GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Webinar

SEPTEMBER 29-30, 2020

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TABLE OF MOTIONS

PAGE 31: Motion to have the council review IFQ data at each upcoming council meeting through January 2021 to assess the need for a possible emergency action due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The motion carried on page 33.

PAGE 62: Motion that council staff draft a letter to the NOAA OST recommending an examination (pilot program, other method) be used to examine whether those publicly-available sampling location catch rates are appropriate for application to the full shore effort, or whether an alternative method is (more appropriate/preferable/possible) for private access locations. Further, NOAA OST should prioritize development a protocol and automated check programs to detect and flag extreme or unusual values in MRIP/FES catch estimates and determine the source of those extreme values, such as input data or calibration procedures. The motion carried on page 63.

PAGE 105: Motion that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council instructs that management advice for Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper be derived using the unadjusted harvest estimates from the state surveys (TPWD, LA Creel, MS Tails n' Scales, AL Snapper Check and FL Gulf Reef Fish Survey) until such time as the causal factors and relationships explaining the disagreement between MRIP FES survey and the state surveys are established. The motion was withdrawn on page 110.

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The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened via webinar on Tuesday morning, September 29, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Martha Guyas.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
**ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**

**CHAIRMAN MARTHA GUYAS:** Good morning, everyone. Let's get right to it. Our first order of business is Adoption of the Agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the agenda? John Sanchez.

**MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** I would like to add an item to Other Business, so that we could take it up at the appropriate time, and I know this meeting is rather congested, full, and so, being that it's a committee of the whole, we can either do it, depending on how much ground we cover, at the tail-end of this meeting, if you would like, or we could take it up at the Other Business at the end of the meeting, being that it is also a committee of the whole, Full Council. What I would like to do is for us to take up a discussion on the CFA proposal, which I believe we are all in receipt of, and see how we wish to proceed with that. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. I've got that on the list, and, yes, if we have time today, certainly we can add that to the list. I also see Kevin's hand up. Kevin, do you have something?

**MR. KEVIN ANSON:** No. Operator error. Sorry.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** No worries. All right. Leann.

**MS. LEANN BOSARGE:** Martha, if we could, I would like to just get a quick update, during Other Business, on the plan for the SEAMAP trawl surveys for the fall, just to see what they're thinking, if it might happen or if it might not, and, if it's not, maybe what Plan B could be, moving forward. Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Sounds good. Anything else? Okay. Is there any opposition to adopting the agenda as amended, with these two additional items? Seeing none, the agenda is approved.

Next, we have the minutes. Are there any modifications to the minutes? I don't see any hands. Is there any opposition to -- Kevin, now do you have your hand up?

**MR. ANSON:** I do. Thank you. Just so that it's clear, there was a big gap that was missing during the Reef Fish Committee, and, just so it's clear to the audience, in case there's any question about that gap, we have things in place now that -- Evidently there was a technical issue related to the recording of the minutes that the person who types out the minutes wasn't able to either understand or hear or just a gap, an actual gap there, and so I just want to -- That is being addressed, and I just wanted to get that on the record, that there are two or three things and some backups, if you will, to record the committee meetings and Full Council meetings now. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks for bringing that up, Kevin. Okay. Noting that, is there any opposition to adopting the minutes, or approving the minutes, I guess as written, but it sounds like there were some issues with them? Seeing none, we will move on from the minutes.

Of course, next on our agenda is the Action Guide, but I think I would like to hit that as we go through each item, and we have a bit of a marathon day in front of us, and so I think, as we go into each agenda item, it probably would be nice to have a brief introduction as to what's in front of us and what the council needs to consider, and so let's move into Tab B, Number 4, Review of Reef Fish Landings, and, Peter, I assume you're going to go through these for us?

**MR. PETER HOOD:** Yes, I am.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Take it away.

## REVIEW OF REEF FISH LANDINGS

**MR. HOOD:** Okay. Thanks. Today we have the report, and so what I'm going to do is I'm going to first go over the commercial landings, followed by the recreational landings, and then landings for species with stock ACLs.

For the commercial landings, gray triggerfish is currently at 62.5 percent of the ACL, as of this week, or for last week, and, for greater amberjack, it's at about 52 percent of the ACL, and, if you look at that table below that says "2019 Final Landings", you will see that neither species last year exceeded its ACL.

If you scroll down, assuming then -- I'm not sure what happened, and my screen is totally frozen up, but the next set of tables should be for gag, red grouper, and red snapper. These are IFQ

species, and Dr. Stephen will be providing a presentation that goes into this a little bit in more detail.

Briefly, for the 2020, gag is about at 42 percent of the quota, and that compares to, over the course of the year, landing 57 percent in 2019. The red grouper, about 52 percent of the quota has been caught so far, and that compares to 68 percent landed in 2019, and then, finally, for red snapper, about 70 percent of the quota has been harvested, with about three months left to go in the year, and, last year, if you look at that lower table, you can see that almost all of the quota was landed, at 99.4 percent of the quota.

For the recreational data, we don't have the Wave 2 data, because of sampling issues due to COVID, and we don't have Wave 3, and so what I'm going to say is going to be somewhat limited. For greater amberjack, which we have here, remember the season starts on August 1, and so we don't have anything yet, in terms of landings for the 2020/2021 fishing year, and so the fishing year that has just started. Also, remember that there's a closure from November 1 through April 30 and then another closure from June 1 to July 31.

Really, all we have for landings is the summer and fall of last year and then May, and then May is incomplete, because we don't have the Wave 3 data yet.

What this table shows is that 35 percent of the ACL has been landed, or at least reported landings, but that number is likely to increase after we get to the Wave 3 data, and, also, you can see that, in the 2018/2019 season, that 87 percent of the ACL was landed.

This table shows reported landings for gag, gray triggerfish, red grouper, and the red snapper for-hire component. Again, without the Wave 2 and Wave 3 data, there's really not much to show. Remember here that gag is closed from January 1 and opens on June 1, and so there's not really a whole lot of opportunity to get at any landings.

Gray triggerfish was closed in January and February, and it was open from March 1 to May 1, and then it was closed on May 2, and that was based on projections done earlier in the year. We reviewed gray triggerfish landings and tried to come up with an estimate of what had been caught, and we found that there were fish, and so we were able to reopen gray triggerfish for a fall season from September 1 through October 25. This just shows 2019 data, and, with the exception of gray triggerfish, you can

see that none of these species exceeded their ACL last year.

If you scroll down a little more, this is for stock ACLs, and, again, because we don't have Wave 2 and Wave 3 data, again, there's not much to say, particularly since most of these species are predominantly caught by the recreational sector. For all these species, the seasons are still open, and, if you scroll down to the 2019 table, you will see that basically all these species stayed under their ACL, except for lane snapper, and lane snapper is something that you started a framework action on, and I think probably we'll be looking at that at the next meeting.

I am going to go through a couple of figures here, and, basically, what we did -- This was supposed to be for the August meeting, but we did was we said, okay, what has been landed in August and reported to the council from 2017 to 2020, just to try to get a little bit of a feel for what's been going on due to COVID, if there's anything that we could kind of tease out there.

Basically, if you look at the greater amberjack figure, the top figure there, you will see that, while landings are a little bit less than what had been recorded in previous years for the commercial sector, it's still pretty much in the ballpark, and then the same thing goes for the figure below for gray triggerfish. It's a little bit lower, but, again, it's still in the same ballpark as the other years.

If you scroll down, the upper figure is for greater amberjack, and, as you can see, 2019/2020 isn't complete yet, and we still have some landings out. The 2018/2019 year, the reported landings were higher, and this is in part -- It's something that Patrick Banks brought up at the last council meeting, that these landings were a little higher than what we were seeing in 2019 and 2020, that fishing year, particularly in the fall, and we went back to look at it, and what we found was that, in 2018, there were more trips captured in -- That were intercepted that had gray triggerfish than in 2019.

Whether this is just a -- That there were, just by luck of the draw, fewer trips intercepted in 2019 and 2018, or if there were in fact more greater amberjack out there, and that's something that we really don't know.

Then the figure below -- Again, that is what was reported to the council as being caught in August for gag, gray triggerfish, red grouper, and the red snapper for-hire, and you can see, at least

for gag, gray triggerfish, and red grouper, we're quite a bit lower, but, again, I think that's, in part, because we don't have the Wave 2 or Wave 3 data to be able to present.

This is the last figure, and this is just for the species where we have stock ACLs, and, again, because these species are primarily species that are landed by the recreational sector, and we don't have that recreational information, the landings for these species are generally lower, because of that fact, than in other years when we've presented this information in August, and that concludes my report.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Peter. I see a couple of hands up. Let me first go to John Sanchez.

**MR. SANCHEZ:** I think my hand is up incorrectly, maybe from earlier. Sorry.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All good. Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Peter, I just wanted to commend you, first. I really like your graphs that you put in here. It's real visual, and it helps me a lot. I appreciate that, and thanks for adding a few of those IFQ species. I had specifically asked for gag and red grouper, just so that we can see -- You know, we think we have some issues with those species, and it would be nice to have both the recreational and commercial landings in this packet that you all present to us, and you all did that, and I appreciate it.

I have one question, and so you were talking about Wave 2 and Wave 3 data, and my brain functions in months, and I think -- I guess you were referring to COVID and some issues we had with sending people out to the docks to sample, and can you go into that just a little bit?

**MR. HOOD:** I can go into it a little bit. Clay might be able to speak better to it, but, for the most part, yes, in March, they were able to get some samplers out on the docks, but, at some point in March, with the pandemic, the thought was that it was safer not to be sending people out, and so, for Wave 2, which is March and April, then we don't have a complete set of landings for that time period.

Then, with Wave 3 data, which is May and June, we just don't have -- We just haven't got those landings yet, and I think they're like imminent, and probably they will show up at the office tomorrow, but we should be getting those fairly soon,

and, as that point -- As we get that information -- These pages that I am showing are also shown on our ACL monitoring page, and those get updated as we receive that information, and so, if you get impatient and can't wait until October, you can go in and look at our ACL page, and that might help you out.

**MS. BOSARGE:** A follow-up, Madam Chair?

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Go ahead.

**MS. BOSARGE:** All right, and so, in March, we got a few people to the docks. Then, in April, we probably didn't, but May and June, that you're waiting on some info from, did we get samplers out to the docks then, or were we still kind of shut down for COVID for May and June, and how are we going about filling in those holes?

**MR. HOOD:** That is something that -- I am not exactly sure what happened, in terms of having samplers on the docks in May, and I am going to defer to Clay, and he may have more information, and then I have no doubt that our Science and Technology crew at Headquarters is trying to look at ways to focus on how can we estimate landings for that Wave 2.

Certainly we were able to get information on effort, because the phone survey -- Sorry. The mail survey was being conducted, and so there certainly is -- It's not like we don't have any information, and there is some information there.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Clay, or maybe I think Richard Cody is on the line, if one of you two can speak to what's going on with MRIP, and I think that would be helpful to this conversation.

**DR. CLAY PORCH:** I can, but, if Richard is on the line, I would just be parroting what they've told us, and so I will wait and see if he's available.

**DR. RICHARD CODY:** There are a couple of things. The effort surveys that are done remotely, the mail and the for-hire telephone surveys, those continued more or less uninterrupted during 2020, so far, and so we were able to conduct those fairly well and get effort estimates.

With the APAIS component, the dockside survey, as Peter pointed out, we have significant gaps for Wave 2, which is -- We're talking about March and April, and then also for May and June, and the states were ramping up, I would say, to conduct surveys in Wave 3, and we're evaluating that right now, to determine if

it’s feasible to produce wave-level estimates at this point.

We do have a number of people that are looking into the gaps that we have, and, as I said, there are significant gaps for Waves 2 and 3, and also a little bit of Wave 4 as well, and so we haven’t published catch estimates at this point, because we really believe that we need to look into it a bit more, to see if it’s even feasible, and then the other thing is to give us an idea of what we’re dealing with, in terms of the gaps for producing an annual estimate.

John Foster and his team have been working with the consultants, at this point, to try and characterize the data gaps as best we can, and we have worked with the 2019 data, using it basically as a test set, pulling out data from various waves in that one, to test the programs that would work with the data, and that seems to be working fairly well at this point. We haven’t done what we would call the next phase, which is to do some imputation, and so, in other words, to try and fill in those gaps, and that’s where we are right now right now.

Cisco Werner gave a talk to the Council Coordinating Committee just recently, and, in that, he laid out that we would probably not be producing wave-level estimates, and we would go with an annual estimate as soon as we could, and probably on the same schedule as we would normally have for the annual estimates.

I don’t know if that answers your question, Leann, but there are significant gaps, and one of our concerns with the dockside survey is that the states have protocols that vary from state-to-state, in terms of social distancing measures and what have you, but, also, they have to take into consideration how busy a site is.

Some states have a large preponderance of very busy recreational sites. In those states, it is difficult to maintain a safe distance, and so we’re looking at things to see if there have been impacts to the numbers of fish measurements, the ability of a sampler to see and verify the catch, as landed, and just to conduct general interview information, and I’m sure the states can elaborate on their work. I am reporting basically second-hand what I’m hearing from the states.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I see Leann’s hand, but, real quick, Richard, just to be clear, I think what I have heard that Cisco said at the CCC meeting was basically don’t expect any more wave estimates for the rest of the year for MRIP, and is that accurate?

**DR. CODY:** Yes, that's correct. That's correct. I mean, there are significant gaps, and I think that we expect that, if we were to produce something, it's likely to have some caveats associated with it, and it's likely to change, also, and I would say, going down the road a bit as well, once we have 2021 under our belts, I would anticipate that we would revisit the 2020 estimates, in light of that information, because it would be more in line with, I think, a normal year, and so there's the possibility that, even when we produce estimates in 2021 for 2020, that those may change later on as well.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Richard. Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks, Martha. I just wanted to be clear, and I don't fault anybody for not going down to the dock and doing interviews, and I don't blame the states or the feds or anybody one bit for not sending their people out there, but I was just trying to get a handle on when we haven't been out there and when we think we're going to get back out there and what the game plan was to fill in the holes, and so I appreciate the conversation. Thanks.

**DR. CODY:** If I could just add to that, Leann, I think we will have a pretty good graphic that explains the gaps in the data available by the October meeting, if the council desires to have a presentation on the gaps.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I think that would be informative, if we can fit it, but I don't know if we can work that into the schedule. I guess I would look to Carrie on that one.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Yes, I think we can try to work that into the schedule, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Great. Okay. Any other questions stemming from our landings report? I had one for Peter, if you're still on the line, Peter. I was wondering if you could expand upon how -- I guess the gray triggerfish reopening, and I think a lot of people were glad to see that, but I was just curious if you could provide us more information about determining that reopening and how that was done.

**MR. HOOD:** Sure. Mike Larkin, who is our LAPP Branch, he got actual estimates of the fish caught through July and August through the Headboat Survey, LA Creel, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and then MRIP, although we have Wave 1 data, and you remember that gray triggerfish is closed, and, for Leann, that's January

and February.

To estimate the Wave 2, or March and April landings, basically, Mike was able to get effort data from the mail survey, and then he focused on effort from Alabama and west Florida, which is where most of the gray triggerfish are caught. He then took an average of 2018 and 2019 landings from Wave 2 and adjusted those down to account for an approximately 25 percent reduction in private effort and 75 percent reduction in charter effort to come up with Wave 2 landings estimates.

Then remember that gray triggerfish closed on May 2, and so, basically, Mike assumed that, from then on, and so that would be Wave 3 and Wave 4, that landings were zero, and so, all told, the actual and predicted landings estimates that he had totaled less than the ACT, and that then allowed us to consider a fall season.

Then, to project how long the seasons could be open, Mike looked at landings in past years, when there was a fall season, and he adjusted those landings to account for different size and bag limits to project how long the season could be, and that's how we came up with that September 1 through October 25 season.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Peter. That's helpful. Anything else on this item? I am not seeing any hands, and let's go to our next agenda item, which is Item V. Ryan, can you give us a quick action guide overview of what we need to do here on this discussion of fishing impacts due to COVID and potential emergency rule requests?

**DISCUSSION OF FISHING IMPACTS DUE TO COVID AND POTENTIAL EMERGENCY RULE REQUESTS**

**MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Sure. For Item 5, you guys are going to receive a presentation from SERO, and it's going to look at the data collected so far on impacts in the Gulf from COVID 19, and you guys should discuss these and note impacts that you're aware of on recreational and commercial and other industries and talk about possible solutions to help mitigate these impacts. SERO can assist with any requests for emergency rulemaking, as appropriate, as it relates to these COVID impacts and clarify that process.

Dr. Powers will also review the SSC's recommendations on applying a carryover provision for the commercial red snapper IFQ program, and you guys can review those SSC recommendations and make any additional ones to the council, as appropriate,

and, for this item, because of the proximity of the SSC meeting to this meeting, Dr. Powers is just going to verbally review that stuff with you guys. Madam Chair.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Ryan. All right. I think we're ready for Dr. Stephen, and so we'll get her presentation up, and whenever you're ready, Dr. Stephen.

**DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** While the presentation is loading, this is very similar to the presentation I showed you guys at the last meeting, and we have just updated some of the information, and this is on the IFQ species.

For a reminder, we looked at three of the key IFQ species in this presentation, red snapper, gag, and red grouper, and we took a look at the 2020 landings and compared it to 2019 and compared it to the average of 2017 to 2019. We are looking for landings as the number of pounds landed, and we're using kind of a trip proxy for the number of trips, which is based on the landings transactions that are put through.

We also look for landings at the ex-vessel total value, as well as the average ex-vessel price, and we have just adjusted -- The data from 2019 and 2020 is still in its current year, as we're waiting to see what the inflation adjustor would be.

For allocation, we're only looking at 2020 versus 2019, and this is new compared to the last presentation, and I didn't have this in at the time. For allocation transfers, we're going to look at the total value of the allocation transfers as well as the average price per pound, and we're looking at the number of pounds transferred and the number of transactions, and then I will conclude with some carryover considerations that we discussed before.

These are the red snapper landings, just to orient you guys again. We have the trip proxy in the upper-left-hand corner. The upper-right is pounds landed, and then the lower-left is total ex-vessel value, and the lower right is the weekly price per pound. The blue-dashed line is our 2020 value, and the black-dashed line is 2019, and the solid gray line is the average of 2017 to 2019. Then we put some upper and lower bounds around those values, based on the averages in 2017 through 2019.

If you look at red snapper with the trip count proxy, we're still having less trips than we had before, overall, but, if you notice, kind of the slope of the line is looking kind of similar

to past years, but we're just at a lower level, and so we think the rate of trips is approximately the same, but we just had less of them, in general.

When we look at the pounds landed, I want to point out that now, with more current data added to it, we're looking at 2020 pounds landed are very similar to past years, and it's overlapping the average value and coming very close to the 2019, and so, in this case, I think we're landing about the same amount at this point in time, even though how it was spread out might have differed throughout the year.

For the total ex-vessel value, we're lower than 2019 with red snapper, but we are approaching the average value of 2017 to 2019, and it does seem to keep picking upward as we get into more recent data, and so we'll continue to keep an eye on this and see what's occurring as time progresses.

In the weekly average ex-vessel price, you can see it's fairly different each week, and that's typically due to who is landing, where it's coming from, and what different dealers are charging for ex-vessel price, and so it bounces around quite a bit, and you can see that, in Week 15 and 16, we were really low for our average ex-vessel price, but now, as we're coming back, around Week 34 or so, you see that we're tipping up even greater than we had in 2019, and kind of the average of that is coming really close to our average 2017 to 2019. In this case too, I think we're starting to approach a little bit closer to what we would have seen without COVID.

This is the same four graphs for gag, and it's typically the same pattern overall, but I just want to point out a couple of things. When we're looking at the pounds landed, gag, in 2020, was fairly comparatively lower than 2019 and 2020, in general, around Weeks 15, 16, and 17, but, after that, around Week 19, we see a strong increase in the pounds landed, and now we're currently very close to the average of 2017 to 2019, but below the 2019 value. Again, this is a bigger difference than we saw during the last presentation.

The same thing with ex-vessel value, and we see the ex-vessel value climbing in the more recent weeks, below 2019, but above the average, and, if you look at the -- I was referring to the average ex-vessel value, and I think there is a mistake in this graph here, but it's a similar case, that the 2020 is going up slightly above the 2019.

Red grouper is similar to gag and red snapper, and I do want to

remind you that red grouper quota dropped in 2019 and 2020, and so some of what you see is the differences in the landings value due to that dropping quota, because this is overall landings and not a percentage of the quota landed.

If we look at comparing 2020 to 2019, in pounds landed, we're now above the 2019 value for 2020, and so it looks like we've recovered at this point. If you look at total ex-vessel value, 2020 values are, again, greater than 2019, and they're coming close to the average of 2017 to 2019.

Looking at the weekly price per pound, you will see that, originally, red grouper was at a significantly higher average price per pound than past years, in the beginning of the year, and that that dropped fairly dramatically after Week 9, which is where we're estimating social distancing and COVID impacts might have started.

As we're looking at more recent years, it's still fairly variable, jumping up and down, but it's well within those bounds. It's lower than 2019, and there's a little concern over the dip here at the end of Week 38, where it's dipping down, but it might also be due to -- The weekly average ex-vessel prices have to do with who is landing in that week, and that's extremely variable.

These are new graphs from what I showed last time, and there was a question about what allocation transfers are doing and how allocation was working, as well as the landings, and so we dug into this data a little bit.

For red snapper, I am going to orient you to the graph. Everything shaded in blue was what we considered a pre-COVID situation. In the top upper-left is the cumulative allocation total value, and the upper-right is the weekly allocation pounds cumulatively, added throughout time, and then, in the lower-left, we see the weekly allocation transactions, and that's how many different transactions. I do separate that from the pounds transferred, because not every transaction is equal to pounds. Someone might transfer one pound, and another might transfer a thousand pounds. Then it's looking at the weekly allocation price per pound over time.

To look at things with red snapper, we're noticing that the allocation total value for 2020 is very similar to 2019, and, right now, it's slightly higher than that, and that might be an influence of more people are out fishing, and allocation is going for a slightly higher price, as more fleets go out

fishing.

Looking at the cumulative allocation pounds transferred overall, we've definitely seen more pounds transferred in 2020, regardless of whether we have a COVID situation or not. Keep in mind that, because this is cumulative, some of those higher impacts that started earlier in the year, before COVID, are influencing overall the height of this line compared to 2019.

Then, looking at weekly allocation transactions, and that's how many different transactions we see, it's slightly less than 2019, but it's still fairly typical of what we should be expecting to see.

