, and we've had some back-and-forth about how we do that. We  
33 may have our APs that could be a vetted list or people have gone  
34 through the MREP program, a little bit of background on this  
35 management process and the stock assessment process works, and  
36 that was one thing.

37  
38 We have talked about, instead of that, maybe you just do a  
39 little computer-based training module that explains to you --  
40 Make sure you have the right expectation for how your  
41 information is going to be used and that you don't expect that  
42 somebody is going to take your number and plug it into a stock  
43 assessment somewhere, you know if you give a number, but that  
44 this is very much qualitative and a 30,000-foot view to help the  
45 scientists understand maybe something that they are seeing a  
46 trend with this or that.

47  
48 Then a more specific recommendation is, where you have the



1 different boxes in the Gulf, and I think it says please choose  
2 one, and maybe scroll down a little bit more, or maybe it's up.  
3 Anyway, wherever you choose your box, where you actually -- I  
4 would say you might want to say to choose all that apply to your  
5 observation. I am thinking more from the commercial  
6 perspective, and it may be a fisherman that regularly fishes on  
7 one trip from the Panhandle to the mouth of the river, and do  
8 you know what I'm saying? If that observation actually applies  
9 to that entire area, you would want him to be able to tell you  
10 that, he or she, and so that was my one recommendation there.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Greg, I think I saw  
13 your hand up.

14  
15 **DR. STUNZ:** Yes, I did, and I just wanted to add to that. It  
16 kind of falls along Leann's, and I agree. Being involved and  
17 having sat on a lot of the SEDAR-type panels, the fishermen that  
18 come there are great, and they contribute, but they don't have  
19 the wealth of knowledge across the whole Gulf, and so this kind  
20 of solves this, but growing in a variety of fields is this whole  
21 crowd-sourcing kind of way that things are going and the whole  
22 wisdom of crowds, and I just wanted to add that, when you poll  
23 enough people, largely, the literature is saying that you can  
24 get very close to what the experts would say, or even sometimes  
25 better, and so we're really playing to that.

26  
27 I am saying we've got to be careful, obviously, about using this  
28 for any type of management advice, but the point is these people  
29 that would contribute here know a lot more than a lot of us,  
30 and, collectively, they can really get down to the bottom of  
31 some answers to complex problems we may have, and so I'm very  
32 much for that.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Emily, I know this wasn't developed in a  
35 vacuum. Could you sort of summarize the response or the feeling  
36 amongst council staff? Is this something that council staff is  
37 enthused with?

38  
39 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I believe so. I think that every one of us has  
40 echoed the sentiments that Mr. Riechers had expressed, that we  
41 want to make sure that, if we are asking anglers to provide this  
42 information, that it is made useful in the stock assessment  
43 level, and we have also actually discussed -- If you think about  
44 Luiz came and give the results of the assessments that were  
45 recently done, and we could also consider incorporating a  
46 summary, so that you hear the assessment results and then  
47 potentially you hear what the anglers are saying.

48

1 There are different levels that we can use this information to  
2 make people or -- Either the managers or the scientists aware of  
3 it, but I would say that, overall, the council staff has been  
4 positive to this effort.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you. We have another question from  
7 Greg.

8  
9 **DR. STUNZ:** Sorry. I forgot to make my main point, and that was  
10 that a person that we just put on the -- Well, I guess we don't  
11 want to announce it, but, a person we put on the SSC, their  
12 expertise revolves around this, where you have very limited data  
13 and you poll people, and, using pretty sophisticated models, you  
14 can get at some answers, and so we will have expertise that gets  
15 at some of the information that you will be driving on our SSC  
16 coming up.

17  
18 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Kevin.

19  
20 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not on your  
21 committee. I just had a couple of comments, Emily. Good job.  
22 As you said, it's kind of a start, and we've been talking about  
23 using angler-provided information, and so this could generate  
24 some excitement, or certainly some throughput, and it would be  
25 worthwhile, I think, to the anglers.