Allocation per pound, similar to ex-vessel price per pound, is very variable, depending on who is transferring what, and what we see here is that there's not a great difference between 2019 and 2020. If we smooth this out to months instead of weeks, we might see a more similar pattern between the two.

The same four graphs for gag, we do notice a little bit of a different pattern here. The total gag allocation, total value, is significantly less than 2019, as we're looking at it here, and this is due to two factors. When we look at the total value, it's how many pounds are being transferred, as well as what that price per pound was, and we know that that allocation price per pound, in general for 2020, dropped about twenty-cents a pound, and we had, overall, less transactions, or pounds being transferred, throughout, and so those are both going, together, to influence what you're seeing in that upper-left-hand graph.

That can be seen if we look at the pounds transferred in the upper-right, we see that allocation for 2020 is less than 2019 influencing it, and, if you look down at the weekly allocation price per pound, typically we're a little bit lower, which is also influencing that.

I do want to point out that, in 2020, we were lower, even before COVID, and so that might also have influence going into this, and we can't necessarily attribute all of this difference due to COVID situations.

This is the same graph for red grouper, and, actually, they're a similar story to what we saw for gag. We have, overall, a difference in allocation total value that's being driven both by a decrease in the average allocation price per pound and the number of pounds transferred.

Here, we saw there is also close to a twenty-cent drop in the average price per pound for allocation, and we also saw a fairly significant lower amount of pounds being transferred, in general. Again, in this situation, we see that that average allocation price was lower even before COVID and that, currently, we're coming up a little bit lower, but it's somewhat variable, and so we'll be keeping an eye on this one as well in the future.

Just to give you an idea of all of the share categories and IFQ, what we did is we took a comparison of past years on the same date as the current year, and this was up through August, and so all of these ended on the end of August, and, if we look at it -- Let's take a look at red snapper first. In 2020, we had 54 percent of the quota landed. In past years, we have ranged between 66 to 71, and so below what we would typically expect, but not below by that much, in general.

If we're looking at red grouper, I want to caution you really to only compare it to 2019, because of the quota drop, and this is a percentage of the quota landed, and so it's not necessarily apples to apples overall, but you see that we're fairly much on target, and slightly above what we were in 2019 at this date.

Looking at gag grouper, we're at 40 percent at the end of August, compared to past years, which range between 34 to 47 percent, and so I would say, in general, we're doing fairly well throughout the year in how much we expect to harvest from here on out, compared to what's been harvested so far.

Deepwater grouper was 55 percent, and that's a little bit lower than we've seen in past years, which ranged from 61 to 67 percent, and this might have more to do with how market influences or different fleets that are fishing for deepwater grouper.

With shallow-water grouper, we're at 25 percent, currently, and past values were anywhere from 28 to 34 percent, and I kind of want to caution you. With shallow-water grouper, we don't typically see a high number of landings overall throughout the year, and I would assume that COVID would be impacting this a little bit more, in that sense, and so that lower number is not surprising to look at.

Then, for tilefish, we're at 38 percent, and, again, it's lower than past years, where, at this point in time, we were at 44 to 56 percent.

I just wanted to remind everyone of what we typically see landed within each share category over time in general, and so you can look at where we are now, versus where we typically expect to be at the end of the year, and so 2017 to 2019 are end-of-year values, and 2020 is our year-to-date, and we did update this through September 23, and so it's a little bit different than the past graphs, where we ended it at August.

With red snapper, we're at 70 percent, and, typically, we land about 99 percent, and I think we're well on target, at this point, to make that 99 percent by the end of the year for red snapper.

With red grouper, again, I'm going to caution you to really only compare 2020 to 2019. In 2019, we landed about 67 or 68 percent of the quota, and we're at 52 percent, and we've got the remainder of the year left to make up that difference.

For gag grouper, we're currently at 41 percent. In past years, we ended at 52 percent, and so we're definitely on track, I think, for hitting close to those same values by the end of the year.

Deepwater grouper, we are at 59 percent currently, and, in the past, we've landed between 84 to 97 percent, and this would be the one that we're going to actually switch and start paying some more attention to, to see if deepwater grouper is going to end up landing less than they typically do of the quota by the end of the year.

Shallow-water grouper, currently, we are higher than we were for the total shallow-water grouper last year, and so I would say that we're doing okay with this. Again, shallow-water grouper does not land a majority of their quota throughout the year, and then, finally, with tilefish, we're at 41 percent right now, and, in past years, we ended a 66 to 83 percent, and so we would need to make up that difference to be on track by the end of the year, and that will be another one that we're going to start paying a little more attention to.

That was the end on those, and I want to pause here and see if anyone has questions from kind of the landings, before we get into the potential for the carryover.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Jessica. Leann, is your hand up?

**MS. BOSARGE:** No, ma'am.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Any questions for Dr. Stephen? I am not seeing any.

**DR. STEPHEN:** I am not either, and so let's just continue on, and we'll go to the next one.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sounds good.

**DR. STEPHEN:** Now I see a hand up, I guess.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Ed.

**MR. ED SWINDELL:** Thank you for the presentation. Is this total landings, or is this recreational and commercial, or is it total landings for the two groups?

**DR. STEPHEN:** This is just commercial IFQ landings. No recreational is included within this.

**MR. SWINDELL:** It's just commercial.

**DR. STEPHEN:** Yes.

**MR. SWINDELL:** Thank you.

**DR. STEPHEN:** All right. If we can move to the next slide -- I see another question.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** J.D.

**MR. J.D. DUGAS:** You did say that we are on track to land 100 percent of the allocation, and it's at 70 now, but we are on track to land it all?

**DR. STEPHEN:** For red snapper, we look like we're on track, because we were at roughly 64 percent at the end of August, and, in past Augusts, we were between 66 to 71 percent, and so, with red snapper, I feel fairly comfortable that we're probably going to be landing the entire quota, like we do. The other share categories, we don't typically land 100 percent, and it's varied over time, and so, with the exception of deepwater grouper and tilefish, I think we probably are on track to do similar to what we've done in past years, and, again, red grouper we only really kind of compared to 2019, because of the quota drop.

**MR. DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you. I wasn't clear, and I was only talking about red snapper, but thank you.

**DR. STEPHEN:** Yes.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Dr. Shipp, is your hand up?

**DR. BOB SHIPP:** It is, yes. I wanted to ask about the tilefish category. Is this primarily golden tilefish, or does this include all the tilefish species?

**DR. STEPHEN:** The tilefish share category is made up of three different tilefish species. We typically see that golden tilefish is the predominant landings within that one, but we also have a couple other tilefish within it.

**DR. SHIPP:** Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Dr. Stephen, will you go back to that page on red snapper landings, where you have the four charts, or the four graphs? I have the printed version, and it's page 3 on the printed version.

I am looking at that top-right fixture right there, and the blue-dotted line is 2020, and so, when our market kind of froze up, so to speak, when we shut down the economy and the restaurants closed and things started to freeze up, I am seeing where that blue line diverges, or goes away from, the dotted-black line from Week 14 through 27 or so, and then it kind of starts coming back to the black line.

That's when the number of cases were rapidly increasing, and the restaurants were closed completely and things like that, and the price bottomed out, where the guys couldn't go fish, and so we're starting to see that uptick in cases again, and have you all done any projections on what that might look like for the end of the year on these quotas, if everything shuts down? Not everything, but the things that are important to the fishermen shut down again, i.e., restaurants start closing across the country again.

**DR. STEPHEN:** We haven't done any projections at this point. To dive into it, we probably need to kind of look at how much it impacted -- Which states are shutting down, and so one of the difficulties with this is that every state has some different social distance measures, and that makes it a little bit hard to model where we're going.

My assumption would be that, if things do shut down, we're going

to see that dip again, and probably not as strong as the dip that you see around Weeks 16 and 17, where most of the country was completely shut down, but that would be my assumption, and so most of my kind of predictions and moving forward is assuming that the country does not shut down again and we don't see an increase.

The other thing to keep in mind is that the dealers have really worked to kind of change, or modify, how they're working, because primarily they were selling to restaurants, and they kind of opened up and used unique avenues, and I think what you see also on the uptick is them figuring out how to move the fish as well in different ways than they have done in the past.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Patrick.

**MR. PATRICK BANKS:** Good morning. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not sure that this is the right time to discuss this, but the slide that showed -- If Jessica could bring it back up, but it showed the percentage of the quota that had been landed to-date, compared to the other years, and could she show that, please, one more time?

**DR. STEPHEN:** That should be Slide 10, I believe.

**MR. BANKS:** There you go. It's pretty clear that our IFQ guys are very good at making full use of the red snapper quota, but it doesn't look like that that's -- Well, maybe for deepwater groupers as well, but it's not necessarily the case for the other categories, and do you have any feel for why these groups, the IFQ shareholders, are not landing all of the quota for those other categories, and then, again, and this is more to Madam Chair and about when we can discuss this, and maybe this is not the right time, but how do we promote that segment of users to make full use of that quota? I guess, to start with, do you have any feel for why they don't land all of their quota in those other groups? Thank you.

**DR. STEPHEN:** The one that I probably have the strongest feel for is shallow-water grouper, and so it's typically the species within that are not a targeted species, and they're more of an incidental catch, when they're looking to target either red grouper or gag or some of the deepwater grouper species. I think that's typically why we see lower landings, in general, with the shallow-water grouper.

Red grouper, because of the quota fluctuations, is a little bit hard to make too many assumptions on, and, similarly, with gag,

and sometimes it’s the matter of whether the gag are biting or not, in order to land those moving forward.

Tilefish, I don’t have much to add, except for it is the smallest portion of our IFQ fleet, in general, and that may have a lot to do with the landings overall.

**MR. BANKS:** Then that second question of -- It’s more for Madam Chair on when we can get a discussion going on this, but I know we’ve got fishermen in Louisiana that don’t have their own allocation, and they are always clamoring for -- I’m sorry. Their own shares.

They are not shareholders, and they always have to lease quota from folks, and they’re always clamoring to get their hands on more fish, and, if we have these shareholders that are not making full use of the fishery, I would just like to have a discussion at some point on how we can get some of those fish that aren’t being used into the hands of folks in the industry who are actually out there fishing and want to fish, if they just have the quota. Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** That’s an interesting question, and I guess the one observation that I maybe would add to what Dr. Stephen said is, at least in terms of the groupers, with red grouper, we know we have some resource issues. Neither recreational nor commercial have been catching their quota in recent years.

Gag is the same way, and, just a few years ago, we were bumping up against that quota, and really no one is catching it now, and so it may be more complex than just people not being able to access shares, or allocation, for those two, but I see some more hands, and so I’m going to go to J.D.

**MR. DUGAS:** Yes, ma’am. I can understand why we can discuss carryover for these other species, but I do not understand red snapper, because, as I stated before, it looks like we’re on target to land all of the quota, and I’m talking about commercial only, and so I’m just a little bit confused, maybe, because I see, in the next three months, all the quota being landed for red snapper.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to point out something that maybe doesn’t come through in the graphs, and so the fishermen that I worry about -- I thought that Jessica made a good point, that I think our fishermen and our dealers

have done a good job of trying to find alternate routes to get the fish to the consumer.

Now, I think, if their markets had stayed frozen, and you saw that difference between the blue line and the black line, all their efforts in the world probably wouldn't have gotten them back to the black line, but, when things started to unfreeze a little bit, and our economy started coming back online, they were able to make it work and get back on track.

What doesn't show up in there though are the fishermen that may possibly lease all their quota and what they're feeling right now, and so there are some fishermen that don't own red snapper shares, and, at the beginning of the year, they lease what they are going to need to catch for the year.

Now, I would venture to guess that those guys are sweating bullets right now, because, if things start to lock back up, if the cases start to increase, and their markets start to freeze up again, they have probably hundreds of thousands of dollars of cash outlay at the beginning of the year to lease that quota that they are going, will I be able to finish catching this quota and pay off that loan that I have for the quota that I leased this year, or am I not going to be able to catch it, and, on December 31, it disappears, and I have a big, fat loan for something that I can no longer even go catch, and my asset is gone.

Those are the people that I really have been kind of concerned about, and that is probably why I will push for having a carryover for red snapper. That is why I am going to push for it, and I think that there's a real possibility that our markets may start to lock up again, as these cases continue to increase in the fall and the winter, and I think we better go ahead and give these guys a little insurance policy, letting them know that, whatever you've got in your account at that end of the year, for that guy that leased his quota and it's in his account, he will still have it, come the beginning of next year, to finish fishing on, if the markets lock up and he can't fish it at the end of this year, before the end of this year. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Roy.

**DR. ROY CRABTREE:** Well, I think that, if the economy locks up and COVID cases spike and we have shutdowns, there are going to be businesses suffering and losing money all across the country.

Coming back to J.D.'s comments though, I tend to agree with J.D. As I look at this, it seems that most of these fisheries are on track to catch close to what they caught in previous years, and so some of these fisheries don't typically catch their quota. Red snapper does, and they are likely to do that this year, if things continue as they currently are.

Bear in mind that doing a carryover is a very difficult thing, and it will require significant reprogramming. There are a lot of decisions that have to be made, in terms of how to do it, and it will distort the markets for next year, and I think you ought to think really carefully about that.

From what I am seeing, at the moment, I don't see a justification for doing it, and I think the complications that it will create and the distortions that it will put into the markets for next year, to me, is probably not worth it, and so I would recommend that we not do it. If things change fundamentally, and the markets freeze up, then I guess you could come back to it then with an emergency council meeting, but, at least for what I'm seeing now, I'm not sure there's a justification.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Roy. I think next on the list is Kevin.

**MR. ANSON:** Well, Dr. Crabtree just made a couple of the points that I was going to bring up, or question, and that was related, administratively, behind the scenes, I guess, if the agency was setup to do that. The market question, going into next year, was another thing that I was going to bring up, but I agree with J.D. and Dr. Crabtree's comments, that I also look at the numbers and think, barring any significant downturn, as Dr. Stephen had mentioned, I think they will be on track to meet or come very close to meeting the quota, and so thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Kevin. Jessica.

**DR. STEPHEN:** I just wanted to add that, much like some of the past discussion, when we were looking at the percentage of quota landed in general, keep in mind, for red grouper and gag, that these are also limited by the longline endorsement, and so that does limit who can fish for it as well.

Just in connecting with some of the comments from Leann, I do want to let the council know that we do have now a loan program, and we are in the point right now of processing loan applications, and that will be able to be included within our

new catch share system, when we migrate it over.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Jessica. Phil.

**MR. PHIL DYSKOW:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to support what J.D. and Dr. Crabtree said. If we're catching 100 percent of the quota, there is nothing to carry over, and, if someone purchased shares in excess of what he could realistically fish or sell, that's a bad investment, and we're not accountable for that.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Phil. Robin.

**MR. ROBIN RIECHERS:** Thank you. I think I'm going to echo some of what has been said, but the one thing I will ask Jessica is, since the benchmark is the 35 percent on the CARES Act, over five years, I am assuming that 2016 and 2015 did not look a lot different, especially on those fish there where we're not actually catching -- It doesn't appear as if we're going to catch our full quota anyhow.

As Martha and others indicated earlier in the discussion, it seems there is other issues there. Either they are mostly a species that's caught when fishing for other species, or there is something else going on, because we never reach the full allocation, and so, Jessica, Dr, Stephen, if you might answer that. I mean, do 2016 and 2015 look similar to the percentages that we would have here on the table?

**DR. STEPHEN:** Yes. For red snapper, they're definitely similar. We typically land at the 99 percent overall. When we look into the other share categories, keep in mind that, for red grouper, the quota was higher, but, in 2015 and 2016, we were landing between 60 to 84 percent of the quota, and, for gag, we were also similar in 2016, with 83 percent of the quota. 2015 was an unusual year, with 59 percent landed, but that does kind of line up with what we see in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

Deepwater grouper, that typically lands around the 85 percent, overall, and shallow-water is also typically at the lower percentage of landings. We were a little bit higher in 2015 and 2016, with 54 and 68 percent. Those were a little bit different than what we've seen in past years, and then tilefish bounces a little bit all over the place, when we look at the percentage of quota landed, and my guess is that has to do with potentially fishing for other species and when they switch to tilefish.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Jessica. Robin, are you good? Any

follow-up?

**MR. RIECHERS:** No, ma'am. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Just two points. First, to Phil's point about it being a bad investment, those fishermen that lease pounds at the beginning of the year, that's so that they can participate in their industry, their chosen employment, right, and they have to lease the pounds to be able to fish them, and you leased them in January, and you had no idea that a damn pandemic was going to hit and shut down your industry.

It would be like saying that people that are pilots in the airline industry made a bad investment. No. COVID hit their industry, and it shut down their line of employment, but, on a separate note, I would like -- I don't hear a lot of enthusiasm for a carryover at this point.

I would remind people that, when we went through the original 36, or whatever amendment, that was something that the stakeholders pointed out. We had it in the original carryover amendment that ended up being just a recreational carryover amendment, and we said we would take up IFQ carryover at a different point in time, and so I don't think this is something out of the realm or that industry has never asked for, but there's not much support for it right now, and I understand people's point of view on that.

I would ask that we get these charts updated and presented to us, since we're meeting every month, pretty much, until the end of the year, at each of our meetings, so that we can keep an eye on it and see if there are some trends that start to look a little more negative and if we need to pull the trigger on something. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Leann. I don't see any more hands, and I know Dr. Stephen has a few more slides, and so let's go ahead and let her continue on.

**DR. STEPHEN:** I will say that the rest of these slides have to do with carryover, and so, if we want to just hold them, I can present them next month, if we do consider going through with it, or I can go through them now, whichever the council desires.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Let's go ahead and go through them and see where this goes, and, if we need to revisit it at the next

meeting, I think we can.

**DR. STEPHEN:** All right. Just to kind of remind you, these slides are very similar to what I showed you last time. I do want to remind everyone that, currently, the IFQ system is being migrated to a new platform, and that means a new database and a new frontend and a new website. Our old software is end-of-life, and so we need to migrate it before the end of the year, or we will not have a working system.

Currently, we're expecting the transition to be somewhere in the fall or winter of 2020, and, because of this transition, we may be limited in putting too much difference, or changes, into the system, as we're going to be concentrating on making sure that the new system is working appropriately.

Some things about carryover timelines, one of the things we had talked about at the last meeting is the remaining amount of carryover will need to be calculated on December 31, and so we won't know the full amount, if carryover is chosen, until that date. A reminder that the IFQ system shuts down at 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time on December 31 and doesn't open up to the fishermen again until 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time on January 1.

With that in mind, that carryover will not be immediately available, because we'll have to do calculations on that, and so it would come, most likely, within the first quarter, if we did that.

Another reminder that the SSC does need to approve a new ABC with carryover, and we did do this exact same presentation to the SSC, so they're aware of where we're at, currently. With that in mind, we can have no negative impact to the SSB or the rebuilding timeframe for any of the stocks that we carry over, and we do need to consider buffers between the ABC and the OFL.

Last time, I didn't have these values, and I wanted to show people the different values of where the commercial quota is, the ACL, and the difference between the OFL and the ABC, just because of the point made with the SSC and what they need to consider in order to carry over.

The overall carryover questions we will have to answer if we move forward with it is whether we carry over in all or some of the share categories, whether it's a full or partial carryover of the remaining allocation, who would be the recipients of the carryover, which I think the council discussed last time, and the typical options are either the shareholders or the

allocations or those with landings.

Then how we would do that distribution, and these are very typical types of distributions, and we can do it proportionally, either based on landings or remaining allocation, or we can do it equally, and then, finally, the one wrinkle in carryover would be the impact on the multiuse carryover, and I want to remind you that we have multiuse between red grouper and gag, and this is frequently used by the fishermen, and so we would need to consider the impacts of that and whether the carryover gets carried over as straight share category or multiuse.

Then the other thing to keep in mind is we do have flexibility measures between shallow-water and deepwater for three of the species there that can be landed under either category. That's all I have for the carryover right now, and I would be happy to try and answer any questions related to that.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Robin, your hand is up?

**MR. RIECHERS:** Yes, ma'am. So, in the vein of some of the discussion that Leann has put on the table, and certainly, if we do reach a point -- Leann, certainly I think all of us understand, while we're looking at gross numbers here, there can be individuals inside of those gross numbers that are in that business situation and may have had a particular issue this year, and I think we're all dealing with special issues in our respective states and businesses, and so I think we all are sensitive to that.

I wanted to just ask the one question to Jessica, or someone, and, if you chose to do a carryover, and we answer these questions that are on the board here, what kind of timing are we looking at from the time we chose to do it until the time we might get it in place, and, I mean, I know we say the first quarter, but I assume that depends on us starting it at some X time, and so does anyone have an estimate of that at this point?

**DR. STEPHEN:** I will try my best to answer that. We wouldn't be able to even begin the process until January, and we would want to -- I am not sure -- If we could get the SSC to approve the carryover before the end of the year, that would take that out of the steps and the process of moving forward.

We would need to have definitively answers on the multiuse before we moved forward with that, because of the impact from that. I would say closer to the middle to the end of the first quarter, just anticipating those needs, and the other aspect is

that we do have to build in some kind of mechanism into the system to do carryover, and, if the council decides to look at the carryover in more detail, if you want to determine how that carryover is used, or it has to be used first, these are more in-depth questions that I don't have here that would take a longer time period. The more simple the options chosen, the shorter the timeline, in general.

**MR. RIECHERS:** Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. I don't see any more questions. Dr. Stephen, you've got a couple more slides, and is that right?

**DR. STEPHEN:** That was the end of my slides there. I don't have to go over these, and these were just there if someone wanted more in-depth information added on after the fact, and so they're just informational, and I don't have to go over them.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. All right. I think we've had a little bit of discussion about this item and whether there's an appetite for a potential in moving forward with an emergency rule at this time, and it seems like there is some interest in moving forward, and there is interest in not moving forward. Any other discussion on this at this time or motions?

**MS. BOSARGE:** Can somebody put this on our October agenda to look at this again? I know that agenda has already been published and noticed, and is it on there?

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Dr. Simmons.

**DR. SIMMONS:** No, Madam Chair. It's not currently on there.

**MS. BOSARGE:** If I could, Madam Chair, I don't know -- Do I need a motion to ask for other business for the next meeting? I mean, I would like to see -- I know I need to give somebody a heads-up that I just want to see a few updated numbers on that and how it's looking, and I want to see them in October and in November, and, for the life of me, I don't remember if we have a meeting scheduled for December right now or not, but I want to look at them at each meeting, and let's keep an eye on it.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I think we could do that. We also have a short, I think, presentation from Dr. Powers too, and so I guess the motion is going to be to whether we address this again, or review it again, in October, and I think we could dispense with that now, if you want to make a motion, Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Okay. I will try and make it just very general then, to give staff some leeway. **I would like to review IFQ data at each upcoming council meeting through 2020, and so this year's council meetings, to assess the need for possible emergency action due to COVID.**

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. While that's going up on the board, is --

**MS. BOSARGE:** I am thinking that, based on what Jessica said, maybe I should say through January of 2021, because she said we would look at it and do something in the first quarter of next year.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Let me read the motion as it's on the board now. **The motion would be have the council review IFQ data at each upcoming council meeting through January 2021 to assess the need for a possible emergency, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.** Is there a second for this motion?

**MR. SANCHEZ:** Second.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** It's seconded by John. Is there any discussion? Troy.

**MR. TROY WILLIAMSON:** This is kind of a general question to Dr. Stephen, I suppose. The implication of the carryover, how is that modified, if at all, by the funds that are being allocated, like in the RESTAURANTS Act? I know the Department of Agriculture has allocated, or they are making funds available, to various types of crops, and isn't there some COVID funding coming for our commercial fishermen, and does that alleviate the need for a carryover, or is it just in addition to?

**DR. STEPHEN:** I believe this would be in addition to that, as a separate action that we're taking directly for this portion of the fishery, but I might let Roy or someone else answer more about that. I am not as familiar with the RESTAURANTS Act.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Roy, do you have anything to add to that?

**DR. CRABTREE:** Well, I can't comment with respect to the RESTAURANTS Act, but there was the CARES Act that had funding for fisheries relief in it in the past, and that's funding that will go to fishermen, and then there was stimulus checks, the $1,200 checks, and all those kinds of things, and so I think that's an issue that Congress dealt with to try and mitigate that, along with additional unemployment insurance, and Congress

did all of that to try and mitigate some of the economic impacts of COVID, but I think whatever you do or don't do with respect to carryover would be separate and independent of that, and I think, Troy, it would be a judgment call for you guys to make, as to if additional mitigation is justified or not.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Roy. Robin.

**MR. RIECHERS:** Mine is just a more general question about the motion, and it could be to Carrie or Mara or someone like that. I mean, as we move forward into the rest of 2020 and 2021, certainly, in the near future, we believe we're still going to be dealing with various impacts of the COVID situation, both when it comes to IFQ programs, but also we just mentioned some of the recreational data collection programs as well.

We may want to check and see how other councils are handling this as well, but is there some place where we kind of notice an opportunity, so that, for instance, you could umbrella this discussion underneath that at each meeting, just in case -- Kind of a general notice, and I don't know if we can legally do that in a more general form, but it's just a question here to think about.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Who would like to take that, Carrie or Mara or someone from the NMFS table?

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I can try to take a shot at it. I think that's a good point, and we can work with Ms. Levy to figure out the best way to do that and then get back to the committee chairs, and I think that's a good point.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Carrie.

**MS. MARA LEVY:** I just have a question. I want to understand more what Robin is getting at. Does he mean notice somehow so that you are able to take action, or just a little more information as to what he's talking about, when he's talking about noticing.

**MR. RIECHERS:** Mara, I'm talking about -- Because I think the question was is it on the agenda, and could we fit it in and that sort of stuff, and it wasn't apparently on the agenda that was already filed, and my suspicion is we can find a way to fit it in, under Other Business or something like that, but that's all I was talking about and not necessarily taking action, because I realize we've got to be more formal about that, but just to have a placeholder somewhere in the agenda that helps

us, if there are some issues that have popped up from one meeting to the next and that weren't inside the thirty-day notice somehow, it would just give us an opportunity, and that's all. I am not trying to make it difficult for anyone here, but just kind of opening the door of a placeholder in the agenda somewhere.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Robin. Any other discussion on this motion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Next, I would like to go to Dr. Powers, and he's got some information about the SSC discussion on this topic.

**DR. JOE POWERS:** I will be very brief. The discussion was presented in the meeting summary, in the written version of our discussion, and, to be very brief, the SSC noted that, from a stock rebuilding and stock status standpoint, we kind of addressed these issues in general when we were dealing with some questions the council had about carryover for recreational catches, and so it is entirely feasible, the level of carryover that's being talked about here, to -- It would not impede significantly the status or the rebuilding of the various stocks.

The issues that we discussed more in detail were exactly the issues you're bringing up, about, procedurally, how do you do it, what are you talking about, in terms of carryover allocation of an individual, who held the lease, issues like that, and so I don't think, really, we're adding more to the discussion that you haven't already noted and that hasn't already been noted by Dr. Stephen in her final slides about, procedurally, what needs to get done, and so I will leave it at that.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thanks, Joe. Anything else on this topic? If not, we are --

**DR. STEPHEN:** The only thing I want to add is that we will need to have some discussion of how to have the SSC weigh-in on the multiuse and how that's carried over, because that is not necessarily a straightforward example.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Noted. Okay. If there are no other comments on this topic, let's go ahead and take a break. We're scheduled for one at 10:30 anyway, and we're a little bit behind, but I think that's okay. Let's go for a fifteen-minute break, and so we'll come back at 10:49. See you all soon.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** The next item on our agenda is some quick updates on the status of the Gulf State recreational data collection programs and the 2022 red snapper season. Ryan, do you want to go through the action guide on that, really quick?

**STATUS OF GULF STATE RECREATIONAL DATA COLLECTION PROGRAMS AND 2020 RED SNAPPER SEASONS**

**MR. RINDONE:** Sure. The designees from the Gulf states will provide a brief update on the status of their respective data collection programs and how their 2020 private vessel red snapper seasons went, and then Mr. Jeff Pulver from the Southeast Regional Office is also going to provide a presentation on the recreational red snapper landings, and you guys should ask questions and provide feedback as you think is appropriate.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, Ryan. I can start for Florida, and hopefully everybody is back at this point that's going to have to give just a quick update here. In Florida, our season was June 11 through July 15, and just a couple of notes.

You all have heard about our Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and that was still in place in June, but, on July 1, we expanded that to a state-wide reef fish survey, and so now we have the State Reef Fish Survey.

We have the June estimates for the Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and about 30 percent of our quota was harvested, about half-a-million pounds, and we're still working on estimates for the July portion of our season, but, by the time Gulf red snapper season rolled around for us, we were doing in-person sampling. The Gulf Reef Fish Survey mail survey was not interrupted by COVID, and then, of course, APAIS is going on in Florida as well. Kevin, are you on the line? Can you give an update on Alabama?

**MR. ANSON:** Alabama announced a thirty-five-day season that began on May 22, consisting of four-day weekends, Friday through Monday. In late June, we announced the closure on July 3, twenty days into the season, and we estimated our landings to be at 994,000 pounds through July 3, and so 11 percent of the quota remained, and so we have announced a three-day extension of the recreational season for October 10 through 12, and the 12$^{th}$ is a Monday, and it's a federal holiday.

I think I talked a little bit about it at the June meeting, but,

through the end of June, we had -- The average number of daily reported vessel trips was 56 percent higher than the average daily trips that were reported for the 2018 and 2019 season, and so we had a lot of effort going on this year, and that's the primary reason why we had to close, temporarily close, the season. That's all I have. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Kevin. Mississippi.

**GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** We had a very good season so far, and it's over with, and we basically closed our season. We started on the 22nd of May, and we kept them open seven days a week, until the 12th of July, I think it was, and we did -- Basically, we harvested a large amount in a short period of time, and the reason for it was we feel like there is obviously COVID -- A lot of people were out of work, and some had spare time to be able to go fishing. The price of fuel was extremely cheap, and I'm sure that helped a lot, and the weather was just absolutely beautiful in south Mississippi here at that time, and so we were able to harvest ours.

We opened back up -- We did close and re-address it, and then we reopened again for one day on the 5th of September, and then we closed it, and we're going to continue closed.

Our harvest this year is 142,526 pounds, which is 93.9 percent of our ACL, and we have decided not to worry about the other part of it. It's around 9,000 pounds, but we will hold on the 151,584 that we were allocated, and we will hold that, because we don't want to take a chance at going over our allocation, which we have never done, and I am proud of Mississippi for that and for our team that's working hard.

We had quite a few trips, and our total amount of trips that we are looking at is 4,372, which is -- On the last day, that 5th of September, we opened that one day, which was the holiday weekend, Labor Day Weekend, and there was 470 boats, which is unreal for us, and that's probably normal for most of you all, but that's a lot for Mississippi, but it worked out pretty good. We definitely -- We had 135,264 by private and 7,263 by state for-hire, to make our 142,526, and that's our report. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thank you very much. Louisiana.

**MR. BANKS:** We had a very good season as well, and I will start first with some of our data collection though, certainly, just like most of us, because of COVID, we saw a large increase in

the number of trips, but what we did see during our creel survey was far fewer people were allowing us to actually look at their fish and sample their fish at the docks, which is understandable. Everybody wanted to social distance.

We have far fewer actually hands-on samples of that fisheries-dependent information, but the season still went along really, really well, and our allocation is about 816,000 pounds, but we were paying back 31,900 pounds, and so we had a functional allocation in 2020 of about 784,000 pounds, and so that was the number we were managing to.

We opened the season beginning May 22nd for three-day weekends only, but we also included the Monday of Memorial Day, and then we ended up closing on August 13th, because we were approaching our quota, but, after getting all the data in and reevaluating everything, we saw that we had some pounds that we can still harvest, and so we reopened for the Labor Day weekend and closed on that Monday of September 7.

We ended up harvesting -- Of the 784,000 pounds, we harvested about 777,000 pounds, and so we left about 6,700 pounds on the table, and, just based on our estimates of effort and harvest per day, and the fact that, if we were to open for one day, it would really entice a lot of folks to go, and we decided that it probably wasn't the responsible thing to reopen, and so we left those 6,700 pounds on the table.

Other than that, it was a good season, and I think our anglers, by and large, are happy with it, and I only got one negative comment from anglers about the season, and it was basically the same comment that most of us get, why are you closing the season, and there is plenty of fish out there, and so, anyway, that's our report. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Patrick. Robin, do you have a report for Texas?

**MR. RIECHERS:** Yes, and thank you, Madam Chair. Kind of like Patrick, I will start out with -- Because it was in the earlier discussion a little bit today, and we'll maybe have a chance to give more of it the next council meeting, but, like Patrick, we did feel the impact of COVID some as well.

We did continue to run our survey with rove counts and some level of survey information, where we weren't necessarily, as Patrick indicated, measuring as many fish, and, even for a while, we went to not measuring fish at all, but we would still

do the interview and conduct the interview, and that started on March 23, and, of course, that was about the time we also lost a bunch of boat ramps, due to boat ramp closures, where they basically shut that down for a period of time, but then we're back fully operational now, and we have been for quite some time.

Now, as far as snapper season goes, we, as always, kept our state season, and we opened our state season on January 1, and we started running our state season, and then we opened the federal season on June 1 and projected to close on August 2, and that's what we did.

Our state-water season is still open, and certainly, under our last projection to National Marine Fisheries Service, which ran through September 18, in doing the every two-week notices to them, after we start on June 1 with the federal season open, we have our allocation at 69.8 percent of the total.

Obviously, you all saw a notice, and I will go ahead and address it here now, and it may also be appropriate to address at a later period of time, but, given notification from National Marine Fisheries Service to Texas regarding really the calculation of the 2019 landings, there is somewhat of a dispute over how those have been done, and so, unfortunately, we were not able to resolve that with the temporary rule in place, which basically has a thirty-day rulemaking.

Well, it's a thirty-day rulemaking, with no public comment, and, in order to preserve our options, our Parks and Wildlife Commission felt like, since we had not been able to resolve it, we would have to file suit in that case, and so what I would say is I hope that certainly we continue to talk, and hopefully we reach a place of resolution, where that doesn't have to move forward, but I just wanted to go ahead and say that here on the record, since we're also -- That will impact where we are in 2020 as well, and so I felt like I needed to at least say that right here.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Robin. Before we go to Mr. Pulver's presentation, I just want to pause and see if there are any questions of any of the state directors. I don't see any hands at this point. I think we are ready to move on to the presentation on red snapper landings, Tab B, Number 6(a).

**MR. JEFF PULVER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am an analyst with the Regional Office, and this is a short presentation, and it goes over the 2019 red snapper landings, and it's only about six

slides.

The first three slides here cover Texas landings, as was just previously discussed, and so the first two slides are very similar, and they contain two different data sources. These are for the private component landings on this slide, which includes private angling and state charter estimates. All landings presented in this presentation will be in pounds whole weight.

The first source is from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, or SEFSC. This dataset was provided to the Southeast Regional Office in late July of this year, and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center dataset contains Texas landings through the high-use season, which is through November 20, 2019, and I had to refer to Dr. Porch on some of this, but the Southeast Fisheries Science Center pulls Texas data through GulfFIN, and I believe it was uploaded by Texas sometime in May.

Using that dataset provided to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, they estimated private angling landings last year of almost 368,000 pounds. Using the same dataset, the state charter estimate was made by the Regional Office of a little under 8,000 pounds whole weight. Adding those two values together results in a little over 375,000 pounds for Texas in 2019, through November 20.

The second data source is information provided by Texas Parks and Wildlife through the EFP process, and so, as stated earlier, they provide the Regional Office landings on a bi-weekly basis, and so this is from the last dataset received, and also presented, I think, to the council earlier in January of this year. Texas reported private angling landings of a little over 260,000 pounds for 2019, and they do not include a state charter estimate.

This is very similar, and it’s the same landings as shown previously on the slide, but this is just for the private mode only, and so private angling, and I just wanted to show the difference here in this slide, and so we have differences in landings in weight, but also in numbers of fish between the two datasets, and so the dataset provided by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center contained a little over 65,000 fish, and landings were estimated at a little over 367,000 pounds, which is about a 5.6 pound average weight estimate for red snapper, compared to the data provided by Texas Parks and Wildlife for last year, which is a little under 54,000 fish, and roughly 260,000 pounds or so, which is a little under a 4.9 pound average weight, and so there is differences not only in average weight estimation,

but also in the number of fish used to calculate private angling landings.

This just kind of summarizes the impact of these additional landings from 2019, and this information was published in the notice earlier this year, and so, for the landings, using the Southeast Fisheries Science Center landings of a little over 375,000 pounds, it resulted in an overage of a little over 110,000 pounds. This payback was applied to the current year quota, and the revised quota was a little under 155,000 pounds.

This slide here goes over the private component landings for each of the five Gulf states in different units, and so the top table contains landings for Alabama, and the state survey used is Snapper Check. For Florida, it's the Gulf Reef Fish Survey, now referred to as the State Reef Fish Survey. For Mississippi, it's Tails 'n Scales, and so the second column contains the units reported through the EFP in pounds whole weight compared to the final column in the far right, which is the MRIP Coastal Household Telephone Survey, or CHTS, units.

These are the units used to monitor against the overfishing limit, because that was what was used in the previous assessment. In general, we can see that the CHTS units are higher than each of the state survey estimates.

The next estimate below that is for Louisiana Creel. For LA Creel, we only have a single estimate. Currently, the Southeast Regional Office provides us these LA Creel landings, and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center is in the process of taking over that process. As discussed earlier, the 2019 LA Creel landings were approximately 31,000 pounds over the quota for that year, and Louisiana has already taken an approach of reducing their current year quota to account for that.

Finally, we have the Texas landings, as reported by Texas Parks and Wildlife for the EFP and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center estimate, as already discussed. If you look at the bottom-right value, summing the MRIP-CHTS, LA Creel, and Southeast Fisheries Science Center values, it results in private component landings for 2019 of a little over 5.4 million pounds.

This slide here compares the landings for the different three sectors, and it compares the total against the annual catch limit, or ACL, and the overfishing limit, or the OFL. As shown in the previous slide, the private component landings were 5.4 million pounds, compared to the private component annual catch limit of 4.269 million pounds, and the private component

exceeded their annual catch limit by approximately 27 percent.

For the for-hire sector, which is federally-permitted charter and headboats, that sector landed approximately 82 percent of their annual catch limit, and then, finally, the commercial sector, as Dr. Stephen noted earlier, typically harvests most of their annual catch limit, and they captured approximately 99 percent of their catch in 2019.

If you look at the bottom row, if you add up these three sectors, it results in total 2019 landings of 15.65 million pounds. When you compare that to the values to the right of it, there's an annual catch limit of 15.1 million pounds, and it's 4 percent over the total annual catch limit and approximately 151,000 pounds over the overfishing limit of 15.5 million pounds. That's all I have at this time. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I will take any questions.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** All right. Thank you very much. I am going to give folks a minute or two to put hands up to ask questions, and I have a couple of just clarifying questions. The slide that shows -- I guess it's Slide 5 that had the MRIP-CHTS versus the state survey report, and the MRIP-CHTS is what was actually reported from MRIP, and it's not a calibration, so to speak, and is that correct?

**MR. PULVER:** Yes, and these are landings that are provided by Science and Technology to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and I might have to refer to Dr. Cody on this, but the telephone survey is no longer in use, and so these are landings from the Fishing Effort Survey, that are derived from that, and then that is calculated into the same equivalent currency, and so CHTS units, using the calibration model.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Then my other question is so, has NOAA published, I guess, an official determination that the OFL was exceeded and I guess whether that has also triggered an overfishing determination, and is that imminent?

**DR. CRABTREE:** If I could respond to that, Martha, and so that is under review at the moment, but that is normally what would be the next step to happen here, and then the council would need to take action to address that, which, in this case, could be to address the issues of the calibrations of the conversion ratios that I think we're coming to next, and so there hasn't been a letter sent or an official determination yet, but that is under review.

I also wanted to say that, with respect to payback, and so there were two notices that went to the Federal Register in the last several weeks, and there was the one with the Texas determination, which Robin brought up, and then there was one for Louisiana as well, and I believe you were all copied with the letter and reference to that as well, and both of those related to the 2019 landings.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Roy. Patrick.

**MR. BANKS:** My question, just briefly, just for Robin, just for clarification, is you had mentioned in your presentation that you all were sitting at just under 70 percent for this year, in 2020, of your allocation, and your state season is still open, and is that 20 percent of the original quota of 265,000 pounds or of that revised quota that NMFS is claiming to have? Thanks.

**MR. RIECHERS:** Patrick, that is -- You rounded up, but, yes, you're exactly right. That's 20 percent of the original quota given when the notification came, and, of course, our season -- Based on the numbers that we had, we felt we were in really good shape, and so I will just leave it at that, but it's 20 percent of the quota that we started with.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Robin. Greg.

**DR. GREG STUNZ:** I've got a question concerning I guess it's your Slide 2, where you've got this -- It's on the snapper landings, where you've got the Science Center estimate, and so you've got the Science Center estimate of 367,000, and then the Parks and Wildlife estimate, and I'm wondering if you could just explain a little bit better what's driving that estimate.

The reason I'm asking is, of course, many around the table know we are also running iSnapper in conjunction with Parks and Wildlife, and the history there is that has systematically run a little higher, because we probably capture components of the fishery that that creel may not, for example, but it doesn't run that much higher, and so I'm trying to reconcile how do you go up over 100,000 pounds between those two estimates.

**MR. PULVER:** I would ask Dr. Porch, if he could, to chime in here, and so the Southeast Fisheries Science Center pulls Texas data from GulfFIN, and that was, I think, uploaded in May, and the majority of the difference is derived -- It's actually in the difference in the numbers of fish reported for last year, and there is a smaller difference in the average weight estimation between the Science Center and Texas, and there's

also a small difference between the inclusion or not inclusion of the state charter estimate.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Greg, is your hand still up?

**DR. STUNZ:** No, my hand is not up. Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Robin.

**MR. RIECHERS:** Just a note. It's been said a couple of times, and I just want to clarify on the record that that data went up in early April and not May, and, while I certainly understand you all may not have gotten to it until then, but I just wanted to make sure that people heard that.

The other part to that is, and I don't know how we'll characterize what makes up more of it or less of it, but the weight change as well takes up a significant portion of it, and, again, I think the hope here is that we're able to resolve these differences quickly and we are able to know what we had in 2019 as well as exactly what we have left on the table in 2020, so that we can make adjustments accordingly.

**DR. CRABTREE:** If I could, Martha, and I don't think -- My internet seems to be down, and so I'm on the phone only, and I don't know if Clay is still on or not. Without getting into the details of any of this, I got the revised estimates from the Center after the June council meeting, and there is an issue with how the weights are calculated, but there also is an issue that the estimate of the numbers of fish in the GulfFIN database increased by I think around 11,000 fish over what was previously reported, and so this isn't just about assigning weights. It also is the absolute number of fish.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Roy. Clay, can you speak to this?

**DR. PORCH:** Yes, and my phone cut out, but, based on what Roy said, I can see where we are now. Texas uploaded more information to the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission site, which we downloaded, and it basically indicated almost 12,000 more fish, and so that's a big part of the difference in the estimate.

The other part is, as Jeff mentioned, our estimate of -- Where it says 375,000, that includes the state charter, and then there is the difference in how we calculate the weight. Texas calculates weight by taking the average size of the fish caught and then applying the length-weight relationship to that,

whereas we calculate the weight by applying their length-weight relationship to each individual length, and then we calculate the average weight, and it makes a big difference.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Clay. Are there any other questions for Mr. Pulver or on this presentation? Okay. Seeing none, let's, I guess, move into our next item in our marathon -- Hang on. Troy Williamson. I see your hand now.

**MR. WILLIAMSON:** I was -- I am not understanding the timing of the determination of the overage for 2019. It wasn't determined until when, in April?

**MR. PULVER:** Yes, sir. The final dataset was first sent to the Regional Office in July, and that contained final -- Well, Texas high-use data through November and landings and biological data incorporated in it, and so that was the first time that we received final 2019 data, was at that time.

**MR. WILLIAMSON:** That was in 2020?

**MR. PULVER:** Yes, correct. July of 2020 is when we received the final 2019 data.

**MR. WILLIAMSON:** Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Troy. Greg.

**DR. STUNZ:** Thanks, Martha. For some reason, it takes a while to get the hand raised, and I guess before you notice it or something, and so I guess this question is to Roy, since he wrote the letters.

You mentioned the letters went to Texas and Louisiana that we saw and that went around, and so was that the same, and the notifications, obviously, that went out, and was that the same for the other states as well, or I'm just wondering why Texas and Louisiana received those letters, or do we just not get those?

**DR. CRABTREE:** There are Federal Register notices, and then a letter goes to the state, essentially informing them about the Federal Register notice, and what Amendment 50 requires is that we make a determination of if there is an overage of the quota, and then deduct it from the next year's quota, and that's the payback.