26  
27 Going back to some of the comments that have already been made  
28 and addressing that, to help with the drilling down of the data  
29 and to help parse out the data, you might want to add one or two  
30 more questions on here to help do that, like species that  
31 they're interested in, and maybe we have a choice of the top  
32 eight or ten species that we commonly discuss, or maybe that  
33 changes based on the SEDAR schedule or something like that.

34  
35 That might be helpful, and another thing is -- I might be  
36 stealing your thunder a little bit from later on in the agenda,  
37 but having the ability to incorporate a link to this from like  
38 the Fish Rules app or maybe some of the other states' apps that  
39 have reporting and such, that maybe there is a link there in the  
40 future, a maybe you want to report on your observations today  
41 type of thing, and that type of thing might be helpful too, to  
42 help get the word out and get some more participation and such  
43 and information. Thank you.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** No more discussion?

46  
47 **MR. SWINDELL:** Can you scroll down on your listing a little bit  
48 on the screen? I want to see the listing of the people and the

1 box that they have to check as to who they represent. My point  
2 is, if you just -- If you're a private recreational angler,  
3 you're going to go out either on your boat or someone else's  
4 boat, and I know you all have heard me talk about this before,  
5 but I think, as I went out and did red snapper fishing, and a  
6 couple of years ago it's been, there were six of us on the  
7 vessel. That vessel had to have a deckhand to give us the right  
8 rods and to change hooks and to take off fish and do all the  
9 descending devices and everything else.

10  
11 I had no earthly idea when I got back just how many fish were  
12 caught and how many fish were let go with what descending  
13 device, et cetera, and why don't you put on there at least that  
14 you can -- If the MRIP people are doing this data gathering, why  
15 not also add a box for vessel captain or deckhand? The deckhand  
16 person can tell you immediately how many total fish were caught  
17 and how many fish they had to release, and that's my suggestion.  
18 Thank you.

19  
20 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you, Ed. I think that was the original  
21 intent of the federally-permitted for-hire bucket, but I will  
22 defer this question to Emily.

23  
24 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Well, we will certainly look into that. I  
25 don't know that we're trying to collect information on the  
26 amount of fish that are harvesting and things like that, but I  
27 will look into the association with the fishery category for  
28 sure and try and make sure that I talk with the Science Center  
29 folks to see what is the most useful for them.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you, Emily.

32  
33 **MR. SWINDELL:** I was doing this for the private recreational  
34 part of the fishery, because people from Kansas may be down  
35 there fishing, and they don't remember, and they don't know how  
36 many fish they caught and how many had to be released and how  
37 they were released and so forth, and so I think it would be much  
38 better data gathering from the deckhand or the captain. Thank  
39 you.

40  
41 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Are there any more questions, or can we move  
42 on? Lieutenant.

43  
44 **LT. MARK ZANOWICZ:** I just want to echo everyone else's  
45 sentiments. This looks like a really great tool, but I just had  
46 one specific feedback item. For the general location of  
47 observations, for those boxes, for VMS data that I have seen,  
48 there is a lot of commercial reef fish and HMS vessels that

1 operate further offshore than those boxes, and I know we don't  
2 manage HMS, but they can probably provide good information on  
3 stocks we possibly do manage, and so it might be beneficial to  
4 have boxes that are further offshore. That way, if somebody is  
5 further offshore, they can provide spatial information on where  
6 they are seeing this stuff.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Are there any other questions? If not, Emily,  
9 let's go on to the next item on the agenda.

10  
11 **PRESENTATION - COMMUNICATIONS ANALYTICS**  
12 **UPDATE - TRANSITION FROM PAPER REGULATIONS TO FISH RULES APP**  
13

14 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay. Thank you. We will certainly tweak this  
15 a little bit and maybe give it a test run, and we will let you  
16 know what the progress is the next time we have a committee  
17 meeting, and so we can go ahead and move on to our presentation  
18 of our communication analytics.

19  
20 As you're aware, each quarter we track the analytics of our  
21 communications in the council office and sort of the amount of  
22 people that we touch on a quarterly basis. We'll start with our  
23 website.

24  
25 As you probably remember, we redid our website last April, and  
26 that was a pretty large effort, and you can see here -- When I  
27 did these analytics, it was just the first quarter of 2018, but  
28 I was able to finish out 2017. The last that you guys heard  
29 this report was in August of 2017.

30  
31 With our website, we continue to sort of follow a slight upward  
32 trend in our user shift, which is perfect, in both the sessions,  
33 and so the sort of unique visits to the site, and also the pages  
34 that people are seeing when they go to our site.

35  
36 It's also really interesting to sort of take a look at what  
37 people are using when they get to our site. Our federal fishing  
38 regulations that are on our website are the most popular,  
39 besides our homepage, and then it's interesting, because you can  
40 see sort of the next most popular was our January meeting  
41 briefing book, and then, as we go down, there is sort of just  
42 fishing regulations in general and our council meeting  
43 schedules, and so I think that this actually kind of follows an  
44 expectable trend. Most people are there for the regulations,  
45 but there is also a group of users that is there for our meeting  
46 materials and things like that.

47  
48 You will also see this little pie graph, and it shows the unique

1 users versus our returning visitors, and it's pretty average to  
2 have such a great proportion of unique users. I bet that a lot  
3 of those unique users are accessing our regulations, and our  
4 returning visitors, I am going to suspect, are most of the ones  
5 that are going for the meeting materials and getting a little  
6 bit deeper into the website and looking for council things.

7  
8 Here are our Facebook analytics, and, again, we're sort of  
9 following this upward trend. We have an increase in followers  
10 every quarter, and we also have a fluctuating engagement, and  
11 you will see that, in most of our analytics, we have this spike  
12 that happens around April. That is typically associated with  
13 our announcement of the red snapper season.

14  
15 This year's spike is not on here, but it's actually a little bit  
16 smaller than it has been in past years, because a lot of our  
17 communications actually directed folks to the state agencies who  
18 were responsible for the red snapper season this year, but,  
19 again, we continue an upward trend in our engagements on  
20 Facebook.

21  
22 Moving forward, this is our listserv for our email, and so we  
23 use Constant Contact, and so this is the number of subscribers  
24 and also the number of publications that we have had, and you  
25 can see that we're just looking at the first quarter of 2018 in  
26 the table, versus the annual numbers, and we have a really great  
27 open rate. Anywhere upwards of a third is considered to be  
28 really good when you are talking about an email listserv, and so  
29 people who are getting our emails are appropriately getting our  
30 emails is kind of what that tells us.

31  
32 Our YouTube Channel continues to have climbs in views. We did  
33 not produce any videos in the first quarter of this year, which  
34 is why we don't have any specific video views. However, the  
35 total views of all of our videos this year, and not just the  
36 ones that we have published in the year, continue to sort of  
37 follow an upward trend, and so we're doing well there.

38  
39 Moving on, our blog, which is a place where we kind of house the  
40 articles that we write and then disseminate those through  
41 different channels, continues to remain steady, with a slight  
42 upward trend, and so we're pretty happy about that.

43  
44 Then our newsletter, and our newsletter is the only analytic --  
45 Well, it's one of the two analytics that seems to be following a  
46 little bit of a downward trend. We have made some internal  
47 changes to the newsletters, and we brought this up to our  
48 technical committee when we met, and the technical committee

1 really actually sort of gave us the perspective that the  
2 newsletter is not necessarily a tool that we should be using to  
3 contact the general public and that it's actually something that  
4 agency personnel focus on more, and so each one of the folks who  
5 do fisheries stuff for a living that sat on that panel said that  
6 they really enjoy the newsletter and that maybe the general  
7 fisherman doesn't want to sit down and read five pages of  
8 newsletter things, but that people who do this for a living and  
9 they open up their email box and they are still considered at  
10 work when they are reading our newsletter might be the audience.