In this case, Louisiana already self-deducted their overrun of

it, and we just basically formalized what they have already done into the Federal Register. Then, in the case of Texas, when we became aware that there were revisions to the landings, and they were much higher than previously thought, there were a number of phone calls and discussions that went on, and the notice went to the Federal Register I think in late August, and so probably about a month or a month-and-a-half after we got the landings notification.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Greg, does that answer your question? I felt like part of your question was about if other states got letters.

**DR. STUNZ:** Yes, and I was wondering what the --

**DR. CRABTREE:** None of the other states exceeded their quotas for 2019, based on the information we have, and so there weren't any paybacks or letters or Federal Register notices for the other states.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Anything else, Greg?

**DR. STUNZ:** No, Martha. That's good. Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. General Spraggins.

**GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Just looking at this, and I feel like, from Mississippi, we need to make one little statement here. Understanding that you all did the best that you could looking at things, but, obviously, with the numbers that they're showing between Mississippi of 150,000 pounds that we claim and what they say was five-hundred-and-something-thousand, and we would had to have about triple the boats we ever have and every day be able to do that, and we just want Mississippi to go on the record to say that we appreciate your efforts, but we do not agree with what the assessment is at this time. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thank you. Troy.

**MR. WILLIAMSON:** Since this information has been -- Regarding Texas and the 100,000-pound overage, since that's been available since July, what has been done to meet with Texas and try to reconcile these calculations?

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** I don't know who wants to take that, if it's Roy or Mr. Pulver or somebody from the Science Center end of the table.

**DR. CRABTREE:** I will defer to Clay on that. There were phone calls, and I spoke with Robin and Lance on a couple of occasions, and there were a number of email exchanges and conversations between the Science Center and some of the Texas scientists. If you want more details, Clay would have to respond to that.

**DR. PORCH:** I guess if you could be more specific what you're looking for, but, yes, we've had quite a few conversations back and forth, and I have not seen an update to the numbers from Texas to account for the additional 12,000 fish, but that's -- At this point, all I can say is, yes, there's been communication between my staff and Texas Parks and Wildlife staff and trying to reconcile the differences, but I haven't seen any further calculations.

**MR. WILLIAMSON:** I guess my question is have you all exchanged data and that sort of thing to compare numbers?

**DR. PORCH:** Yes, and we download their data from the Gulf States site, and so it should be exactly the same data, and we certainly sent Texas Parks and Wildlife the details on the methods that we're using, and so I guess the answer is yes there.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Robin.

**MR. RIECHERS:** I just want to add a little flavor to that discussion as well. I think the discussions have been somewhat frustrating on both sides, and I will share that, and I am not speaking for Roy and Clay, but I think they probably feel some level of frustration, as I know we do, but the answer to your question, Troy -- While, yes, there were some general emails back and forth, we have not yet been privy to exactly how we get -- When I say exactly, I mean from Point A to Point B and you actually see the total being added up to 375,616. That is where some of the frustration has been, and certainly, again, like I said, I am still hopeful that we resolve this issue, hopefully sooner rather than later.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Mara.

**MS. LEVY:** Thank you. Well, I don't want to be a killjoy here, but we do have current active litigation about this notice now, right, and so, I mean, I don't have any problem with you talking about the facts and what's in the notice, but I am basically going to advise the agency to just not have discussion here about conversations that went on and the things that happened

and the background. It's just not something that is appropriate for this forum at this particular time.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Tom.

**DR. TOM FRAZER:** Mara covered what I was going to talk about. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks. I have a general, before I go to Troy, question about timing. Obviously, the Texas letter is one thing, but Louisiana's went out pretty recently as well, and, luckily, they knew from the get-go that they were a little bit over last year, but it seems like, I guess, the formal communications about that might have been a little bit late, considering a lot of these state seasons were closed at that point, and I'm just hoping, for future years, I guess maybe that communication is a little bit more timely about overages, so that it's clear that all parties are on the same page before seasons are potentially over. I'm just going to put that out there. Troy.

**MR. WILLIAMSON:** I guess, to Mara's point, we're not trying to develop a record here for litigation, and I think more just in terms of cooperative federalism and trying to interact cooperative and collectively to solve common problems, rather than doing things separately here, and so, insofar as that's concerned, that's my comment. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Troy. I am doing one more scan for hands. Clay, is your hand up?

**DR. PORCH:** Yes, and I just wanted to say that we really can't report any earlier than we receive data, and so, the sooner we receive the data, the better it is for us to report and discover any potential disparities.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** So was that an issue with Louisiana? I am just trying to figure out why the --

**DR. PORCH:** No, and I'm just saying that the earlier -- In the case of Louisiana, they do things a bit differently, and so it's a little harder for us to know exactly what they did, and we're trying to work with them now to get that straight, but I think that, from the preliminary work we did, we would have come up with exactly the same numbers, but it's just Louisiana has a separate program where they collect size information, and so it's just a matter of us getting both sets of data, and we could do a check earlier, but, like I said, preliminary work suggests

that we're getting the same estimates.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, Clay. Kevin.

**MR. ANSON:** To that issue, I guess, of the Science Center reviewing the state data, I can understand, in Texas's instance, where they aren't collecting fish weights with each interview, and they're collecting lengths and then determining that based on a regression, but I guess, as we talk about Louisiana, I mean, these programs have been MRIP certified, and so I'm just curious, Dr. Porch, if you can, I guess, describe the process or the rationale for double-checking the numbers, so to speak, if the program has been certified, and is that something that will be done for every state program, I guess, as the data is available?

**DR. PORCH:** We do it anyway for stock assessments, right, and so we do participate, and we work with the Southeast Regional Office in quota monitoring, but we're also calculating landings for stock assessments, and so it's always important to understand how the estimates are calculated and make sure that we're on the same page there.

As far as certification goes, remember that, when MRIP certifies something, they are just saying that the design is appropriate if the assumptions are met, and they're not actually certifying the estimates themselves, and that's a conversation that I think Richard could chime in on.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Richard, I don't know if you want to chime in, but it looks like your hand is up. Go ahead.

**DR. CODY:** I just wanted to reiterate what Clay just mentioned, that that certification really pertains to the survey design, and so what it says is that, if the survey design is implemented as laid out in the design, or as documented, then it's a valid way to collect data, and it doesn't say anything about the vetting of the estimates produced by the survey. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Now I really don't think that I see any other hands. Just kidding. J.D.

**MR. DUGAS:** Thanks. A question. Due to COVID, has MRIP's programs been running 100 percent throughout this process? How accurate are their numbers?

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Richard.

**DR. CODY:** I can help address that. I did summarize, a little bit earlier on, about some of the issues that we've had, in terms of data collection, and there have been some gaps, and that's the reason for not publishing wave-level estimates beyond Wave 1 of this year, and so there are significant gaps in the data collection process, and we are trying to address those, in terms of our survey design specs and how it reacts to those gaps.

**MR. DUGAS:** So could we ask the question that the numbers given are 100 percent accurate?

**DR. CODY:** Well, the data that you're looking at is 2019, I think, and 2020 information we haven't made available yet, but, in terms of accuracy, we know that survey designs have certain -- That there is an underlying level of bias in nearly every survey, and so, in terms of where accuracy is concerned, it's very difficult to say something is 100 percent accurate.

If the design is implemented and the assumption is met, then you get a certain degree of precision, let's say, with those survey estimates, and so, I guess in short, what I'm trying to say is that we know that, for instance, the state surveys produce more precise data and more timely data. They were designed to do that. That's their job, but we know very little about the accuracy of the different survey methods, because we haven't really looked at the drivers for the differences between the estimates that are produced by those various surveys.

**MR. DUGAS:** Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Anyone else? Okay. I think we are ready to move on to our next stock in our MRIP-FES and red snapper marathon for the afternoon and late morning, and that is Item -- I guess we're on VII, the MRIP-FES calibration workshop, and so I think, first for this item, we're going to have a presentation from Dr. Powers. Go ahead, Dr. Powers.

## MRIP-FES CALIBRATION WORKSHOP

**DR. POWERS:** Thank you. This is a summary of the SSC review of some key issues in terms of the calibration, and we're talking calibration here is -- In this particular presentation, we're talking about the creation of a time series to be used in stock assessments that calibrates the current method FES survey with the historical records going back to 1980.

This is not red-snapper-centric. The examples that were given

to us were not red snapper, but it gives a good background of what the expectation is, in general, for how this affects stock assessment, and so a quick discussion of the statistical survey methods and then how that relates to calibration of the prior years, to get a consistent time series, and then a few examples, in terms of king mackerel and I think -- I have forgotten what the other snapper was.

Remember that basically all survey methods like this -- You are estimating two things, the catch rate and effort, and then you multiply the two together, and you get a total catch. Of course, the details are more detailed, more complex, because you're dealing with different strata and how you estimate it for different strata and how you adjust for missing data and things like that, but, basically, remember that we're talking about catch rate times effort.

A little bit about some of the acronyms that are being used here. In the old method of doing things, we had the catch rate was the public access dockside survey and the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, CHTS, and the new system is the Access Point Angler Intercept Survey, APAIS, and the Fishing Effort Survey, FES, and so those are the key things. I would say that the big issue has always been with the telephone survey, CHTS, and now how that is being addressed through the FES.

What are the basic differences? With the CHTS, the household telephone survey, it was a random-digit dial survey, where whoever answered the phone answers the questions, and it's for only coastal counties, and this then is adjusted. in terms of effort, to get it for non-coastal counties, in-state and out-of-state, and other issues like that.

There is a series of questions about household-level fishing activity, and the households are being contacted with no prior notification, and they expect an immediate response, and it requires trip-level reporting, and it's asking about effort, and it's not asking about catch rates.

Also, the biggest thing is it suffered from declining rates of coverage and response, and the primary reason for this, and the thing that is addressed with calibration, more so than anything else, and the basic factor is the use of cellphones, and large numbers of households no longer have anything other than a cellphone.

The FES is a residential mail survey, and it gives respondents time to consider their answers and determine who in the

household should actually be answering the question and in consultation. It helps in terms of the recall, and it requires summary reports, and it is designed to maximum coverage and response.

As I mentioned before, there's a need to get -- For stock assessments, you need to get a consistent time series over this period, and the FES and APAIS data -- That methodology entered in in 2018, and you need to calibrate the pre-2018 data, so you get that time series, and so statistical methods are used to do the standardization, and you base it on when both surveys were conducted and then adjusting for things like state, wave, cellphone, and other factors.

For those of you that know the stock assessment process, this isn't all that much different, statistically, than doing a catch per unit effort standardization. You are adjusting for all those factors for which you have information that you can adjust for, in terms of the historical perspective.

Now, what you will see here is the trends in the actual effort estimation, and the upper one is the FES to base private boat effort. The bottom one is the base that is traditional, and then the upper one is the calibrated.

As you can see there, as expected, the calibrated effort is higher, but, if you look at the next slide, if these are scaled to their means, and what this means is you take the mean of each one and divide each data point by that, you will see that they plot very nicely on one another, and what this means is that the trend that you're getting via the calibration is similar to what you had before, but the scale, as shown by the previous graph, is different, and, because the trend is similar, that helps, in terms of the stock assessment and being able to interpret historically what things went on.

One of the things that has been a criticism is that there's sort of a mismatch between the uncalibrated effort and what population -- Just basic population trends and fishing license trends, and you can see here the calibrated effort does tend to follow the trend of population and fishing license trends, which is what you would expect over a twenty-year period, that there has been increases like this.

There was a number of case studies that were presented to us at the SSC, and there's some terminology that we used there. Base is the uncalibrated estimate, and ACAL is the estimates where you were only adjusting the dockside survey portion of it, the

catch rate portion of it, and FCAL is where you are calibrating both the dockside and the Fishing Effort Survey, and so both the effort and the catch rate. We looked a trends in the landings and point estimates and catch ratios.

Let’s take king mackerel for an example. As you can see there, the base and the ACAL, the blue and the red -- Remember the ACAL is just calibrating for the catch rate portion of it, and you can see there that there is some changes from the base due to that, but there is a major change to the green, and that’s for the effort, the inclusion of the effort, and, as you can see there -- As I mentioned before, in the case of king mackerel, the trend, in terms of landings, is very similar, but the scale is higher, and you can see there that the scale is, in some cases, close to twice as high, particularly back in the early years. Again, if you scale them to the indexed to the mean, you get a very similar trend.

Remember that, also, one of the issues is the total number of releases, and that is affected by the dockside survey, but, again, the driving factor is in fact the effort survey, and you can see there that the release number also is quite a bit higher, in the case of king mackerel, than the base case, the traditional uncalibrated case.

Gray snapper is another example, and you will see similar results here, and the big change, of course, is the effort portion of the survey, the calibration for the effort, but the general trend is similar, but the scale is changed. It’s similar in terms of the releases, a similar sort of thing.

The SSC made a recommendation, and one of the things that is of concern is that, basically, the shore mode of the harvest and some limitations, in terms of the survey and the importance of the shore mode on the overall harvest, and particularly discards, and so the SSC recommended the possibility of a pilot program, or other sort of method, to try to ferret out how the sampling location catch rates are appropriate for application of the shore effort and whether there is alternative methods, or more appropriate or preferable or possible, for private access locations. This was basically a research recommendation to begin to think about investigating this.

One of the key things that the SSC noted is that there are outliers, and, even in the old method, there were outliers, in terms of catch and effort, that need to be identified and evaluated. Now, due to -- This program is run by the Office of Science and Technology at NMFS in Washington, and so there’s

only a certain amount of things they could use, and so what we were suggesting is that they try to identify some algorithm for identifying outliers that can be implemented so that would facilitate what individual analysts, and, when you do the stock assessment, they can be looked at in particular.

If there is a particular cell or wave or datapoint that looks like an outlier, you understand the reason for that and be able to adjust for it, if needed, in terms of the stock assessment, and so that was, again, more of a research recommendation.

The other key thing that we noted is that, for Tier 3a and 3b of the control rule -- Remember these are the data-poor stocks, where, essentially, you have to -- They were based on time trends of catches and whether those time trends related to a stable period where there was an increasing biomass or decreasing biomass, and there was a considerable amount of work that was done originally to try to ferret out which one of the stocks related to each one of those situations, and that was done by looking at the actual time series of the catches.

What that means though is that, with the new calibrated catches, that has to be revisited, because the hypothesis on which those Tier 3a and 3b control rules were based have changed with the calibration.

This was a general recommendation from the SSC about the calibration procedure itself, and, essentially, it’s saying that the calibration works through the assessment and that, ideally, what you need to do with the result of the calibration and going through the assessment is that’s going to generate ABCs and ACLs and so on, and that time series really needs to be consistent. The management time series really needs to be consistent with the stock assessment and reviewed by the SSC to generate the OFL and ABC for each stock.

Basically, this is basically just saying that the endpoint of this is to have a consistent time series for both the assessment and the management. That was basically it.

Now, as I mentioned, the previous motion, in many ways, in my personal opinion, is kind of motherhood and apple pie, because, of course, you want to have that consistency, but, as we already discussed today, there are many issues that remain, and that will be discussed more when we talk about the state calibrations.

The other thing I would mention is the scaling up of the catch

for each one of the original stocks is, in general, the Fishing Effort Survey is more effort, which means that the catches were higher than anticipated, but, because the trends are similar, what that means is you have -- From a typical stock assessment, you will say that the abundance is --

That the catch is higher, but the abundance is higher, and it shows a higher productivity, and so remember that, when you do the stock assessment, the catches go up, but you also change the status of the FMSY, which measures the amount of productivity, and so some of these things are going to be fairly robust, in terms of how those adjustments are made, but, in any case, the results for a typical stock assessment are going to be fairly predictable, because the catches go up and the abundance goes up, and, if there's a decline in the stock, that steepness of the decline will be larger, but, at the same time, the productivity will be larger as well. The potential productivity will be larger as well. With that, I will open it up for questions.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Dr. Powers. I see Dale has his hand up.

**MR. DALE DIAZ:** Dr. Powers, I might have a couple of questions, but the background material for this presentation is Tab B, Number 7(b), and, if staff can pull that up, on the very last page, there is a motion that failed, and I was just hoping that you could give us some background on the motion that failed and just explain it to me a little bit.

I have read through it, and I did not get to listen to the meeting, and I apologize for that, but I just kind of wanted to know what led up to that motion and explain exactly what that motion means.

The motion, and they just pulled it up on the board, and I'll read it real quick, and so the motion is that the SSC recommends that the FES calibration of the MRIP survey be used in stock assessments unless other credible landings information is available on a stock basis. In these latter cases, the SSC should be consulted at the initial stages of the assessment as to which time series of landings to use in the stock assessment. The SSC requests further review of state landings to MRIP calibrations as a means of verifying the accuracy of landings derived with the calibration to FES. That motion failed on an eleven-to-eleven vote with two abstentions, and can you just kind of set the table a little bit and explain it a little bit better, Dr. Powers?

**DR. POWERS:** I will have to dig back through my memory, but, basically, there was -- It's similar to the fallout of the state surveys versus the MRIP and so on, and the question is how you integrate in state surveys and what is the process of doing that, and, as I recall, the motion was essentially -- The objective of the motion, as you see here, was essentially issues of protocol, in terms of how that gets integrated into the SEDAR process.

A number of people I think felt like that that should be -- It should go through a SEDAR, and eventually through the SSC, but not in the original stages, and Ryan Rindone can maybe help me on this, in terms of the discussion, because this was defeated, or eleven-to-eleven, with two abstentions, but it was largely about protocol. Ryan, have I got that right?

**MR. RINDONE:** Yes, sir. Just to add a little bit, we don't normally put failed motions in the SSC reports, but the SSC members requested that this be included, and so that's why this is in here the way that it is.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Dale, did you have additional questions?

**MR. DIAZ:** No, and I think my other questions will be more pertinent to the next agenda item.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. I see a couple more hands going up, but I want to do a quick time check with Tom, since it is just about noon. What's your pleasure?

**DR. FRAZER:** I think we've got a couple of hands up, and we'll go ahead and entertain the two questions on the board, one from Kevin and one from Leann, and then we'll take a break for lunch.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sounds good. Kevin.

**MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Going back to Dale's question, I listened in to the discussion at the SSC, and I agree that it was, in part, due to process, as to why the motion failed, but I think it also addressed some concerns amongst some of the members as to the estimations that were made for the two species that were given as an example and that the SSC should be allowed an opportunity to weigh-in if other data, or alternative data, existed, to kind of have some judgment as to which one would be better used in the assessment, rather than waiting for it to go through the SEDAR process and then come out.

It could expedite the process by doing it, and so it was a process issue, but I think it was also related to some concerns about the data and the disparities between not only the state surveys, but even the Coastal Household Telephone Survey estimates, and so I just wanted to add that, and certainly, Dr. Powers, if you want to respond to that, you can. Thank you.

**DR. POWERS:** I think that's a good characterization. I mean, obviously, in terms of the debate that's going on in this forum, just in terms of the catch estimates, are ubiquitous. I would mention though that, when I refer to the SEDAR, and perhaps it's the old forum, when you went to a data workshop and an assessment workshop and then a review, and then you go to the SSC, and I think, in terms of some our responses, some of the SSC members' responses to this particular motion, having the SSC weigh-in -- I mean, there's no problem with having the SSC weigh-in, but it has to be early in the process, and, the way things are structured now, it's always late in the process.

If you're going to integrate in new catch information, that has to be early on, or else the assessment gets slowed down considerably, and I think that was some of the motivation for people, but not everybody. Obviously, with an eleven-to-eleven, there were multiple concerns, for various reasons.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Dr. Powers. Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My questions will probably be answered by either Dr. Cody or Dr. Porch, and so just to give them a heads-up. In the SSC summary from their July 8 and 9 meeting, I am trying to understand the differences between FES and our older system and how the magnitude of these changes and where they came from.

I always thought that it was mainly the effort portion of it, right, the actual telephone survey versus the mail survey, and that's where a bulk of the difference comes from, and then, when I read the summary report, the other piece of the reporting program for the private anglers is the APAIS intercepts, and so where you actually go to the dock and get the intercepts, and I always thought that that portion was simply for a catch rate, that you get effort from the mail-out survey, or the phone survey, and then you multiply that times your catch rate to get your landings, and the catch rate comes from APAIS.

In the summary, it says the number of changes in the APAIS, or Angler Intercept Survey, design in 2004 and 2013 required the development of an adjustment procedure to ensure the effort

estimate, and not the CPUE, but the effort estimates were comparable across the entire time series, and then, if you skip down to the next paragraph, it says, in summary, the APAIS adjustment process resulted, on average, in a 2.7-times increase in recreational fishing effort. Effort and not CPUE, but effort.

Then it goes on to say that -- I am going to paraphrase this, but those two -- The old APAIS system and the new APAIS system didn't run side-by-side like we did with the effort side of things, where we ran telephone and mail side-by-side.

They didn't run side-by-side, and so there were some, I guess, assumptions that had to be made about how to change it, and they actually went back and weighted effort, based on days of the week and time of the day and other things, and so, essentially, I guess they gave more power in the calibration to certain effort numbers than others. I need somebody to explain to me how APAIS, which I thought was simply for catch rates, is now being used to adjust effort by 2.7 times, on average.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Richard, I'm going to give that one to you, since Clay has left the meeting.

**DR. CODY:** Yes, and I can address that a little bit. Leann, as you correctly pointed out, there were two calibrations that were applied over the time series, and they had one that re-weighted the APAIS data, or the dockside survey data, and so, with the procedure that we used for the APAIS, we used what's called a raking procedure.

We re-weighted, or applied pseudo weights, to the data going back in time, so that they matched as closely as we could get them to match the survey design that we have in place right now, and so that ended up re-weighting the APAIS data.

I wouldn't say that it resulted in a two to three-times difference in its effect on the estimates, but the APAIS itself does have an effect on the effort estimates, because it's used to adjust for what we call off-frame effort, and so that would be -- In the case of say most of the states out-of-state fishing effort, and so they're asked a question dockside of what is their state of residence, basically, and so that's used to adjust for people that we don't call, or not call, but mail surveys to within the state.

Then there are some other adjustments that are done to allocate the actual catch to different areas fished, and so offshore

versus inshore, and that comes from the APAIS as well, and so there are adjustments there, but, by and large, most of the effect is due to the difference between the FES and the CHTS.

The adjustments that you're talking about are referring to how the model was applied to the FES over time. In the 2000s onward, it's used to show an increase in the amount of cellphone use and the decrease in the amount of -- Or the accessibility of angling households through landlines, and so that started around 2004. Then, in 2013, we introduced the new APAIS survey, and so those, I think, are the two dates that you are referring to in the report. There is a combination of both, but, by and large, most of the effect is due to the difference between the FES and the CHTS.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Just a quick follow-up, Madam Chair, and is that okay?