11  
12 With that, the sort of internal discussions that we've had is  
13 that maybe we're going to start gearing that newsletter to that  
14 audience a little bit more.

15  
16 Moving to our final metric, which leads into our next  
17 conversation, is our regulations app. As you can see, we've  
18 been following a downward trend in the use of our regulations  
19 app for a couple of years now. Our app is quite out of date,  
20 and the analytics are showing that that's true, and it also  
21 turns out that there are other apps that have been popping up  
22 that are gaining popularity, and so I just wanted to use this as  
23 sort of a transition to our next discussion, which is that we  
24 have decided to stop using our current app.

25  
26 We have that Gulf Council fishing regulations app that we have  
27 actually entered into an agreement with Fish Rules. Fish Rules  
28 is the industry leader, as far as we are concerned, in hosting  
29 the fishing regulations from Maine all the way down the east  
30 coast of the United States, and so we figured we would jump on  
31 that bandwagon.

32  
33 Now we are transitioning away from our old app, and we will be  
34 transitioning to using Fish Rules. To Kevin's point earlier,  
35 one of the coolest parts about Fish Rules is that there will be  
36 a section where we can add information like our anecdotal data  
37 collection tool, and we will also be able to integrate, if we  
38 have public hearings coming up on a species, we can always  
39 notice people through the app.

40  
41 If you are looking at red snapper regulations, there will be a  
42 notification that says that the council will be hosting public  
43 hearings on this issue, and then you can click a link to go to  
44 it, and so it's got some increased functionality over what our  
45 current app does, and so I think that is going to be a really  
46 nice way to sort of continue to build our community.

47  
48 Also, Fish Rules also already has tenfold more users than we do,

1 and so we will be entering into sort of a captive audience  
2 already, and we also will be working in the coming weeks on  
3 transitioning away and making sure that our current users to our  
4 current app can transition over to Fish Rules with ease, which  
5 will continue to be a free app from the user standpoint.

6  
7 Then we're also going to transition away from our printed  
8 regulations, and that's a little bit of how we sort of  
9 financially justify moving over to Fish Rules, is we have been  
10 printing less and less fishing regulations, and we will now not  
11 do a big run of prints that we then send out or distribute.

12  
13 We will be making postcards that direct people to this app or to  
14 our website, and we are always willing to print our regulations  
15 and send them to individuals if that is their preferred  
16 mechanism, but, as time goes on -- We didn't print our  
17 regulations for the first half of this year, a lot because I was  
18 out on leave and a lot because it presented a really good  
19 opportunity for us to figure out how badly people missed them,  
20 and I think we had less than seven people contact us looking for  
21 those regulations.

22  
23 I feel pretty comfortable in moving away from the paper  
24 regulations into the role of using apps and using our website to  
25 communicate those regulations, especially since our regulations  
26 change so frequently, and so, with that, is there any questions  
27 or discussions about our transitions over to the app or our  
28 communications analytics, and I know I kind of slid from one  
29 right to the other there.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Is there any questions for Ms. Muehlstein?  
32 Kevin.

33  
34 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you again, Mr. Chair. Again, I'm not on your  
35 committee. Emily, you said you had an agreement with Fish  
36 Rules, and did that agreement include any money, and what's the  
37 stipulation regarding if, for whatever reason, the communication  
38 problem isn't there and they don't upload information on a  
39 timely basis, and what's the out, as far as that, so you can  
40 kind of limit some of that PR?

41  
42 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** That's a great question. The reason that we  
43 have entered into a relationship with Fish Rules is, one,  
44 because they are the industry leader and they already have that  
45 audience, and the other thing that they have done, and they have  
46 done this for the South Atlantic, because the South Atlantic  
47 uses them, is I will be the one that is hosting those  
48 regulations through the Fish Rules platform.

1  
2 Just like our current app, and I'm the one that goes into the  
3 backside and make sure that everything is current, and so they  
4 have now given me control over the Gulf portion of Fish Rules,  
5 and so we don't have to rely on a third party any longer to make  
6 sure that those regulations are correct.

7  
8 The developer of the app is already hosting the Gulf  
9 regulations, and he would kind of contact me every once in a  
10 while to groundtruth what he was doing, but, in our official  
11 agreement now, we at the council will be responsible for hosting  
12 the Gulf federal regulations, and then, regarding the financial  
13 portion of it, yes, there is a financial contract, and I think  
14 it's costing us \$4,000 per year, and we're in a five-year  
15 contract, and that is the -- Strangely enough, that's about the  
16 exact amount of money that we were spending on printing the  
17 regulations, and so it kind of ends up being a wash, as far as  
18 our budget is concerned.

19  
20 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Are there any other questions on anything that  
23 Emily has discussed? I think we're getting near the end, but,  
24 Emily, I will pass it back to you.

25  
26 **SUMMARY OF O&E TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING**

27  
28 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okay, and so that leads us to our last agenda  
29 item, which is just finalizing the report of the O&E Technical  
30 Committee, and, actually, as we've gone through the other items  
31 on the agenda today, we have touched on everything that the O&E  
32 recommended, and so I don't have anything further on the agenda  
33 item.

34  
35 **OTHER BUSINESS**

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you very much. You did all the heavy  
38 lifting at this meeting, and I appreciate it. I have the last  
39 item, and let me tee that up. The council has evidenced a  
40 strong desire to reduce discard mortality, and the Outreach and  
41 Education Technical Committee has evidenced a strong commitment  
42 to also develop efforts on that behalf, and we have stakeholder  
43 groups that are making significant investments in time and  
44 effort and, in some cases, money to reduce discard mortality.

45  
46 One of the things we need, in order to be successful over time,  
47 is we need to establish a starting point. We need some data,  
48 and so the committee asked to have some data presented at this



1 meeting, and the next two pieces of data that I'm going to share  
2 were not available at that outreach committee meeting which was  
3 held just a few months ago, but they are available now, and the  
4 two focuses here are -- The first chart will show a summary of  
5 discard mortality by species.

6  
7 The second one will show -- I'm sorry. The first chart shows a  
8 discard summary, and this is a calculation, if you will, of  
9 discards by species and by year for both commercial and for  
10 recreational. The second chart will show the mortality rate of  
11 those discards in the same manner, broken down by fish and by  
12 category of fishing.

13  
14 Now, Clay, my intent is not to try to defend the accuracy of  
15 these numbers at this time. This is a first stab in developing  
16 data that can be used to measure progress towards reducing  
17 discard mortality, because I'm sure that everyone involved in  
18 this process has the same comment of how do we know if we're  
19 being successful and how do we know if all these efforts and  
20 time and money expended is generating any result.

21  
22 Our goal is to ultimately have tools that we can use to measure  
23 the success of these various forms of discard mortality  
24 reduction, and so that's what we're trying to do here, and I  
25 think we have the second chart up now, and could we go back to  
26 the first one, please?

27  
28 I will let everybody look through this. I won't attempt to  
29 defend the numbers, but you can see that we have a significant  
30 number of discards in almost every category, and so this is a  
31 worthy task for the council and the committee to pursue.

32  
33 Now, the second chart, if you could please put that up, the  
34 second chart is a first pass at trying to measure mortality by  
35 species for both commercial, charter, private, and headboat, and  
36 so, rather than get into the weeds about defending the data, we  
37 can see that any reduction would significantly improve the  
38 population of remaining fish in the ecosystem, and that's what  
39 we want to accomplish.