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Go ahead.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Okay. I know I'm getting in between us and lunch, but what struck me, Dr. Cody, was this 2.7 times, and maybe my memory is failing me, but I thought, in some of the data that we've seen, effort increased sometimes by sixfold, and, well, if the APAIS adjustment is 2.7 times, and I round that up to three, that's almost half the increase in effort that we're seeing as a difference in these new numbers that we're getting, and so it seems to me it does -- Whatever assumptions we're making in weighting these numbers, APAIS numbers, differently is having a big impact, and I hope to dive into that a little more, since we didn't have a side-by-side on those, and I would assume we're making some decent leaps of faith when we start weighting some things.

**DR. CODY:** I would have to take a look at that number, and I'm not sure what it's actually referring to, but we did see a differential effect between shore versus private boat, and the FES estimates for shore effort were much, much higher, and so I'm not sure -- I need to just take a look at that number, that 2.7, but, in general, catch estimates did increase on the order of three times, on average, I think, and that's broad, but I need to take a look at that number, to make sure that I'm understanding what you're asking.

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

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Ryan, I saw your hand. Is it to that point?

**MR. RINDONE:** Yes, ma'am. To that point, and so we were just checking the verbatim minutes, and, per the verbatim minutes, the SSC summary appears to be accurate, and, in the archived SSC materials that you can review, we have Mr. John Foster's presentation, and it's reflected in his presentation as well that that increase is attributable to changes that came about through the implementation and adjustment of APAIS. I think it's page 70 of the verbatim minutes, if you want to see what he actually said about it. Thank you.

**DR. CODY:** I can take a look at that during the lunch break.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Ed, I see your hand. Is it a quick one? I think we're going to -- It sounds like we might have to come back on this after lunch anyway, and Richard is going to do some research at lunch, and so, if you've got a quick question, we can handle it now, if you would like.

**MR. SWINDELL:** The call list, Dr. Cody, that you used from the FES comes from where? Do these states supply the fishery license people or what?

**DR. CODY:** I am not sure what you're asking here, but I can let you know what the survey does, or how it's structured. In general, we use the U.S. postal address database, and so that's the most complete list that we can sample.

**MR. SWINDELL:** (Mr. Swindell's comment is not audible on the recording.)

**DR. CODY:** We use that as our base, and then we use license information to augment our sample, or to refine the sampling, so that it's a little bit more efficient.

**MR. SWINDELL:** Okay. Fishing licenses, and is that correct?

**DR. CODY:** Yes, that's correct.

**MR. SWINDELL:** Okay. Would it help you to use vessel license owners?

**DR. CODY:** Well, we do use that, in the absence of fishing license information, in some states, and it's used as a way to get at matching license information, or known fishermen, with our base sample, and so we don't use that in very many of the states.

**MR. SWINDELL:** Okay. Well, I was just thinking that you might

get a little more information from a vessel owner than you would from each individual person that has a fishing license. Thank you. That's all.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Ed. Joe, before we break, do you have anything else to add, Joe Powers?

**DR. POWERS:** No, I don't.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. All right. Then I think, Mr. Chair, we're ready for lunch. If we need to, we can circle back to this item and address any lingering questions.

**DR. FRAZER:** I think the conversation will be a continuation, and it's certainly linked, and so we'll pick up as scheduled at one o'clock, and it's only going to be a forty-five-minute lunch. See you guys at one o'clock.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on September 29, 2020.)

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September 29, 2020

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

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The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council reconvened via webinar on Tuesday afternoon, September 29, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Martha Guyas.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** One thing, before I forget, is we do have a break scheduled at 2:30, and that will be a hard stop, and so just take a lookout for that. If we're in the middle of a discussion, I'm going to kind of put that on hold, so that we can take a break at 2:30.

I do want to go back to Ryan on the MRIP-FES calibration workshop. We didn't go through our action guide on that item, and so it probably would be good to, now that we've had a little bit of discussion and had the presentation from Dr. Powers, to reflect on why we received that information and then if the council, or the committee, would like to take any action. Thanks.

**MR. RINDONE:** Thanks, Martha. You guys had asked the SSC to have this workshop and to review the MRIP calibrations, and it was convened to demonstrate to the SSC the process of transitioning from the Coastal Household Telephone Survey to the Fishing Effort Survey and the effects of that transition and the consequences for the species that we used for examples, and that you guys should be considering the recommendations offered by the SSC.

If we bounce back to Dr. Powers' presentation, which is Tab B, Number 7(a), on Slide 15, there is the first of four SSC recommendations, and, generally, this recommendation would be from the SSC to the NOAA Office of Science and Technology, to recommend that an examination, like a pilot program or other method, be used to examine whether those publicly-available sampling location catch rates that are used in FES for shore-based harvest are appropriate for the application of the full shore effort or whether an alternative method is more appropriate or preferable or possible, whatever suits you most, for those private access locations.

Now, moving to the second one, and I will explain why I am moving to the second one in a second, the SSC also recommended that the NOAA Office of Science and Technology prioritize development of a protocol and automated check systems to detect and flag extreme or unusual values, like outliers, in the MRIP-FES catch estimates and determine the source of those extreme values, such as input data or calibration procedures.

Both of those motions passed without objection, and both of those are things that the SSC is asking that the NOAA Office of Science and Technology do, and so, Madam Chair, what may be appropriate, in this instance, is for -- On behalf of the SSC, if the committee agrees, for the council to write a letter to the NOAA Office of Science and Technology recommending the same as the SSC, if it's the pleasure of the committee. Madam Chair.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Ryan. Dale, I see your hand.

**MR. DIAZ:** Ryan, somewhere, in prepping for this meeting, I read something to the effect that there was some talk about challenges that small states have, and, whenever you talk about "flag extreme and unusual values" in MRFSS and FES catches, I think about the challenges of small states. Can you remind me, and where did that conversation take place, and is there any plan to look at how to deal with some of the challenges that small states face?

**MR. RINDONE:** It's been spoken a few times by folks from the NOAA Office and Science and Technology that, the way that MRIP is designed, it makes it a little bit difficult for it to accurately survey very small areas, and I will use Mississippi as the guinea pig on this, because that one has been talked about specifically.

The precision and accuracy of those estimates that come out of those small states is not like it is for states like Florida, and that's something that that program has struggled with, but, in the case of at least for red snapper, the Tails 'n Scales offers supplementary data to MRIP, to help try to address some of those shortcomings that are endemic to the way that MRIP is designed, and MRIP is designed to suit all the needs, and so not all states are the same, and Mississippi, being the one that's been talked about the most, is definitely a good case study for that. That's been discussed at multiple junctions throughout all of these reviews.

**MR. DIAZ:** I would just like to, at some point, make sure that that's going to get off the ground and actually be done. I don't think this is probably the perfect place for that, but that motion reminded me of it, and so thank you, Ryan.

**MR. RINDONE:** Sure.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Dale, I agree with you, and I think this motion may get the ball rolling on that. It may take a little time to roll down to the state level for specific species, like what you're talking about, but this will at least begin the process of starting to look a little deeper into some of the data that looks like possible outliers or looks slightly unusual, and I think that's the first step to really understanding any big differences that we see.

**I would like to make that motion, and so it's essentially the motion you have on the board, plus, at the beginning, put somewhere that the council would write a letter to OST and then the rest of the motion.**

**MR. RINDONE:** Ms. Bosarge, I have done that, if that's useful to you.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Leann, are you also looking for the previous

motion as well, the one about shore mode? Is that right, Ryan?

**MR. RINDONE:** Yes, ma'am, and so we're talking about -- There is four motions in Tab B-7(a) that Dr. Powers has starting on Slide 15, and the first one is the one that is a little bit long. It would be something like the committee recommends that the council draft a letter recommending that the NOAA Office of Science and Technology conduct -- We don't need all of that. We'll start with this, and we'll bounce back to that.

The committee recommends that the council draft a letter, or have staff draft a letter, to the NOAA OST recommending the examination -- Then you can highlight from where it says, "pilot program," and then all the way down to the end of the motion. Between "recommending an examination", let's change "the" to "an". Then delete "of".

At the end of that sentence, after "location", say, "Further, NOAA OST should" -- Then go to the second motion in the PowerPoint. Then highlight from "prioritize" to the end of the motion. Ms. Bosarge, I believe that reflects what you were trying to do, and is that correct?

**MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, sir, I think it does. You might have a little wordsmith editing to do in there, but that captures what I was needing. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. I think we've mostly got that on the board now. Let me read it and make sure that it makes sense, and then I'm going to look for a second here. **The motion is the committee recommends that council staff draft to the NOAA OST recommending an examination of a pilot program or other method be used to examine whether those publicly-available sampling location catch rates are appropriate for application to the full shore effort or whether an alternative method is more appropriate/preferable/possible for private angling locations. Further, NOAA OST should prioritize development of a protocol and automated check program to determine and flag extreme or unusual values in MRIP-FES catch estimates and determine the source of those extreme values, such as input data or calibration procedures.** Leann, are you good with that?

**MS. BOSARGE:** Yes, ma'am.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Is there a second for this motion?

**MR. SANCHEZ:** I will second it.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, John. I see a couple of hands. Richard.

**DR. CODY:** I just wanted to make a point for Dale and Leann's benefit. We have started to look at ways to flag the data, different ways that we can flag potentially outlying kind of estimates, and so that would include smaller states, like Mississippi, and it would include any kind of an estimate, and it wouldn't preclude that level of resolution. That's it.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Richard. Is there any discussion on this motion? I am doing a quick scan for hands here. I don't see any hands at this time. **Is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Ryan, have we -- Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to recommend that, at some point in the future, and it does not have to be right away, but that our SSC get some more in-depth presentation on the changes made on the calibration side for the APAIS changes, the 2004 and 2013 changes to APAIS which resulted in some re-weighting to intercept data and 2.7-times increase in effort for recreational fishing, on average.

I think it would probably be beneficial to have higher resolution of what those changes were, and maybe even like a case study, where you go through a specific species, and maybe one that doesn't have an extreme amount of data to go through, and actually parse through what got upweighted or downweighted and what changes came out of that and how those decisions were made, and I think that would be good for the SSC to look at in the future.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Leann. Ryan.

**MR. RINDONE:** A good portion of that was reviewed by Mr. John Foster during this workshop and is detailed in the presentation that he gave, where he walked through the progression and evolution of federal recreational data collection from MRFSS into MRIP and APAIS and CHTS, and then from there into FES, and so the SSC has reviewed a great deal, and I don't know if every nook and cranny, but certainly a great deal of what Ms. Bosarge is asking.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Leann, do you want to follow-up to that?

**MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks. I went through those presentations, and Dr. Powers gave us a little bit of that, but those are some

overall graphs that cover several decades of data, somewhat generally, and I would like to know what assumptions we made on this weighting of effort based on day of the week and weighting of effort based on time of the day and weighting of effort based on out-of-state anglers.

We need to look at what kind of assumptions we made there, and I think a case study is a good example of that, because that's when the rubber meets the road, right, and it's sort of like we approved all of these different state methodologies, but, when the rubber hits the road between the state and the federal data, the numbers that come out of them are quite different, and, if we don't ever start actually getting into the details of this stuff, we're never going to understand the differences, and so that's my attempt at starting to understand some of these differences.

Let's get into the assumptions that we made when we went back and started reweighting things and increased effort by 2.7 times when we went through that process.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Richard.

**DR. CODY:** I just wanted to address the 2.7 times effect on effort. That is not due to the APAIS alone. It's due to APAIS and FES, and so I went back and looked at John's presentation, and that's how it's presented, and so it may not have been that clear from the presentation, but that's with both the APAIS and the FES calibrations applied to the old time series, and so that's how that is done.

The other point that Leann made before lunch referred to the different blocks of time that we had, and we can certainly provide the council with additional information on what we did to adjust the weights. For instance, in 2013, we changed the survey design for the APAIS to essentially what it is right now, and so we had a fully weighted sampling methodology that was matched with the weighted estimation process as well.

We didn't have that beforehand, and there was a mismatch between the two from 2004 to 2013, and we had information available to us from the sample weights that could apply pseudo sample weights to the data to start the raking process, and so the way raking works is you have a reference period that is used to adjust the previous period, and so, for instance, you start the most recent time period and you adjust backwards, and we use ten-year blocks from 2004 backwards, potentially just to minimize the effects of one block to another and to contain the

variance within those blocks, and so that's part of the explanation, but I would be happy to provide the council with maybe some detailed explanations as to how the weighting was done initially and how it transferred backwards in time to the raking process.

**MS. BOSARGE:** That would be great, Dr. Cody. Thank you for that answer, but I would rather that you provide it to the SSC, because I don't think I'm smart enough to ask you the proper questions about it.

**DR. CODY:** Sure. Thanks, Leann.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Kevin.

**MR. ANSON:** I recall a presentation that was given to the council back maybe in 2015, giving it some time to actually collect some data and look at the impact of the new APAIS methodology, but I recall that, in 2015, and I think maybe Andy gave the presentation, potentially, where he looked at the changes specific to red snapper for the states, talking about the time block change and the impacts of effort. Dr. Cody, that might be something you want to look, or maybe council staff can go back and look, but it probably would need to be refreshed, but it did address some of the issues and questions that Leann has, as I recall. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Kevin, for that refresher. Okay. Where are we? Ryan, do you have anything else on this item before you give us a review of where we're going with this agenda item?

**MR. RINDONE:** The only other two things that I have are the last two motions that the SSC passed. The third motion is that a workgroup review the stock landings for Tier 3 stocks of the ABC control rule and reevaluate those assumptions, and just to say that the ABC Control Rule Working Group, which is composed of all of those people already, can certainly work on that, and so that will -- The SSC will take care of that within itself.

Then the last one is that the SSC recommends that management actions stay consistent with recreational landings time series used in the assessments and reviewed by the SSC to generate catch limits for each stock, and that's something that the council is currently doing. It's updating catch limits to be commensurate with the most recent stock assessment, and so that would just be -- The SSC is essentially just recommending that the council keep doing that, and so neither one of those I think

require specific action by the committee or the council.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, Ryan. Kevin, is your hand up?

**MR. ANSON:** No, and I will lower it. Sorry.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. All right. With that, then let's move to Item VIII. Ryan, do you want to go through the action guide for this one before we start moving into Dr. Cody's presentation?

**REVIEW AUGUST 5, 2020 MRIP RED SNAPPER STATE DATA CALIBRATION WEBINAR**

**MR. RINDONE:** I sure can. Dr. Cody is going to summarize the proceedings from the August 5 NOAA OST workshop for red snapper calibrations, and this is the fifth workshop that's been held to this effect. Dr. Powers will also review with the committee the SSC's deliberations over the material presented during this workshop at the SSC's August 11th and 12th meeting, and then the Southeast Regional Office will demonstrate some options for calibrating the state-generated harvest data for red snapper from their data currencies into MRIP-CHTS.

You guys should consider all of these recommendations and make your own to the council, as appropriate, and this is going to be a long agenda item, and so I would encourage asking questions as we go and try not to wait too long as presentations and recommendations are moved through. Madam Chair.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, Ryan, and so I will try to keep an eye out for hands, on that note. Richard, once your presentation is up, go ahead and start, but I may pause you, or have you pause, for questions as they appear in the queue.

**PRESENTATION**

**DR. CODY:** Okay. Hopefully everybody can hear me. The summary that I'm about to provide really is just a summary of the calibration workshop, and, as Ryan pointed out, it's the fifth in a series of workshops that we have held with the help of the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission over the last six or so years.

This is just some background and context. The first three workshops really focused on development of the survey methodology and getting to the point where we were in a position to test actual survey methodology, and so the first two

workshops really occurred in the first couple of months, and the first three within a period of thirteen months altogether, and so, just to summarize what went on in those workshops, basically, there was a focus on coordination between partners.

Then the idea that how we would focus on integrating specialized surveys into the MRIP family of surveys, we'll call it, and then a need to meet management and stock assessment needs, and so there's a dual purpose here of being able to enter managed stocks, managed catches, as well as provide information that is needed for stock assessment purposes.

The consultant report from the first workshop basically presented some options for survey development, and there were two basic options that were presented, and one was integrating improvements into the general survey, and then the other was focused on standalone specialized or targeted surveys, and, in general, I think the preference was the second option here, with Florida being a little bit different, in that it was more of a connection with the MRIP survey.

As I mentioned, the first three workshops really were focused on development of methodology and approaches, and so the fourth workshop, which was held in September of 2018, focused more on the implementation of the surveys going forward. By that time, the survey designs for all of the states were either certified or very, very close to being certified, and so basic methodology had been more or less agreed upon for the different surveys, and the focus was on options for calibration and producing an integrated Gulf-wide estimate.

Initial work by the consultants, in terms of coming up with a way to integrate the estimates, wasn't too promising, and it pointed out some issues with the differences between the surveys that didn't lend themselves towards an automated way, or a very efficient way, of integrating the surveys and coming with a composite estimate, let's say.

The methodology that they looked at is frequently used to combine information from different sources, and let's call it the composite estimation, and so, with that, calibration was discussed, in terms of the FES-based survey, since that was the survey that we had gone to in 2018, and, going forward, that would be the survey that was available to us, and that points to some of the adjustments that had to be made and the recent workshops, where calibrations were developed based on the CHTS.

The two methods that were essentially looked at in the workshop

were modeling-based approaches versus simple ratio-based approaches, and it was determined, at that time, that a simple ratio-based approach could be effective and available far more quickly than a modeling-based approach, and that would take time to investigate, and then the other point I would like to make is that a simple ratio-based approach didn't preclude pursuing modeling at a later point, and also refining the simple ratio-based conversions, as more data became available.

A point to some documentation here, and I did notice that, early on, there was some discussion of what certification actually means, and we have a policy and procedure directive out there that looks at the transition to state surveys, or to alternative survey methods, and, also, the certification of methods and what's involved, what it entails, and what it pertains to, and so I would point out that the transition plan is required in NOAA MRIP certification.

Once the survey goes through the certification process, a time is expected to transition to that methodology, and that's where the question of calibration comes up, because of differences between the current or previous methodology and new methodology, and so that's where calibration is part of the transition time, and it may be required if there were substantial differences between the estimates, as there are between the FES-based MRIP estimates and the state survey estimates.

Generally, the argument for calibration is that, when you have multiple surveys in use, it facilitates a common standard, or a common currency, so that you can have a better way to compare information that is provided by those surveys, such as catch information, and this lends itself to evaluation of catch trends, and so you need a way of stepping from one time series to another, as the methods are different, and you have to have a way to adjust for those differences. Then ACL monitoring as well. If you have a situation where the ACL is set up in one survey currency and monitored in another, then you would need some way to adjust for that.

We approached the calibration of the general and specialized surveys with a couple of things in mind, that calibrations are necessary to express the MRIP-CHTS, or Coastal Household Telephone Survey, based ACLs in the new survey units, for monitoring purposes, and that calibrations -- A goal of calibrations is to facilitate a conversion of catch estimates in both directions, and it doesn't frame one survey as inferior or superior to the other. It is largely agnostic to which survey is preferred, and it's just a way of stepping from one survey

currency to the other.

Then the focus of the workshop presentations, as I mentioned, was on simple ratio-based calibrations, to allow conversion between the MRIP survey and state survey estimates, and so that was the goal of the workshop.

The workshop was set up in two sessions, and it basically was a six-hour webinar split in two. The first session largely concentrated on the state presentations of their methods for producing the ratios, and different factors come into play in the production of ratios. Obviously, when you have very different surveys, very different survey methodologies, ratios may be more effective at one level of resolution versus another, and so those were the things that were considered ratios as the wave level versus the annual level. In general, the approach was settled on for an annual level ratio.

In the workshop also, Mississippi introduced, largely for food for thought, I think, and maybe Paul can elaborate on that, but a new approach, which was a meta-analytical approach that could be used to weight estimates and produce sort of a composite-based estimate.

That was largely outside the scope of the intended goal of the workshop, and I will get a little bit into that later on, and the second session dealt with the SERO adjustments, and, beyond the ratios produced by the states for the MRIP to the state survey estimates, there were other considerations as well, such as the time period that would be used for adjustments back to the CHTS from the current survey methodology, since CHTS is not in play anymore, and, basically, Jeff Pulver provided a presentation that dealt with three versus five-year averaging, for comparison.

The transition team sub-group was another component that was introduced in this second session as well, and this was basically a follow-on from work that we had done in the transition of the MRIP surveys from the old CHTS to the new FES, and we employed a transition team, and the transition team was made up of state partners and regional partners from the councils and commissions, as well as the Regional Offices and Science Center of NOAA as well, in addition to Science and Technology, so that there would be a more open and transparent process for dealing with the transition from the old MRIP surveys to the new ones.

We felt like this was a good model to build on for going forward

with the state surveys, and so we introduced the idea that there would be a sub-group from this full MRIP transition team that would focus on the next steps for the state surveys, after we introduced the calibrations.

It dealt with, obviously, considerations around the development of calibrations. For instance, with ratio-based calibrations, we know that, if we add more data -- As we add more data, those ratios may change, and there may be other factors that come into play as well, including that, as more data become available, there will be opportunities to revisit calibrations, and maybe the methodology as well, whether it’s modeling versus ratio-based approaches.

Those were two questions that we posed that would be part of the charge for this team, and it also would help in increasing the level of disruption that’s associated with calibrations, and everybody here now is familiar with the amount of disruption a change in survey methodology can cause, and so you don’t want to be introducing calibrations annually and then having to change ACLs and all the other associated responsibilities that go along with that, and so the team would be focused on determining time intervals for a suitable period for revisiting calibrations.

In addition to that, we talked about the role in the data management of Gulf States and the states and coordination in making the data available and the formats for the data available, and, obviously, Gulf States has experience in handling and working with the state data, and NOAA as well, and so it seemed an obvious choice that they would be involved in that process.

Then Leann kind of pointed to this earlier, and it’s something that she has mentioned several times in other meetings, and other have as well, but we really need to get a handle on survey-related drivers for differences in the estimates.

We know we have very different surveys, and we know that they produce different estimates, and we know that they have all been certified and that they are valid approaches, but what we don’t know is what are the drivers for those differences between the estimates that we get, and that points to the question of accuracy that came up this morning in one person’s question to me, and so that’s something that I think is a priority for Science and Technology, and I think probably we would need the states collaboration on that, because we have to be able to compare between the states and the MRIP survey.

Then other related questions to research, and one thing that has been discussed internally, and has been brought up externally as well, is the idea of looking at possible ways of ground-truthing or validating the data that we get for effort estimates. I know a number of the states have, Alabama and Louisiana, for instance, and Florida too, I think, have initiated methods that they can use to get direct counts of fishing effort, through video methods, I think, or visual counting.