40  
41 I am going to open this up for any discussion on this data, and  
42 it's probably the first time any of us have seen it, including  
43 myself, and so I would like to open this up for discussion and  
44 comments.

45  
46 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** When I was pulling up the first chart, I wasn't  
47 sure what the source of that information was.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Very good question. I am going to pass that  
2 over to Clay, because I am not sure either.

3  
4 **DR. PORCH:** Those were the ones that we sent up that would have  
5 been our calculations, and Shannon is nodding her head, and so  
6 maybe, Shannon, you could interject, because I think you did it.

7  
8 **DR. SHANNON CASS-CALAY:** These come from the most recent stock  
9 assessment of each species, and they are the numbers that were  
10 data inputs to the stock assessment, and so the stock assessment  
11 may actually fit these data differently, but these are the  
12 inputs, and so these are the information that we received  
13 through data workshops, and they are in numbers of fish, and  
14 these are actually the strata that are available from the stock  
15 assessment, and these are five-year averages within each cell,  
16 and, in some cases -- I just wanted to point out, especially in  
17 that 2015 forward, they represent fewer than five samples, and  
18 so there may be -- They are a five-year computation, but there  
19 may be only one or two years of data represented in that cell.

20  
21 These are released. These are total discards, and so you need  
22 to apply a discard mortality rate to compute the dead discards,  
23 and that's where these numbers come from. These are the discard  
24 mortality rates that are actually used in the most recent stock  
25 assessment of each of these species.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** That would be Slide 2, if we can put that up  
28 there, please. Any other questions about this data? Now,  
29 recognize that this is a starting point. We want input on how  
30 we can improve the availability of data, and so this is  
31 important input so that we can provide a real useful tool here,  
32 and I am not trying to defend the numbers, and Dr. Cass-Calay  
33 isn't either at this point, but we're looking for feedback.  
34 Greg.

35  
36 **DR. STUNZ:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I do have a comment, because  
37 I think part of these tables were driven from a motion that I  
38 made at the last meeting or so, and what I was looking for there  
39 was related to Emily and a lot of questions that I think she was  
40 getting and I was getting as well for exactly what you pointed  
41 out. It was where is the bang for our buck and how many fish  
42 are discarded, and, if we use these tools, what would it look  
43 like.

44  
45 Shannon, first, I appreciate you putting these together, and I  
46 guess my comment, and please, Clay or Shannon, correct me if I'm  
47 wrong, but some of the discussion we had yesterday -- These  
48 numbers, like you're saying, are far from perfect, and it's

1 probably some of the least refined data that we have, because  
2 it's just very hard to collect these type of data, and I think  
3 Clay mentioned that as well, and so I agree that this is a good  
4 starting point.

5  
6 My real question would be sort of for Emily here, in a way,  
7 Emily and Shannon. We couldn't really present -- I am back on  
8 the other table now, if we use red snapper as the example, and  
9 we couldn't really present this to the public, because it's the  
10 handline east and west and the discard fleets during the closed  
11 season and such, but what I'm assuming, Emily, is that you could  
12 distill this down by summing these across to get at maybe what  
13 is the whole recreational discard and what is the commercial and  
14 so on.

15  
16 That would be my first question, and my second question that I  
17 would have is that -- Shannon mentioned that these were  
18 assessment-derived discards, in some cases, and, in all the  
19 documents I look at, the recreational numbers I see here are  
20 pretty close. There is a lot of differences, but they're not  
21 that far apart. That is not so much the case on the commercial  
22 side.

23  
24 What I see here are sometimes a lot less than what you see in  
25 other documents, and so I don't know what is the most  
26 appropriate numbers to use, and maybe there is not, because this  
27 data is still so -- It's a little bit more elusive or whatever,  
28 but I just want to make sure that what Emily has providing to  
29 the public is the best, up-to-date, summarized information we've  
30 got.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Right, and I'm going to pass this over to  
33 Emily in just a second, but just remember the overriding intent  
34 is to get discard mortality out of the closet and into the  
35 light, where we start to talk about this with some hard numbers,  
36 and so we don't have any great data to date, and this is a first  
37 pass to get feedback and information from the council on where  
38 we want to go with this. Emily.