We have started a conversation within NOAA related to that and what kinds of technology we can leverage and what means can we approach to looking at ways to evaluate the differences between the surveys and also get an idea of how far off, if they're off, in terms of their estimation.

I dealt a little bit with the discussions that went on in the workshop, and I'm not going to go into the actual calibration values, and I will leave that up to the Southeast Regional Office and the Science Center, but I will point to the overall consultant recommendations.

They had a chance, during the actual workshop, at lunchtime, to deliberate with each other, and we had Virginia Lesser from Oregon State University, and we had also Lynn Stokes from Southern Methodist University, and they were joined by Jean Opsomer from Westat, who had been at Colorado State University.

All of those three reviewers, or consultants, had been involved in the development of the surveys, and so they were very familiar with the methodologies that are used, and I guess the take-home is that they had a chance to review the methods prior to the workshop and then also during the workshop as well, and their deliberations really did not result in any major concerns over the methods presented by Alabama, Florida, and Louisiana.

They couldn't recommend the Mississippi meta-analytical method, but they thought that it certainly could be useful, or more appropriate, for other uses, and I think that was Paul's intent when he presented it, was just to put it out there as something for discussion.

Then they did have a minor suggestion to Florida for their variance estimate for the ratio, and so that was the -- Other than that, there were no major concerns about the methods that were used, given that they were limited by data, and, in the case of Louisiana, you had one year of side-by-side APAIS and three years of side-by-side FES/CHTS.

They recommended consistency, as much as possible, between the approaches, given that there were differences in the data and then the preferences of the states for when they felt their survey was most stable and when they felt the comparisons were most appropriate with MRIP.

Then the last recommendation they had is that MRIP should compile the methods into a single report, referencing survey documentation as well, and this didn't have to involve a large-scale process, and it could be just a compilation of the workshop materials and then the survey documentation that had been provided for certification.

Those were the basic recommendations there, based on the consultants, and the consultants, I should add, their charge was really just to look at the approach, if they had any major concerns about the ratio approach as it was applied, and so that was the role of S&T in this workshop, and that was our goal and our focus.

I basically covered this slide already, and this has to do with the transition team, but I will mention that, following this workshop, the idea is that we will follow-up with state partners, regional partners, including the councils and commissions, to set up a date for the initial working group meeting, and so we're hoping that that will occur sometime in late October, and that's all I have.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, Richard. I am going to give folks a couple of minutes to raise hands, if they have questions. Ed Swindell.

**MR. SWINDELL:** Thank you, Dr. Cody. One of the questions that I have is I have never been asked before, but how many -- In the FES system, how many of the response letters are sent out, and what is the response result? How many letters do you get back with a good result?

**DR. CODY:** Well, our response rate is between 30 and 35 percent, overall. The number of letters we would send out, or request for response to our surveys, varies from state to state. It's depending on -- We use a methodology that is basically called a Neiman method, and so you try to achieve a certain level of precision, and so that means that, in states where you have a good chance of say getting a response and reaching a fishing household, you may have a smaller sample size than you would say in a state where they are less likely to respond and you are less likely to reach a fishing household. It just varies by

state. I mean, overall, it's -- I may need to verify this number, but it's over 100,000 that I am aware of that we send out.

**MR. SWINDELL:** All right, and I brought this up before, and what about if you would use -- Have you looked at the potential to use a vessel that -- The owner of a vessel that has a fishing license, and he can report on three or four or five fishermen, instead of 100,000, and it seems to me like you would have a much better chance to get a lot more information if you were able to use the vessel survey, instead of an individual fisherman survey.

Have you thought about that at all, because, to me, that's all right in line with the fishermen's act that was passed by the legislature to improve the data collection for recreational fishing, and, to me, that would go a long way to improving it, is to get better data collection, and I think you could get that by vessel-by-vessel, rather than individuals. Have you looked at that at all, and can you look at it?

**DR. CODY:** Yes, we can, and there are some vessel-based permits that are out there, or endorsements that are associated with vessels, but, largely, license information is a mix, and so you've got -- You have vessel-based licenses, and then you also have individual licenses, and so it varies from state to state, the quality of the license information and the rate at which it's made available to us.

We have done some preliminary work, where we've looked at the potential to shift the APAIS over to a boat-based survey, for efficiency purposes, as you pointed out, and we're not quite at that point yet, where we've looked at it enough to fully consider the effects that it would have on the overall design. We are looking into it though at this point, because, in the case of the large pelagic survey that we used in the Northeast to get a handle on highly migratory species, it's vessel-based, and it uses the vessel-based permit as well.

The APAIS, as you know, is largely an angler-based survey, and so the unit of effort that we get information on is at the angler level, but there could be some efficiencies gained by moving to a vessel-based approach.

**MR. SWINDELL:** Are you looking at it intently, or is that something on the radar to definitely get done, or you just have an eye on it and that's all?

**DR. CODY:** No, we are looking at it intently, and one of the things that we are sort of charged with right now is, for the Modern Fish Act, we have a report to Congress that's due at the end of the year, and so we've been working with the states to get information on their saltwater license databases.

The report really was a requirement to provide Congress with a status update of where we are with that information, and so I think, once we have that information compiled, it will put us in a better position to evaluate a vessel-based approach, but it is something that -- It's constantly on our mind, and we do look at it on a regular basis, and it is a priority for us to look at it.

**MR. SWINDELL:** Very good, and I think the FES would be greatly improved with the amount of data that you could get, especially if sent out the same 100,000 to vessel people, and you get one hell of a lot more data, three or four times more than you're getting now, from individuals. Thank you.

**DR. CODY:** Just to follow-up on your comment there, the license information that we do get, and we do use, for our surveys is used to make the sampling a little bit more efficient, and so we try to match license information provided by the states with our address-based approach, and, where we have matches, we sample those at a higher rate, and they are weighted appropriately, but it does provide a considerable increase in efficiency, and so we are looking at those different methods.

**MR. SWINDELL:** Well, I think it would be great, and, you know, in Louisiana, for instance, definitely the vessel that's going to fish in federal waters has to have a separate license, and they could quickly provide all those to you, and it would get one heck of a better data collection. Thank you. I appreciate it. That's all.

**DR. CODY:** Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Ed. Thanks, Richard. I see next Leann, and then I've got a question for Richard as well.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks, Madam Chair. So, Dr. Cody, that 30 to 40 percent response rate sounds really good, compared to some other response rates I've seen in other surveys, and I was wondering -- For the non-responses that you have, you have to make some assumptions, and I remember that we had a presentation from Florida, from Dr. Bev, Beverly, and she was talking about how Florida divides its anglers up into buckets, for lack for a

better word, and that's my term, and I don't think she used it, and, if they're out-of-state, they go in one bucket. If they live on the coastline, they go in another bucket.

Then you can make different assumptions for non-responses for those anglers, as to whether or not you think they fished or didn't fish, and you can kind of get a better feel on what might have happened, and I was wondering, for MRIP, for your assumptions for non-responses, do you divide anglers up into buckets and use different assumptions or not?

**DR. CODY:** Yes, and we use a variety of different methods, and I will just mention one thing that we just started in Waves 4 and 5, and so that's September and October and then July and August, those two waves. We started what we call a non-response follow-up survey, and so that's a standard methodology that's used to get a handle on the non-respondents in a mail-based, or any other kind, of survey.

We are doing that, and we're conducting that right now, and we won't have the results for a while, but that's a follow-up from something we did back in 2013, and we did the same thing.

One of the other things that we do is we look at some of the demographic information for our respondents, and so we look at the initial demographic let's say characteristics of the sample, age, gender, the various different characteristics that we can look at, and then we compare it to those that respond, and, obviously, there are some indicators in there that would point to avidity or bias.

There is an avidity concern with any kind of response related to fishing, and it tends to be the people that fish the most that respond the most, and so that's been one of our major concerns and one of the things that we look at when we weight let's say the respondents with the demographic information. We weight it to more closely match the sample, so that we can account for that bias. That's two approaches that we have.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Richard, I've got a question I guess relative to this presentation and also the white paper, which is background, and so, thinking about in Florida what is now the State Reef Fish Survey, and so what was the Gulf Reef Fish Survey.

We have -- This is a supplemental survey, and it's MRIP

certified, and we have a calibration methodology that I think at this point is approved, I think, and so my understanding is that now it's up to the SEDAR stock assessment panels and the SSC to decide what years of data and estimates represent best available science for assessments, and the reason I'm bringing this up is for -- Like we've got a gag grouper assessment around the corner, and landings for gag overwhelmingly come from Florida, from the recreational sector in particular, and so can you comment on that, please?

**DR. CODY:** I can't make any assertion on best available science, but I will leave that up to the SEDAR process and the SSC. I can reiterate Science and Technology's role in the certification of the Reef Fish Survey, and, obviously, there's a slight change in scope for the State Reef Fish Survey, now that it covers the entire state.

That actually should improve the effectiveness of the survey, because you don't have to worry about excluding part of the state, but that would -- I would recommend just a review there to at least look at any potential impacts that we might not be considering right here, and so generally what we've recommended is that, for any changes, or major changes, to a survey methodology that it should be just at least presented for review again, to determine whether those changes are substantial enough to require a full review, and I would think, in this case, that there isn't really a huge change to it, but I would defer to the consultants for their expertise in that area.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** So the gag assessment is coming up later this year, and, I mean, they would be looking at Gulf Reef Fish Survey data, before the expansion, and I am just trying to, I guess, confirm that, at this point, it is the SEDAR panel and the SSC's decision as to whether the Gulf Reef Fish Survey should be considered best available science for that assessment, and I think that's what you just said, but I just want to confirm that.

**DR. CODY:** I would ask Roy, and possibly Clay, to chime in here on that. I mean, my concern is just basically with calibration and certification. What happens after that is really a different process, and so I don't want to speak to that process at this point, and I would defer to the region for that.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Roy or Clay? Who is determining best available science for an assessment?

**DR. CRABTREE:** That is ultimately the Fisheries Service that

makes the determination, but it’s not a determination made in a vacuum. It’s a determination in which a whole lot of people weigh-in, including the SEDAR panels that put the assessment together and review it and the SSC of the council.

Normally, I would send a memo to the Science Center, asking the Science Center to tell me what’s the best available science, and then, ultimately, there is a decision memo that’s written that makes the determinations, and the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries would concur with it, and, along the way, the lawyers would review it, and so it’s a big process.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Yes, and so, knowing there is an assessment on the horizon that probably needs to consider this data, does that process need to start now? What are the exact steps of the process? I am just trying to clarify that.

**DR. CRABTREE:** I assume it’s going to go through the SEDAR process, and, generally, they will make some determinations about the appropriate sources of data that go in, and, assuming they make reasonable decisions that have a good rationale behind it, normally the decisions they make would be borne out.

Now, on occasion, we have had the SSC disagree with something, and, on occasion, we’ve had the Science Center weigh-in, but that’s a process, and so I don’t really -- You are talking about what dataset should be used for the recreational landings in a particular assessment, and I would think that would be the SEDAR group, along with the Science Center and the analysts, that would do that.

Clay can talk more about that, but a lot of that will come down to which data can you reconstruct the historical time series in, and I don’t know if you can do that with the GRFS dataset or not, but you’re going to need to do that to do the assessment. Probably Clay would want to weigh-in.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Clay.

**DR. PORCH:** Basically, I agree with Roy. In the case of gag, the plan is, at this point, to conduct the assessment using the FES calibrated statistics and then also with the new version, using the GRFS data. The challenge that we have with GRFS is that it has not been calibrated back in time. That’s a key point for any stock assessment. You need a consistent time series of catch.

What you don’t want to have is to use one currency, especially a

currency that indicates higher estimates, and then, like towards the end, switch to another currency that gives lower estimates, because all that does is say that, oh, gee, there must have been a big drop in fishing mortality, when in fact it was just that you changed the currency, and so the time series has to be consistent, and then you get consistent ABC advice.

Ideally, we would conduct the assessment in the same currency as what we're using to monitor in, and, obviously, that's not been the case with red snapper, and so we've had to come up with these conversion factors.

The way the gag assessment is going to go, again, is we'll do the assessment in the FES time series, because that's the only one that has been calibrated back in time, as I think Joe was explaining to you earlier, but we do want to look at, at least as a sensitivity analysis, a sort of calibrated GRFS survey, but that hasn't been done yet, and it will get some level of review, but it wouldn't get the normal level of peer review that we would get in say a research track assessment.

My guess is we'll give the SSC both sets, but the one that has actually been reviewed and calibrated is the FES, and the other one would be kind of preliminary and might be more of a sensitivity analysis.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks for that, and so my understanding is that, because we have a calibration methodology, we do have estimates back in time, and I don't want to derail this conversation too much and focus on the gag, but, I mean, this is an important point, in terms of how we are, just in general, working between existing FES and some of these surveys that are out there that do have probably some pretty valuable information that we would want to look at. I guess I will stop there, but we do have a methodology, and we do have landings back in time, and so this is something that I think we do need to look at. Okay. Enough of that. Dale.

**MR. DIAZ:** I hope that I can articulate my point. All this stuff is pretty complicated. When FES started rolling out and we started seeing some of the numbers, as far as effort that was related to FES, what I thought would happen is, you know, if FES is basically showing there was a lot more effort in the past than we thought there was, we would adjust the stock sizes from the past up, and then things would kind of work out in the wash, whenever we got a stock assessment.

We might have to reallocate some things, to get the fish where

they're supposed to go, but all that stuff would kind of -- We would be able to correct it, and I'm just wondering if doing these calibrations now, until we actually get this red snapper stock assessment, if it's even appropriate, until we can take into consideration in that stock assessment, and maybe it's going to be taken into consideration before, and it doesn't matter, but if somebody could explain it me, because that's -- It seems like we're going to impose the effort now in these calibrations, but we haven't accounted for the fish in the next stock assessment, and so I don't know if anybody could speak to that and tell me if I'm thinking wrong or not.

**DR. CRABTREE:** If I could, Martha.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Yes, go ahead.

**DR. CRABTREE:** You have a stock assessment that is based on the Coastal Household Telephone Survey currency, and that is what all of the state allocations for red snapper are based on. The trouble you have now is you're using a different currency to monitor it, and so we know that there are substantial differences in some of the state surveys, and you have to fix that.

You are not consistent with the Magnuson Act, and you're not in compliance with the statute until you fix that, and so you've got to fix that. I don't think you will be able to increase the quotas or do anything else until you bring this program into compliance with the statute.

Now, you're going to get a benchmark assessment at some point that will, I guess, use the FES survey, and that remains to be seen, but I think you're two or more years away from having that.

In the short term, I think you are going to get the results of the Great Red Snapper Count, and you're going to get, presumably, a new catch level recommendation that comes out of that, and maybe it will be higher, and I don't know, and that, I assume, will still be generally based on the selectivity patterns and things in the current assessment, and so it will be in the Coastal Household Telephone Survey kind of currency.

If it gives you a quota increase, it will make all of this, I think, easier, but you're not going to be able to defend the position where you have quotas and allocations in one currency and you're using a different currency to monitor it, and so, Dale, I think you have to fix this, and I don't see how you're

going to be able to get anywhere until you've addressed it.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Roy. Susan.

**MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** I think Roy and Dale and Clay have all kind of touched on this, and this has been one of my concerns, is we have five different states collecting data, and we have the federal government, NOAA NMFS, collecting data, but even the worst part about that is the five states are not all collecting the same data, and so, to Martha's point, now you've got one state collecting for gag, and none of the others, and this is just a combobulated mess, and I just needed to get that off my chest. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Susan. Leann, and then I'm just going to remind everybody that we said we were going to break at 2:30, and we're creeping towards that time point, but go ahead, Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Thanks. I wanted to follow-up, actually, on what you were talking about, Martha, and I think that, for any upcoming assessments that we have, where the species is Florida-centric, and whether that means all the landings come from Florida or an overwhelming proportion of the landings come from Florida, I would hope that we would, at a minimum, do that sensitivity analysis that Dr. Porch was talking about and run that, to see what effect those two different landings streams have on the overall population that we think is out there.

Everybody gets hung up on red snapper, FES for red snapper versus the state numbers, and they forget that we're getting FES data for every species that we have, and, by and large, when we plug them into these stock assessments, we are doubling, just about, the biomass that we once thought was out there. We thought we had a hundred fish out there, and now we think we have 200 fish, and that's just a dumbed-down example.

People all worry about what it's doing to red snapper and what it's going to do to everybody's allocations there, and I'm a little more concerned that, if we don't run some sensitivity analyses on some of these other species, where you don't have an allocation between commercial and recreational, if you go double the biomass that you once thought was there, and then allow people to pound it, then, well, were we right? Were there really double the fish or not? You can't predict who is going to catch the fish.

People say, well, as long as we use the same measuring stick for recreational landings as what we put into the stock assessment,

it will all come out in the wash. Well, that’s not the case in a blended fishery, where you have both people fishing on the same quota, with no set allocation. Maybe the commercial will go out and catch those fish, and maybe the recreational will, and, if the commercial catches them, then it finally drills down to what I feel the overall problem is, is which picture of reality is right. Do we have 100 fish out there or 200?

It's important to determine which one of those is more accurate before you start putting them into practice, especially when you’re going up on the curve, when you are increasing the number of fish you think you have out there and you’re going to increase fishing pressure as a result of it.

If we were going downward on it, and we were kind of putting a chokehold on our fishermen, well, then, we would at least be putting the fish first in that case, and we probably wouldn’t overfish, and we would underfish, but we’re doing just the opposite, and that’s where I have some real reservations, and I hope that we will run these sensitivity analyses and take it seriously and really decide what is the appropriate picture of reality for these stocks.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Leann. Clay.

**DR. PORCH:** Thank you. There’s actually a lot wrapped up in the points that Ms. Bosarge was making. Obviously, reality is a difficult thing to get your hands on, just because of the types of data it needs to get at what the real number of fish are that are out there, and having this kind of uncertainty with recreational catch statistics certainly doesn’t help.

What I would say, to Dale’s point earlier, with regard to things coming out in the wash, I think what we mean there is, if we did the stock assessment somehow in the state currency scaled back in time, so that you have a consistent metric, since the state currencies generally estimate fewer fish than either the CHTS or FES survey, then we would estimate the population to be a little bit lower, and maybe in some cases a lot smaller, and that means that the ABC would be smaller, but it would be in the metric of the state currencies, which are already lower.

You would basically have lower currencies that you’re monitoring in, but also a lower ABC, because it would be in that same currency. The converse is that, right now, the only time series we have scaled back in time is either CHTS, which we no longer support, or the FES survey, and so the new assessments are being done in the FES.

FES gives much higher estimates, all the way back in time, and so the ABC coming out is going to be higher, because it's estimating the population to be larger, and, in that case, if you're going to monitor that ABC in FES currency, then you would need to convert all the state monitoring programs to that same currency.

When you do that, either way you do it, assessment in state currencies and then the ACL would be in state currency, or assessment in FES currency, and so the ACL is in an FES currency, and then you have to convert the state currencies for monitoring purposes, I suspect that you will end up getting very close to the same season, because you're either getting a lower ABC and monitoring with a lower currency or you're setting a higher ABC and monitoring with a higher currency, but, in the end, you probably will get similar seasons. I hope that makes sense.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Clay. Okay, Kevin. We have less than eight minutes. Is it a quick one?

**MR. ANSON:** I think so. Dr. Porch, what I heard you say though is that you're saying there's a chance. There's a chance that, during the interim analysis, that we could go back in time, using the parallel data collected, or estimated, through CHTS currency on these state surveys and we can use that calibration to go back in time and put in a proxy, if you will, for those years prior to the state surveys being in place, using that calibration and go forward then with the state survey data, and is that what you essentially said?

**DR. PORCH:** Well, there's certainly a chance of doing that. I haven't seen the analyses that the State of Florida is doing in trying to go back in time, calibrating between GRFS and the FES survey. It is not simple, however, because the things that drive the differences in time are changing in time.

For instance, as Richard described, the calibration between the FES survey and the old Coastal Household Telephone Survey is looking at things like cellphone usage and how they moved away from landlines over time, and so there's a lot of other ancillary information that went into deriving that calibration, and they had a whole statistical model behind it.

You would probably have to do something like that with the state surveys, but I haven't thought about it in enough detail to say exactly how you might do that, and I think you're going to have

to have some people really dedicate a significant amount of time to figuring out the best way to try and calibrate back in time.

**MR. ANSON:** Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Richard, do you have a point to make?

**DR. CODY:** Yes, and I just wanted to follow-up on what Clay mentioned. There is another consideration, without complication this any further than it needs to be. If you calibrate to each of the state surveys going back in time, you do make the assumption that they would perform equally in each state, and I think there's a fair bit of -- I think that would be a hard assumption to defend, and so that's something that complicates things even further, and it was alluded to a little bit in the white paper.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, Richard. We've got five minutes. Greg.

**DR. STUNZ:** Well, Martha, mine is not real quick, and so do you want me to wait until after the break?

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Yes, and let's hold yours. I think Kevin is putting his hand up, and I am going to assume it's back to the point that Richard was just making, and is that right, Kevin?

**MR. ANSON:** That's correct, Madam Chair. On the face of it, I agree with Dr. Cody's comments, but, as I provided, at least at the last meeting, there is multiple ways to look at these figures, these data, and kind of step back and try to look at them, to see how they fit, to see how they fit to what our perception is of what's going on out there.

I provided a couple of examples to do that in my presentation, and I think that's what kind of goes into the comment that General Spraggins had made earlier about Mississippi not feeling confident in the estimates that are being made, and they just don't reflect reality, and I think that's part of the reason why some of the votes, at least, were on that eleven-to-eleven with two abstention vote recommending that state surveys be used, when and if they are available, at least for looking at when you do an assessment.

On the face of it, I agree with Roy's comment that, you know, we have the Act, and we have Magnuson that we have to deal with, as we look at these calibrations and how they affect or impact allocations to the states, but we need to find something pretty

quick here, potentially, and certainly it will help to have some more clarification with the Great Red Snapper Count information, to see if it's another number that we'll have to deal with, but, to wait until the next assessment, which I looked at the schedule the other day, and the assessment won't be completed, if it goes on schedule, until the end of 2023.

Then we have to go through the SSC review, and we have to talk about it at the council, and so, potentially, we would be talking about the 2024 season for any of these changes to occur relative to having more fish available through increased FES landings or some potentially reconciliation of the Great Red Snapper Count, and I hope that can be addressed in the interim assessment, or interim analysis, but that's just -- I don't know, and I'm just venting a little bit, but we need to go back to Leann and trying to get some semblance of reality and what numbers appear to really reflect what's going on on the water, and so thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, Kevin. It is 2:28. Let's go ahead and take our break. Roy, I'm assuming your hand is up to that point, and we can come back to you when we return from the break, and then we'll go to Greg. I think we've got fifteen minutes. Is that right, Tom?

**DR. FRAZER:** Yes, fifteen minutes, and so we'll see people at 2:45.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sounds great.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Roy, are you back from the break yet? You're next on my list.

**DR. CRABTREE:** I am.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Go right ahead.

**DR. CRABTREE:** Well, I'm worried that we're getting off-track a little bit, and you could take the current stock assessment, and I'm sure you could figure out some way to re-run it with state data, and, if you did that, all things equal, it would give you a lower total allowable catch, because the recreational time series over the years would be smaller.

If that happened, then you would have a lower commercial quota, and the charter boats would lose fish, and you will have a mess

on your hands, and so you should think about that, because I don't think that's where you want to go, and I don't think it fixes any of the problems that we're concerned about.

The benchmark assessment is going to be a couple of years in the process, and that's when these issues are going to be addressed, and so it's just not going to get resolved in the short term.

I think you need to get focused on what's happening now, and I'm worried that we're taking our eye off the ball. You have a couple of things coming, and one are these conversions, these calibrations, that we have to deal with, but the other piece of this is the Great Red Snapper Count that is coming relatively soon, I think, and then the interim assessment that is going to come to you.

That is what we need to be focused on right now, and, if you believe that we're likely to see quota increases, then you need to think about what are you going to do with them and how are we going to get this done, and how are you going to deal with the reality of these calibrations, because I think you will have to deal with those in order to be able to raise the quotas, assuming that the Great Red Snapper Count and the interim assessment allow that to happen.

I don't know if that's going to happen or not, but it's all going to hit you very quickly, and you're potentially going to get hit with a lot of fish, and you're going to be under intense pressure to get all of this done in time for next year's fishing season, and, if you're going to make changes to allocations and who the fish goes to and all of these things, you've got a lot of decisions to be made, and they're going to come at you quickly, and I think you really need to be focused on that right now and not so much on all these issues about MRIP I think that are going to take care of themselves over the next few years, because I think a lot is going to hit you in the next few meetings, and you're going to make a lot of decisions.

In the meantime, if you think about where we are today with red snapper, we're in a good place, folks. The season is much longer than it was eight or nine or ten years ago, and the quotas are high.

There is lots of reasons to think that more good things are coming to you with red snapper, and so I worry that we're getting a little too gloom and doom over red snapper, but I think we need to rein back in on what decisions are you going to make in the next couple of meetings, because I will tell you

that, if you're going to get something in place for next year, you've got, at the latest, the April meeting to take final action on it, and so that doesn't give you a lot of time.

I don't know when you're going to know what the interim assessment is going to give you, but it may be January before you really have a good clue as to what's coming, and so you've got a lot coming at you fast, and I think we really need to get focused on the decisions that are in front of us now and let these decisions that are going to come in a couple of years -- We'll deal with those after we deal with what's immediately in front of us.

That's just my advice to you. Most of these things, you're going to vote on them after I'm gone, but I'm telling you that you need to be ready, and you need to be prepared, because there may be a lot of things coming at you fast.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Roy. Next in the queue, I have Greg, and then I do want to note that we have a couple of presentations still to go on this item, and I'm certain lots more discussion, and so I'm just putting that out there, and I think we're scheduled to go until four, and then the fireside chat, virtual fireside chat, is at 4:30, and so I assume that 4:30 is like the drop-dead, but I would leave that up to the Chair. Anyway, Greg, take it away.

**DR. STUNZ:** Thanks, Madam Chair, for waiting and delaying my comment, because it was rather lengthy, but I just wanted to comment on a couple of things related to my experience and expertise on this council. I mean, obviously, science is a building process, and, as scientists, we always leave room, so that, as we make new discoveries, we can change the way we thought in the past, and that's sort of a fundamental principle.

In reality, that's exactly what we're seeing here. The MRIP and state systems are a perfect example of that, and, over the weekend, I went back and reviewed some of the old National Academy of Science, or NRC at the time, reports, and, if you recall, what we've been talking about, that 2007 study, it said that that Coastal Household Telephone Survey was flawed, that that couldn't be used, because of the way it's set up.

We built on that science, and the next NAS study after that showed that the MRIP-FES wasn't appropriate for short-season management, and I think we all kind of realized that, and, in fact, that's probably why the states developed their more nimble and responsive programs, to address these issues we were having

with this in-season management.

That kind of brings us to where we are now, and the panel, guided by the Modern Fish Act, is now supposed to consider how can MRIP better be modified to better deal with this in-season management, but, as we all know, the assessment and everything else we've got in the air right now is a year or two out, at least, I think, and so that really gave us what we've got today, these really good systems, in my scientific opinion, that I would have a very hard time arguing that the State of Mississippi is not doing a great job and to argue that that's not better than MRIP.

That is pretty difficult, given the nature of their fishery and how they can monitor it, and I'm sorry to pick on you, General, but your state is a good example of how you can really drill down, and Louisiana too, and all the others, for that matter.

Then we add on -- You know, we've got these suites of recalibration, and we've got the abundance estimate study coming out from our team very soon here, and, in fact, I'm briefing Congress later this week, and so we'll have those results soon, and so things are very fluid. There is a lot of balls that are in the air that, as Roy mentioned, are drastically going to change things, and I think, until we can really get our arms around this, we really need to go with what we have at hand, and, in my opinion, those are the state systems.

Now, I know that Clay probably doesn't like that, because we can't generate historic yield streams from that, and I completely understand that, but I think that also is -- You know, we can solve that problem. That's a short-term problem, and we don't want to go back to programs we have less confidence in. We want to move forward with programs that we do have more confidence in.

Anyway, the point is this is going to be a challenge, but I wanted to put that little bit of perspective of how we -- I think we need to further the science, and we as a council can decide what that science is, I mean, in consultation with our SSC and that sort of thing, and we've got really bright people on this call and around this table, and I just feel like we need to move that ball forward and away from where we're at right now, and so, anyway, that's my soapbox for the day, Martha, and that's why I said I would wait until afterwards.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Greg. Kevin.

**MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate Roy's comments about the potential for lots of movement coming up in the very near future for the council relative to red snapper management, and I don't agree, necessarily, with his comment that we just need to be focused on those other items and this is not a big issue, relative to determining allocations or reductions to the states allocations going forward, because, for Alabama's case, in particular, we are potentially going to -- In the next presentation, we're going to be looking at a scenario where we're going to be cut in half, essentially, of the number of pounds that we would have coming to us.

That would get us at a fourteen-day season, if you just do the simple math, but we've found that, as you compress seasons, effort increases per day, and so we could be looking at a ten or eleven or twelve-day season, if we're trying to be proactive in not going over our quota under that situation, and so, although things appear to be rosy, they're not certainly rosy for the recreational fishery in Alabama.

These are big decisions, and they are weighty decisions, and so I will certainly be looking forward to the discussion for the rest of the day, but those are some of the immediate things, is what impacts this calibration and these data show relative to access for the recreational fishermen, particularly in Alabama.

I wanted to ask if -- Dr. Porch briefly described it, but I still was left wanting a little more in the August meeting, but I wonder, Dr. Porch, if you can describe the process and under-the-hood-type things that you were going to do or what's going to be done for the interim analysis, relative to trying to reconcile or incorporate the Great Red Snapper Count numbers in there, and what does that look like?

Is that just that you're going to scale up the number to more closely match what the Great Red Snapper Count estimate is, since it's kind of a one-time snapshot, or are you going to tweak some of the parameters that are used, based on some of the data that's collected? I am just not clear as to how that process is going to work, and I know you probably need more than just a few minutes to respond, to provide a response, but I'm just wondering if you could provide a little bit more detail on that. Thank you.

**DR. PORCH:** Thanks for that question, Kevin. I can't really provide a lot more detail until we really get into the nuts and bolts of what Greg's group is going to provide. I mean, I have a hint of it, but, until we really start working together on it,

it’s hard for me to say exactly what we’re going to do.

One thing we were floating around in our mind is to get the abundance at-age estimates that the Great Red Snapper Count might produce and then multiply that by the fishing mortality rates that would lead to an SPR of 26 percent, since that’s the benchmark that’s on the books, and so, to the extent that the Great Red Snapper Count gives higher estimates than the stock assessment, you might get somewhat higher catch estimates, or, if it was the other way around, that it was more than the stock assessment, you get lower catch estimates.

We can’t really do that until we see what has actually been produced by the survey, and, like I said, I have an inkling of it, but we’re really got to get into the nuts and bolts of it before we determine what the best way forward is, and I don’t know if Greg wants to comment further on that, but I really don’t want to go out on a limb and say exactly what we’re going to do until we see what all we have.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Clay. Next on my list, I have Joe Spraggins.

**GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess the biggest concern that I’ve got for Mississippi on this is -- I understand exactly what Roy is trying to say and what he’s asking us, which is something in the near future of two years or three years or whatever, it’s going to change a lot of things that we do here, but I think that the biggest concern coming from Mississippi, and I can’t speak for Alabama or Louisiana or Texas or Florida, but, for Mississippi, it’s what is going to happen in the short term, and I think that’s our biggest concern.

We all know that the Great Red Snapper Count is there, and we know that that’s -- I mean, all indications is it’s probably, and I can’t say it, just like anybody else cannot, that it’s going to be an increase in the number of quota of what’s there. However, we’re all very scared that -- Especially like I think I can for sure include Alabama with me, that, with the greatest reduction that you’re doing with Mississippi, saying that we had 550,000 pounds in 2019, and we didn’t have 550,000 pounds in the last five years.

To say something like that and then allow that to go forward, and I think the biggest concern we have is some adjustment to the ACL before we get any of the other information put together and before we do anything with the other information and we make sure that we are working.

I don’t think there’s a state here that wants to do something wrong. I think we all want to do it right, and I think that we’re trying hard, and we’re trying hard to do it. We have worked hard, and we got Congress, and we got our senators and our congressmen to get onboard with us, and we got them to help us, to say that we could be able to do our own state management, and it was a process that was put forward through NOAA and through Commerce, and it was passed by Secretary Ross, but yet, all of a sudden, now we’re just trying to change everything and say that state management is not doing what it should.

I think that’s our biggest concern. Our biggest concern right now is if we -- I will be honest with you. From Mississippi, if I had enough warm fuzzies for myself to say that they’re not going to change anything, and they’re going to allow the Great Red Snapper Count to work, and we’re going to sit down and talk about what’s happened between our allocation that we say that we are bringing and by using our Tails ‘n Scales compared to using the MRIP and what it really works out, and I believe I would be happy if I knew that was going to happen. I think the biggest fear right now is something is going to happen before all this does, and, once again, I kind of got it off my chest, and so thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Joe. Next in the queue, I have Phil Dyskow.

**MR. DYSKOW:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In the vein of what General Spraggins said, but particularly in the vein of what Greg Stunz said, and I appreciate the fact that, as a credible scientist, he was able to articulate it so concisely, but so much of what we’ve discussed today, and I’m going to be blunt, and I don’t want anyone to take offense, but we have this dead horse, which is the old way of measuring recreational data, that we’re trying to kick down the road and make work in the future, when we have five state systems that, in the view of most of us, is far more effective, far more detailed, far more state-of-the-art, far more scientifically valid.

We could spend more time on how do we get these five systems working in sync with each other, and how do we react to the fact that the Great Red Snapper Count is probably going to show a much larger fish population than NMFS data has previously shown, and so that’s where we ought to be focusing all our energy.

I come from the private sector, and, in the private sector, if we have a tired, old computer system, and we want to go a

modern, faster, state-of-the-art system that provides better information, we simply find a way to bridge between the two and move forward, and so let's not try to Band-Aid this thing forever. We have better systems now, and let's make them work.

If, for data history purposes, we need to find a bridge between these systems, let's do it, but I think we're trying too hard to patch something that no longer fits the needs of the recreational angler. Even though it may fit the needs of other sectors, it certainly doesn't work for the recreational angling community, and so that's all I have to say.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Phil. We've got a number of hands in the queue. I think what we can do is go to those hands and then bounce back to Dr. Powers. He's got a presentation for us that we probably are going to want to see before we get too deep into figuring out what we do next here. Leann.

**MS. BOSARGE:** Just a couple of things, and I think, unfortunately, Dr. Crabtree is right, that we've got to make some decisions and figure out how we're going to handle this, because we can't -- If what we have in front of us says that we're overfishing, and nobody can seem to figure out the difference between the state surveys and FES, then I don't see how we get around it. We've got to do something to make sure we don't overfish, because that, to me, is inexcusable. We can't have that.

Then now you're letting it affect everybody, people that have made sure that they report everything they catch all the time, although it's not pleasant, and we have to wear an ankle bracelet to do that in the commercial fishery, and we're tracked constantly, but we've done it, and we don't have uncertainty around our data, and we're staying within our limits, and so we can't let this get to the point where it overflows and starts affecting other people and other sectors.

The same thing with the for-hire. Lord have mercy, but they're having to underfish to account for overruns in other places, and they have been for quite some time, but, on a different subject, that Great Red Snapper Count.

So I only know what Greg has told us about it in different presentations that he's given us, and I'm looking forward to seeing it and seeing what comes out of it, and my view on it is it's going to tell you what the abundance, or population, of red snapper is, and so, if it's telling us about population, although it's not using a stock assessment model, it is

assessing the stock, and I'm just wondering -- Typically, that goes through the SSC, and all the data is public, and it gets peer reviewed, and then it comes to us. Is that going to be the case here, before we start using it for management?

**DR. PORCH:** I guess I will jump in?

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Go ahead, Clay.

**DR. PORCH:** Thanks. If we're going to give interim analysis advice, and so, in other words, update the ABC in time for the 2021 season, the only review that it would get would be at the SSC level. I mean, Greg may have some of the results published in peer-reviewed journals by then, and I don't know, but probably not everything about the study, and so I think the primary review will be at the SSC.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Clay. Greg.

**DR. STUNZ:** Thank you, Martha. I just wanted to comment on the Snapper Count, since it's coming up so much, and, yes, Leann, to your point, that would go through our normal processes. I mean, obviously, our team provides our reported estimate, and then it moves on through the various processes.

I am trying to think of what I can say here, because of our obligation to brief Congress first, but this is likely going to help us, but, in a way, right now, what we're talking about, that really doesn't matter, whether we come back with less fish, the same amount of fish, or more fish than the stock assessment really tells us.

We have got fundamental problems going on with the way we're managing the fishery right now, through effort calibration, through different systems that are feeding into that, and a whole variety of things that we've been discussing pretty much all day today.

What I am sort of concerned with is that it always seems like, when we have problems, either the stock improves or something happens, and there's more fish available to temporarily fix a problem, and it's sort of like a Band-Aid on a giant wound that, yes, is helping for this season or next season, but it's not really helping us fix the underlying problems that are leading to this in the first place.

I would be tremendously disappointed if all the hard work that this team has done over the past few years is just sort of a

flash in the pan. I mean, I think what needs to happen is we need to fix the underlying issues. If we have more fish, well, that's great. That feeds into the process, and it helps out every sector, and we don't look to this Snapper Count as a way that's going to get us out of the current bind that we're in.

We need to take this break, as I mentioned before, and really think about how do we want to manage this fishery in the future, so we don't get back into this situation.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Greg, for that insight. Mara.

**MS. LEVY:** Thanks. I guess I just wanted to reiterate something that Roy said about, at least at some point during today, focusing on the calibration and how to deal with the fact that the current catch levels are set with MRIP-CHTS, but we have the states monitoring in all these different currencies.

This isn't a new thing. I mean, we've been talking about this since before Amendment 50 became final and the need to do something about this, and so I think that it is an important issue, and I think, to the extent you want to do other things with the red snapper fishery, that this is a key thing that's going to need to be addressed before all those other things can happen. Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Mara. Susan.

**MS. BOGGS:** I am sorry that this may not come across correctly, but now if the Great Red Snapper Count is the tell-all-be-all, what do we do with state management? I mean, we keep throwing all these data collection systems and analysis in the mix, and we talk about kicking the can down the road, as Phil kind of mentioned, and it's almost like we're kicking the can down the road again, because now we're going to have a new dataset, and now we've got to figure out what to do with that, and I just feel like we're spinning our wheels, and we're not going to get anywhere, and it's just going to create more problems down the road, and not just with red snapper, but with other species. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Susan. I know we have a lot of names on the list, but we've got two more presentations, and it is 3:15, and we're scheduled to go until 4:00, and I would like to pause and to keep the queue, but I think we need to get through these presentations at least today, to, if nothing else, relieve our speakers, and so, if I can, I would like to go to Dr. Powers at this point, so that we can go through Tab B, Number 8(d).

**DR. POWERS:** Thank you. I am not sure if this will solve anything for you, because a lot of the discussion that we had at the SSC sort of mimics some of the problems that have sort of ensued.

In the presentation that was made earlier today with Dr. Cody, he mentioned the process by which ratio estimates were generated for each one of the state surveys, and that was considered to be the best way to go over the short term, and so what we are talking about here, in terms of the SSC, was to look at those ratio estimates, what they're getting at, and to make some sort of determination about their usefulness for converting from one system to another.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** It looks like we're having a little bit of technical difficulty. Give it a minute. Perhaps what we can do, instead of just staring at the black swirling circle of death, is we can maybe go back to our queue, while that presentation is trying to load. Richard, you were next on the list.

**DR. CODY:** Okay. I have just a few points that I would like to make with regard to MRIP and it being basically a dead horse. I will point out that we have different types of surveys in the Gulf, and they are not necessarily general surveys, and they don't cover all the species that MRIP does, and so I would hope that, in your considerations of any of the surveys, that you will take into account the fact that they do very different things and that they have different priorities other than red snapper. This is just one point that I wanted to make.

The other point is that the MRIP surveys -- I mean, there have been no other surveys that have been reviewed to the level that MRIP has, and so there is a certain amount of credibility that goes along with that.

We have always acknowledged that there were certain things that it doesn't do very well. For instance, it doesn't address in-season management of species very well, and the goal, the focus, of developing the state surveys was to address those two specific issues. One was to get more precise catch estimates to handle those in-season management quotas and the second was to get them a little bit more timely.

I would just urge people not to lose sight of the other things

that MRIP does. MRIP is charged with covering all species, and, right now, we have two surveys that are certified to cover one species each, and it would probably involve a re-review of those surveys to align them with adding additional species, and so just please keep that in mind as you make considerations or deliberate on the value of MRIP.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Richard. I am going to recognize Tom.

**DR. FRAZER:** Thanks, Martha. I realize that people have a lot to say, but I want to try to keep us track and keep us focused and not let this get off the rails. I mean, I think Roy made some good points, right, and so, in fairly short order, we are going to be faced with some decisions that we need to make in order to effectively manage this fishery.

In the short term, and I would agree with what Greg said earlier. You know, we've got five states, at this point, who have invested a fair amount of effort in their own data collection programs, to ensure that they can get more precise estimates and be more certain with their catches, and that's a good thing, right, but, at the end of the day, people have to remember that the stock assessment was not conducted using those state data collection programs, and we still have to use stock assessment in the units that it was carried out in.

In order to manage the fishery, you have to have a reference point, and so we will make improvements, moving down the road a bit, and perhaps the Great Red Snapper Count will provide a way to tailor that assessment a bit, to improve it, and it may in fact yield more fish that we can allocate, but, at the end of the day, we're still going to have to allocate those fish, and we're still going to have to calibrate the state measures to the assessment units, and so we can't forget about that at all, and I want to make sure that, to Roy's point moving forward, that we start thinking about what it is that we're going to need to do and when we're going to have to do it.

Are we going to have to do it in our October meeting, or are we going to have to do it in our November meeting? If we don't get an interim assessment until January, what is it that we're going to do, and when are we going to do it, to ensure that we can give advice for each of the five states to manage their fisheries in 2021?

We will continue to make improvements, and we'll learn from these things, but I don't think this conversation is about throwing MRIP out the window, because, as Dr. Cody said, there

are a lot of good things about MRIP. It was designed for a number of different purposes, and so we have long-term needs, and we have needs to monitor fisheries for in-season management purposes, and so there's a lot going on here, and let's make sure -- Again, I think we're moving forward in the right way, and there will be some growing pains, as John Sanchez has said in previous meetings, along the way, but let's make sure we're doing the responsible thing moving forward.

Again, a couple of things that I'm sure will come up is, if we happen to be allocated more fish moving forward, as a consequence of the interim assessment, then we're going to be faced with a couple of challenges. How do we allocate those fish? Do we -- I don't want to get into that right now, but we have to be thinking about what process we're going to use moving forward and what decisions that we'll have to make and when we'll have to make them. Hopefully that will kind of rein things in a bit as we talk about the rest of this day, I guess. Martha.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Tom. Okay. It looks like we were able to get Dr. Powers' presentation up, and so let's go ahead and proceed with that. Dr. Powers, take it away.

**DR. POWERS:** Okay. Thank you very much. Let's just go to the next slide. This one is just background. This is sort of our working orders for the SSC, in terms of the survey, is to -- Or the state survey estimates and the August 5 workshop, in terms of their marching orders that were identified by Dr. Cody as well, but, basically, it's to clarify the processes and to identify some ways to move forward.

The key thing here is that you have, on the left-hand side, the five different state surveys, and then what you want to end up with is the MRIP-FES survey and then some calibration and the MRIP Coastal Household Survey calibration. The workshop went through, as was mentioned, these ratio estimates, and that's what those numbers in the little boxes are.

The ratios of moving from, for example, the Gulf Reef Fish Survey to the MRIP survey is 2.63. From MRIP to the MRIP-FES, the MRIP charter boat, it's 2.99, and, in the case of LA Creel and Texas Parks and Wildlife, we just go directly, and so this is the basic information that has been agreed to through the workshops, in terms of the actual ratios. Now, this isn't a comment about what's best, and it's simply a conversion.

If you boil it down into directly to the Coastal Household

Survey, you see there that the Florida, LA Creel, and Texas Parks and Wildlife, by design, are close to 1.0, in terms of this ratio, which is ideally what you would like to have, in terms of this sort of thing, but, of course, those ratios for the smaller coastal states of Alabama and Mississippi were quite a bit lower. Nevertheless, those are the ratios that are presented.

We reviewed those and the methodology at the SSC, and we made some suggestions for modifications of the number of years to use in computing the ratios, and then we came to this motion, which basically specified the ratios that would amount to the best available information, and, as you can see there, the actual numbers and what years they related to, in terms of the ratios, and that motion carried with one abstention. Again, this is not making a comment on what is best, but it’s simply a conversion factor, or conversion factors.