39  
40 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you. My understanding is that this table  
41 is showing us the total discards, and, like Greg mentioned, it's  
42 sort of breaking it up into the different sectors, but also into  
43 different modes of fishing and different regions.

44  
45 Then the other table is showing the percentage mortality of  
46 discards, and so I actually feel like -- Please correct me if  
47 I'm wrong, but what I can do is kind of combine the two tables  
48 to come up with this really, really ballpark estimation of what

1 the actual dead discards are.

2  
3 If I have the information on total discards and then I have the  
4 percentage of dead discards from that, we can come up with an  
5 idea, and I can certainly craft some language in the tools that  
6 we use that does point to the fact that this is a very broad  
7 estimation, but we could be potentially impacting this number of  
8 fish, and so it looks like, from the combination of these two  
9 tables, we can actually derive a number of fish for the  
10 different species and the different types of fishing, and I  
11 would be comfortable finding ways to use that in my  
12 communications.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Are there any other questions regarding the  
15 data? Clay.

16  
17 **DR. PORCH:** Thank you. I just wanted to respond to a couple of  
18 the comments that were made. Some of this information, in terms  
19 of discard mortality rates, is fairly well-founded. There is a  
20 number of studies, and we looked at them collectively.

21  
22 The problem is, if you do a scientific study and you, for  
23 instance, demonstrate that venting cuts release mortality in  
24 half or whatever the number ends up being, we don't know,  
25 necessarily, how well those procedures are being implemented in  
26 the general fishing community, and that's the point that you  
27 were raising, and so that's the gap that we have.

28  
29 All we can do is say, okay, there was a venting regulation, and  
30 we expect that, at a given depth, you would decrease the release  
31 mortality rate by X percent, and then we would just apply that  
32 to the information we have on the depth of fishing, which, as I  
33 mentioned yesterday, is less than perfect, and so that's why  
34 information like what you might be collecting on your website  
35 and this web app would be quite useful.

36  
37 On the other hand, there are some other species where the  
38 discard mortality rate is not that well known, and gray trigger,  
39 for example, you saw that I think we assumed something like 5  
40 percent, and that is based largely, if I recall, on testimony of  
41 fishermen that essentially says they are indestructible and they  
42 can sit on the deck for a while and you throw them back and they  
43 are healthy, which seems like it makes sense, but we just saw a  
44 presentation at the South Atlantic Council where the depth  
45 associated with barotrauma was actually really high.

46  
47 If they are in deeper water, or I think over a hundred feet or  
48 so, you actually have a high fraction dying from barotrauma,

1 because, essentially, when you get the descended intestines  
2 coming through the mouth and stomach, they catch on the  
3 pharyngeal teeth, and so it ends up cutting them all up or they  
4 get snagged and they can't eat again, and so, potentially, it's  
5 a lot higher than what we've been assuming, and so I don't want  
6 to make it sound like there is not more work to be done.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Thank you. Are there other questions?  
9 Barring no more questions, that ends our presentation, and we  
10 are done. Thank you.

11  
12 **MR. SWINDELL:** Can I interject something?

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN DYSKOW:** Certainly. Go ahead.

15  
16 **MR. SWINDELL:** Mr. Dyskow, I really appreciate all the work  
17 you've done on all of this. I think you did a good job of  
18 putting it all together, and I appreciate you taking over my  
19 place on this committee, and it also helped you, I think, learn  
20 more detail about what's really going on, and so, maybe  
21 together, we can make this even more fruitful in the future.  
22 Thank you.

23  
24 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 20, 2018.)

25  
26 - - -