That is the thing that we wanted to reiterate, and the first paragraph there is the SSC notes that the FES catches are going to be higher, and this is basically the same comment that Clay made before about how this scales the assessment, but the ABC and the OFL will be scaled as well, and so one of the key things that you’re all aware of is that these conversions aren’t handled well, in terms of the stock assessment, but, when it comes down to allocations between sectors and states and the historical perspective, based on previous perceptions of relative catches, it’s unclear how this will be addressed in the allocation decisions, and that’s quite obviously the conundrum that the council is facing.

Sort of reiterating the current ratios are acceptable methods to convert from metric to another, but there is no -- The SSC has not determined a, quote, unquote, true estimate. There are significant differences, particularly between the small coastline states of Alabama and Mississippi, and, ultimately, these things are going to have to be reconciled in order to establish a consistent time series, and, to that end, the SSC is supportive of the efforts of the transition teams in helping to resolve these issues.

I would also make a comment that my experience with these sorts of things is that it’s quite often that one survey is bad and another survey is good. It’s rather than they are good at measuring slightly different things, and I think it’s the onus of the transition team and this whole process to try to determine what it is that is actually being measured and to, again, put those in a common framework, and perhaps even by

meta-analysis sorts of approaches that Patrick Banks had suggested, and I think that, as scientists, we have to be open minded about how we proceed, but, clearly, this needs to get resolved, and so that's my presentation.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Dr. Powers. Are there questions specifically to Dr. Powers on this presentation? I am going to give people a minute, and I know we've got hands in the queue from our previous conversation, but let me get questions for Dr. Powers at this point. I think I saw Patrick's hand go up.

**MR. BANKS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I understand that the SSC has not determined a true estimate, but, Dr. Powers, I just want to make sure I'm clear on what the SSC guidance is from a best scientific information available. What you guys are saying that, in order to calibrate between the state survey catches and the MRIP, our survey catches need to be multiplied by a conversion factor to get the true estimate of catch, and is that what the SSC is saying?

**DR. POWERS:** No, and I said that those conversion factors convert from one to another, and it's not a true estimate. We really don't know what the true estimates are, but what we're saying is we're agreeing with the workshop that, if you're going to convert from system to another, those ratios are an appropriate way to approach the problem.

**MR. BANKS:** Okay. I wasn't clear. When you are trying to say that we thought -- To try to put our catch data into MRIP terms, we need to use those conversions, and is that your --

**DR. POWERS:** I'm sorry, but you'll have to speak up. There is some background noise.

**MR. BANKS:** Somebody needs to go on mute. Okay. When we want to take a look at what we estimate for our catches in our state systems, but we want to put it in the currency of MRIP, we need to use those conversion factors, correct?

**DR. POWERS:** That's what the recommendation is.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Did you have a follow-up, Patrick?

**MR. BANKS:** No, and I appreciate it, Dr. Powers.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Is there anyone else with questions for Dr. Powers? I don't see any right now, and, in the interest of time and moving us forward, I am going to suggest that we move

on to the next presentation, which I'm sure will generate lots more discussion, from either Dr. Crabtree or Peter at SERO regarding red snapper calibration options.

**DR. CRABTREE:** Peter is going to give that, Martha.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, Peter.

**RED SNAPPER CALIBRATION OPTIONS**

**MR. HOOD:** While we're waiting the presentation to come up, I would just mention that, basically, if you want to act quickly, what this presentation will do is provide a couple of options that can be achieved through a framework action.

Again, what I'm going to be talking about are maybe two ways to address converting the ACL to CHTS currency to state currencies for the management of the private angling component. There may be other options, but these seem to be practical and something that could be implemented quickly, if that's your desire.

Other than status quo, which is the first bullet, one option is to do a straight-up conversion, and that's the second bullet, where, basically, the ACL is in CHTS currency, and it's converted to state currencies using the different conversion ratios. The other option is where a buffer is applied to the private angling component and the state ACLs are allocated based on that lower ACL.

Basically, I want to go back to the previous slide just to make a note that, down at the bottom there, if you want to change the state allocations put in place by Amendment 50, you would have to do a plan amendment, and, if you wanted to try to tackle that reallocation sooner rather than later, you could do an emergency rule that would then put in place that reallocation, and that would be in place then while the amendment is being developed.

This basically shows what happens -- What the ACLs are doing if you took those straight conversions, and, if you look at, for example, Alabama, which is the first state listed there, under the current private angling component, in CHTS units, they would get 1.122 million pounds, roughly, and, if you multiply the conversion ratio by the ACL in CHTS currency, you get roughly 547,000 pounds in Snapper Check currency.

Then, to sort of then see what the state landings are in CHTS currency at the end of the year, and, in this case, what I have in that predicted MRIP CHTS landings is sort of, assuming

Alabama exactly caught its converted quota, and so that quota in Snapper Check, and we would take those landings, and we would divide it by the conversion ratio to get the predicted CHTS landings. As you can see, it converts back to the 1.122 million pounds, and so this is one option.

While we're waiting for the next slide to pop up, in this case, what happens is we're going to apply a buffer to the private angling component ACL, and, basically, it gets reduced by a certain amount, and what we found is that a 23 percent buffer got us the closest to the private angling ACL of 4.269 million pounds.

In this case, we have the second column labeled the current ACL. If we applied a 23 percent buffer, that's listed in that third column, or the center column, and that would be -- That's the value that each state manages using their monitoring system, and so, for Alabama, and I'm sorry, Kevin, to pick on you, the 1.122-million-pound ACL would be reduced to approximately 864,000 pounds. That's applying that 23 percent buffer, and that's what they would manage using Snapper Check.

At the end of the year, the landings would be divided by the conversion ratio to get back to the CHTS currency, and so, in the case of Alabama, if they were able to perfectly match their quota and get that roughly 864,000 pounds, we divide it by the conversion factor of 0.4875, and then that gives us a predicted 1.773 million pounds in CHTS units.

If we do this for all the states, and assuming each state catches its quota exactly, we would then sum the landings into CHTS currency, which is that last row, the right-most row, and then you would then compare that to your 4.269-million-pound private angling component to see whether you stayed under or exceeded the ACL.

In this example, if you look at the red value, the red number there, that's the sum of the predicted landings, and you can see it gets pretty close to the ACL, using that 23 percent buffer. It's off by just a little over 5,000 pounds.

The next slide is going to be a bar chart that's going to be shown for each state, and you're going to see what the allocations would have been for each state, and that's in blue, and the brown is each state reduced by 23 percent, and then the orange is what each state's ACL, managed in state currency, would be after you convert it to the CHTS units.

I would like to sort of make two points here. One is you can see that fish from the buffer go to Alabama and Mississippi, and so they gain some fish, compared to the other states, and the other states would then lose some fish, and then the other points is just, if you look at that furthest right, where it says “Total”, you will see that sort of going to the conversion, with the buffer and everything, you end up with that orange bar being roughly the same as the blue bar, and so the math seems to work out using this buffer method. Madam Chair, that completes my report, or presentation.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Peter. I suspect that we have questions out there on Peter’s presentation, and then we can go back to the general queue, just to be clear. Who has questions for Peter, or we can just go to the queue, I guess. Let’s just do that, and then we’ll just roll into them. Next on the list, I had Robin.

**MR. RIECHERS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to go back a ways in this conversation, just because I thought it was worth hitting again, and, in regard to the science part of this and the review, and I think we all want to make sure that we go through the appropriate review, but I think we also have to recognize that what we’re reviewing is an independent review of the stock assessment, and so, in some respects, some of that review and the teams that worked already to design the study --

Not that their work shouldn’t be reviewed, and it should, but maybe we can hurry that along, or at least have some confidence, as we hurry it a little bit, so that we can impact next year as much as we can, and certainly I think everyone is suggesting that is the case with an interim analysis, but I think it’s important to recognize that there already is a lot of our current SSC members and people around the Gulf who we depend on for this kind of expertise involved in that study as well.

I kind of agree with actually some comments that both Roy and Tom and Greg all made, that we’re kind of dealing with the short-term tyranny of the urgent and trying to work through what maybe looks like really a difficult situation, possibly, into next year, and certainly how do we do that, in terms of both maybe trying to find a way through it, so that we buy ourselves some time, but there’s been some discussions about allocations, and, folks, an allocation by next spring, I just don’t see how we would do anything like that, I mean, given how contentious any allocation is.

I mean, I would remind this group that we couldn’t get a

calibration type of data calibration reallocation of a minor percentage passed, and, first, it took a very long time to work through the council, and then, of course, it was challenged as well, and so I think we just have to recognize that, and so I think what we really have to focus our energy on is maybe the immediacy of next year and then spend some time working through some of these other issues that are really still out there. Thanks, Martha.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thank you, Robin. I am going to go to Kevin next.

**MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just first say a couple of comments, like Robin said, going back a little ways, and I would ask that I can be put in after Clay's queue in there, if I can come back up again, and I have a different thing to talk about at that time.

I appreciated Dr. Stunz's comments, and Dr. Powers' comments, about scientists and that they need to be shown data for them to change their minds, but they're willing to change their minds if they are shown data, and so that was comforting to hear both of them talk in those terms.

I don't know, and certainly Dr. Stunz can comment, and he's up next, as to the scope and breadth of his concerns that he has with trying to solve these issues, but I got the impression that it was mostly on the management side of the house, and I am just wondering -- Once we see the final numbers from the Great Red Snapper Count, but, if it's significantly higher, two or three or four times higher, I think some introspection needs to occur relative to how then those estimates were created from the first iteration that were so far off.

That's just something to be thinking about, and hopefully other folks can be thinking about it as well, as to what process would that be, and are the same issues that caused such a disparity for this species -- Are they in the science, if you will, or are they in the model for other species that we manage, because certainly red snapper are not the only species that we hear folks saying there's a bunch of fish out there, and it's particularly those that are under ACLs. I just wanted to add that, and I will come back to my other thing after Dr. Porch. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Kevin. That was a good point. Greg.

**DR. STUNZ:** Thank you, Martha. Just to point back to the

snapper abundance estimate study, and I want to make sure -- You know, this was never intended, and nor does our team feel that this is like the end-all or it's going to replace the assessment or anything like that.

I mean, it was to enhance our knowledge base and build on that and give more scientific information to what we already have, and so I don't want anyone to think that we're just going to give it over and here's this. That's not the case at all, but I think it is going to shed some very informative light on potential stocks of snapper that we may have missed and that sort of thing, in terms of calculating that abundance.

I just wanted to clarify that, Martha, and then, Kevin, to your point, as far as how this will be built into the process, that's kind of where we leave this study as the scientific team and then it takes over again with the SSC, and then, of course, Clay's shop figures out how that integrates into the assessment or what they're going to do with that, and we don't necessarily, other than I'm a member of this council -- We don't have a direct role in that, other than I fully expect reports and briefings to occur, and, in fact, I look forward to briefing you, Tom and Carrie, whenever you all are ready after Friday, this group, at least the preliminary briefing, so we can talk about broad numbers that will be developed into a final report.

I expect us to have many, many meetings with Clay and his team and his lead analyst, to really understand the study and how to build it into the process. What that looks like right now, well, I don't know, and Clay would, obviously, have to guide that process.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thank you, Greg. Next on the list is Phil Dyskow.

**MR. DYSKOW:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Greg, I appreciate what you've said. I am not trying to put words in your mouth, but I am concerned that we don't use the Great Red Snapper Count data as a one-time fix to this problem we have of calibrating between state data and MRIP.

If we make the population bigger somehow, that gives everybody more fish, but it doesn't solve the fundamental problem. We have these formulas that may or may not make sense, and we can defend MRIP until we're dead, but there is still is a real concern between the better -- I shouldn't use the word "better", but the more detailed state data that we get and MRIP, which uses a system that I can't see how anyone would say it's a

better system, or a more accurate system. We have to fix that problem. We can't just use the Great Red Snapper Count as a one-time Band-Aid to fix this fundamental problem that we have.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Phil. Next in the queue I have Clay.

**DR. PORCH:** Thank you. I agree with Greg and everyone, and I am super excited to see the results from the Great Red Snapper Count. As many of you know, I was involved in the beginning, hosting the workshops that we used to put together the RFP for this, and I would have loved to have been involved, except I drafted the RFP, and so it would have been a conflict of interest, but I think this kind of thing is incredibly timely, and I would say that, just so you know, this actually is not a review of the stock assessment.

They are not looking at the stock assessment and figuring out what's right or wrong. It's a completely independent assessment, and so what they have done is used state-of-the-art technology to do something that has never been done in the country before.

They used a whole bunch of different technologies in different parts of the Gulf, because some types of technology don't work as well in the Gulf as others, and many of you, like Bob and all, know this. They have stitched it all together to come up with a total estimate of the abundance of red snapper.

I am as excited as anybody to see this, because one of the things they've done is go all over the entire Gulf of Mexico, and they're not just looking at one type of habitat, and they're looking at everything, and so this is a really powerful thing, and that's why it was so expensive, but I think, not only is it going to inform red snapper, and, yes, as scientists, we are all excited about it, because we're going to have information that we've never had before, but the other thing that it's going to do is help inform us how we can reinvent our entire survey process.

They used smaller vessels, for a large part, and they are getting other fish besides red snapper in there, and so, at the same time, we've actually got a project going on with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission, part of the SEAMAP, and that is to look at how we might reinvent our surveys, taking advantage of all the things we learned from the Great Red Snapper Count and many other pilot studies that we've been doing internally.

We're trying to put that all together, not only to get better species-specific estimates, but also more information for ecosystem-based management, and so I just wanted to kind of make that clear. This is something that we're all looking forward to, and I think it's going to change the game in the Gulf. Having said all that, of course, it is an expensive endeavor, as Greg has explained, but I think we'll learn quite a lot.

The other thing that I do want to bring up is Phil is right, in that this doesn't make the calibration conversion factor thing go away. I think that's a separate issue that we need to tackle. Some of you from the states know that we've been trying to pursue RESTORE funding to come up with a plan where we can groundtruth some of these surveys and also expand on the efforts that the states and Richard Cody's group are doing in trying to understand why they are different.

There is definitely two things going on. We need to do a better job doing our surveys, and the Great Red Snapper Count will help point the way for that, and also pursuing how do we determine what's the best way to collect all the types of data we need for recreational fisheries, and I think that's a separate track, and both things need to happen.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Clay. It's good to hear that you guys are thinking about the big picture. Next, I have -- I thought I had Kevin, but it seems to have disappeared. Kevin, do you still want to speak?

**MR. ANSON:** Yes, Madam Chair. With three minutes left to go in your scheduled meeting time, I will offer a motion, and I sent it to staff already. Let's see if we can bring that up, and my computer is running a little slower behind what's shown on the screen, and so I'm just going to go ahead and read it, for shortness, for brevity.

**The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council instructs that management advice for Gulf of Mexico red snapper be derived using the unadjusted harvest estimates from the state surveys (Texas Parks and Wildlife, LA Creel, Mississippi Tails n' Scales, Alabama Snapper Check and Florida Gulf Reef Fish Survey) until such time as the causal factors and relationships explaining the disagreement between MRIP FES survey and the state surveys are established.** That's my motion.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, Kevin. I think the screen is a little bit slow for all of us. While we're waiting for that to go on the board, let's check in with Dr. Frazer and see how he

would like to proceed, since, as you mentioned, is about four o'clock. Assuming this motion gets a second, would you like to debate that motion now, or would you like to save this for tomorrow?

**DR. FRAZER:** I think what I would like to do is, if it gets a second, I think that I would like people to stew on it, to be honest with you, and save it for Full Council. I think, if it gets a second, I would allow Kevin some time to provide some rationale for the motion, but I think we'll pick up discussion in Full Council, and I think that would give people some time to really think about it. It's too late to try to push it.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay.

**GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I would like to second it.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thank you, General Spraggins. I am just going to read the motion, now that it's on the board, and at least I can see it, and hopefully you all can too at this point, but I know, for whatever reason, late in the day, the internet decides to take a nap.

The motion is the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council instructs that management advice for Gulf of Mexico red snapper be derived using the unadjusted harvest estimates from the state surveys, and I'm not going to read them all out, until such time as the causal factors and relationships explaining the disagreement between MRIP FES survey and the state surveys are established. Kevin, do you want to just briefly give us some -- Give us your thoughts on this, where you're coming from?

**MR. ANSON:** Certainly. Thank you. We have had lots of discussion today and presentations provided from both the agency as well as summary information from the SSC and the review of the various calibration workshops, and kind of the common thread, or the common theme, is that the FES survey is providing estimates, and the actual estimates are much larger than the Coastal Household Telephone Survey.

There is not much rationale for why that exists, other than there is a change in methodology, and they're getting a little higher response rate and such, and so there was dissention, if you will, I guess for lack of a better term, or there was certainly a motion that was almost passed at the SSC that would lean heavily upon state surveys, where they existed for certain species, and so this -- There's just a lot of issues related to the FES survey that just have not been borne out yet, and so

this is an attempt to try to address that in the short term, so that we can address some of these other issues related to allocation and in the red snapper fishery. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Kevin. Okay. I thought I saw Dr. Simmons' hand, but it's gone now. Richard, it looks like you're the only one right now.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Madam Chair, I just wanted to remind the committee that we did send a letter to Dr. Porch and the Science Center after the June council meeting discussing and requesting that interim analysis for red snapper and requesting that, as appropriate, the data generated from the Great Red Snapper Count be included.

We originally had planned a preliminary presentation during the September SSC meeting to receive that, and that, unfortunately, had to be pushed back, and so, right now, we are just waiting to hear from Dr. Stunz and Dr. Clay Porch as to when the timing can move forward, and so, right now, in a letter, we're requesting that this be done in January of 2021 and go to the SSC before the January 25 through 28, 2021 council meeting. We're just waiting for some feedback on that timeline. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks for the reminder on that. That's probably -- I am guessing it's too soon for Clay or Greg to be able to confirm that that's still a realistic timeline, but I don't know if either of you all want to jump in on that.

**DR. STUNZ:** Martha, did you want me to just jump in real quick on that?

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Sure.

**DR. STUNZ:** I mean, I think that's realistic. There's no problem giving a preliminary briefing to the council of what we've found, but getting through the SSC in time for them to vet it -- You know, that's going to take a little bit longer, and I assume everyone would like to know the take-home message, and then the SSC would do their thing, but I will defer that to Tom and Carrie to work out how to do that.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Greg. Richard, do you have something to contribute here?

**DR. CODY:** I just wanted to address Kevin's point that not much is known about the differences between the FES and the CHTS. I will point out that we made presentations on that very topic to

the South Atlantic Council, Mid-Atlantic, and the Gulf Council, where we outlined some of the reasons we feel the FES is a better estimate of fishing effort than the CHTS.

Among those were the fact that you have response rates among the CHTS that basically is less than 10 percent. The demographic of those respondents does not match the fishing population, and so there are plenty of pieces of information out there, and I just don't want people to leave with the impression that this has not been looked at. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. Thanks, Richard. Clay, I think I saw you trying to jump in, maybe to answer the question about the interim analysis, but I can't see your name on the list now, and so, if you have something to say, go ahead.

**DR. PORCH:** I agree with him that we -- Our goal anyway is to have some estimates by the end of January, but it's just really hard to say anything definitive until we've actually seen the data, because the devil is always in the details, and so we need to think about, one, what's the best way to use this data, and, two, do we have the actual information to do what it is that we're attempting to do, and so it's just hard to give you a definitive answer until Greg's group shares the data with us and we talk it through.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Fair enough. Okay. Dr. Frazer.

**DR. FRAZER:** Okay. Again, I think it's getting late in the day, and I think it's been the type of discussion that we anticipated, and I think that we have a motion on the board and a rationale for the motion, and we have a second for that motion, but I do not want to rush into a vote on this particular motion, or any motion for that matter, and I think it has some pretty significant consequences for us moving forward, and I want people to take some time to think about that before we go into Full Council tomorrow.

I think we'll leave it there, and I appreciate everybody's time, and I think it was a fairly constructive dialogue, and so, in that sense, I'm pleased, but we'll see folks again tomorrow at 9:00. I want to remind people that we have a session at 4:30, a Q&A, and Dr. Crabtree and myself will be available for that, but we are going to have to switch platforms for that, and so we'll leave the Adobe Connect platform and go to a Go to Webinar platform, and so I will see everybody who is interested in joining that session at 4:30, and, if you're not there, I will see you tomorrow at nine o'clock, and so thank you for your

time.

(Whereupon, the meeting on September 29, 2020.)

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September 30, 2020

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council reconvened via webinar on Wednesday morning, September 30, 2020, and was called to order by Chairman Martha Guyas.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Staff is pulling up the motion that we have on the table, and this is Kevin's motion. Given that we have Full Council this morning and public testimony that is a hard start at 9:30, probably the most prudent thing to do at this point, Kevin, if you're up for it, would be to withdraw this motion from the Reef Fish Committee, and then we can maybe reintroduce it at Full Council this afternoon. Kevin, are you down for that?

**MR. ANSON:** Yes. I could be down for that. At the last meeting, public testimony was very short, and so I'm just wondering, instead of the afternoon, instead of going into committee reports and bringing it up under the Reef Fish Committee report, at that time, or the time scheduled for it, is that we actually -- Assuming that there is time left over with public testimony, is that we bring it up immediately after public testimony.

Just essentially postpone the committee, potentially postpone the committee, or bring it up as a special agenda item, if you will, after public testimony.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Okay. I will leave that up to Tom.

**DR. FRAZER:** Kevin, I appreciate that. It's hard to say how much participation we will have in the public comment period, and so the intent is not to essentially discount the motion at all, and my preference would be to revisit the issue during the committee report.

**MR. ANSON:** I understand. Just if there is opportunity, if

public testimony is short and does not take up the time allotted, I am requesting that we bring it up at that time, and that's all.

**DR. FRAZER:** Okay, Kevin, and so we'll do is we'll see where we stand with regard to the schedule, and we can, at that point -- If there is adequate time, we can initiate the Reef Fish Committee report, perhaps first, and alter the agenda that way. Okay. I understand where you're coming from. Thank you.

**MR. ANSON:** All right. **With that, then I withdraw my motion then, based on that.** Thank you, Madam Chair and Chair.

**CHAIRMAN GUYAS:** Thanks, Kevin. Okay. With that motion withdrawn, we do have some other business, but I would suggest that maybe we roll that other business onto the council other business, and, with that, I think we are finished with the Reef Fish Committee.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on September 30, 2020.)

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