

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

299TH MEETING

FULL COUNCIL SESSION

The Lodge at Gulf State Park Gulf Shores, Alabama

APRIL 10-11, 2024

VOTING MEMBERS

- Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- Kesley Banks.....Texas
- Susan Boggs.....Alabama
- Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
- J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- Tom Frazer.....Florida
- Bob Gill.....Florida
- Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- C.J. Sweetman.....Florida
- Ed Walker.....Florida
- Troy Williamson.....Texas

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- LTJG Jacob Shinnick.....USCG

STAFF

- Max Birdsong.....Social Scientist
- Assane Diagne.....Economist
- Matt Freeman.....Economist
- John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- Jessica Matos.....Administrative & Accounting Technician
- Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

1 Austin Abrams.....
2 Brett Alger.....NOAA OST
3 Scott Bannon.....AL
4 Elizabeth Boggs.....Orange Beach, AL
5 Randy Boggs.....Orange Beach, AL
6 Eric Brazer.....Shareholders Alliance
7 B.J. Burkett.....Panama City, FL
8 Rick Burris.....MS
9 Heather Blough.....NOAA
10 Ron Chicola.....LA
11 Anthony Colletti.....LA
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21 Brian Lewis.....Clearwater, FL
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24 Lawrence Marino.....LA
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29 Laura Picariello.....
30 Clarence Seymour.....Biloxi, MS
31 Jessica Stephen.....NOAA
32 James Stevens.....Apalachicola, FL
33 Mark Tryon.....Gulf Breeze, FL
34 Matt Walia.....NOAA OLE
35 David Walker.....AL
36 John Walter.....SEFSC
37 Jerry Whisenhunt.....Dauphin Island, AL
38 Johnny Williams.....Galveston, TX
39 Dale Woodruff.....ACFA, AL
40 Jerome Young.....FKCFA, FL
41 Bob Zales.....Panama City, FL
42 Jim Zurbrick.....Steinhatchee, FL
43
44 - - -
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1
2
3 Table of Motions..... 3
4
5 Call to Order, Announcements, and Introductions..... 7
6
7 Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes..... 9
8
9 Presentations..... 10
10 Brief Update on Recreational Initiative..... 10
11 Opportunities to Advance EEJ in GOM Fisheries..... 10
12 Supporting Agency Update from U.S. Coast Guard..... 27
13 Update from BOEM on Wind Energy Development in the GOM... 29
14
15 Public Comment..... 42
16
17 Committee Reports..... 102
18 Gulf SEDAR Committee Report..... 102
19
20 South Atlantic Council Liaison Report..... 125
21
22 Committee Reports (Continued)..... 132
23 Shrimp Committee Report..... 132
24 Data Collection Committee Report..... 153
25 Reef Fish Committee Report..... 167
26 Closed Session Report: Announcement of Officer of the Year 223
27 Mackerel Committee Report..... 224
28
29 Supporting Agencies Update..... 230
30 Alabama Law Enforcement Efforts..... 230
31 NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE)..... 234
32 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission..... 241
33
34 Discussion of Council Planning and Primary Activities..... 244
35
36 Other Business..... 246
37 Federal Charter Vessel ID Marking Requirements..... 246
38 Discussion of Green Hydrogen Production..... 248
39 Magnuson-Stevens Act Confidentiality Proposed Rulemaking.. 253
40
41 Adjournment 264
42

- - -

TABLE OF MOTIONS

1
2
3 [PAGE 133](#): Motion to request that National Marine Fisheries Service
4 continue with the Texas Federal Closure in the coming year, in
5 conjunction with the State of Texas closure in 2024. [The motion](#)
6 [carried on page 134](#).

7
8 [PAGE 136](#): Motion that, in Alternative 3, to replace "a non-OLE
9 server" with "the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) or
10 Office of Science and Technology". [The motion carried on page](#)
11 [137](#).

12
13 [PAGE 138](#): Motion to request NMFS adopt the following priorities
14 for utilizing the FY24 \$850,000 appropriation for ELB development
15 and implementation: 1. Sufficient funding to ensure the SEFSC
16 server has capacity to receive and store shrimp fishery vessel
17 position data; 2. Develop a statistically robust design for
18 distributing units to a representative portion of the fleet that
19 would be comparable to the last ten years; 3. Cover the cost of
20 providing units and cellular service to those shrimp vessels,
21 pursuant to the Early Adopter Program. [The motion carried on page](#)
22 [138](#).

23
24 [PAGE 144](#): Motion that staff send a letter to NMFS requesting a
25 report on the analysis of the 1 percent threshold increments for
26 the red snapper bycatch in the Gulf shrimp fishery. [The motion](#)
27 [was withdrawn on page 149](#).

28
29 [PAGE 152](#): Motion to request staff prepare a letter to respond to
30 the request for input on noncompliance of Responsible Fisheries
31 Management Certification in the shrimp industry. [The motion](#)
32 [carried on page 153](#).

33
34 [PAGE 156](#): Motion to have the IPT explore how to incorporate
35 economic data collection into the amendment. [The motion carried](#)
36 [on page 156](#).

37
38 [PAGE 157](#): Motion to request that NMFS examine the possibility of
39 randomly sampling economic data from charter-for-hire reporting
40 system participants and report back to the council on the viability
41 of this approach at the next council meeting. [The motion carried](#)
42 [on page 162](#).

43
44 [PAGE 163](#): Motion to request staff bring back a suite of validation
45 options to include the recommendations made by the Ad Hoc Charter-

1 for-Hire Data Collection AP. [The motion carried on page 167.](#)

2
3 [PAGE 167](#): Motion that staff develop a document to adjust the
4 annual catch target (ACT) buffer for the federal-water charter-
5 for-hire red snapper sector. [The motion carried on page 171.](#)

6
7 [PAGE 171](#): Motion that staff develop a document to adjust the for-
8 hire red snapper season and private recreational red snapper
9 accountability measures. [The motion carried on page 181.](#)

10
11 [PAGE 190](#): Motion to direct staff to explore the removal of the
12 twenty-fathom closure for shallow-water grouper for the
13 recreational fishery in the months of February and March in the
14 Gulf of Mexico. [The motion carried on page 192.](#)

15
16 [PAGE 201](#): Motion to discontinue work on Reef Fish Amendment 61.
17 [The motion carried on page 201.](#)

18
19 [PAGE 209](#): Motion that the council recognizes the results of the
20 SEDAR 85 stock assessment and the SSC's recommendations for catch
21 limits for the deepwater grouper complex and requests staff to
22 begin development of a document to modify the deepwater grouper
23 catch limits accordingly. [The motion carried on page 209.](#)

24
25 [PAGE 216](#): Motion to include in the development of Amendment 60,
26 a method to equitably reclaim all shares and to distribute the
27 commercial allocation through a public auction to be administered
28 by an independent third party. [The motion failed on page 219.](#)

29
30 [PAGE 220](#): Motion to approve the following purpose and need and
31 list of actions for inclusion in Amendment 60: Purpose: The
32 purpose of this action is to increase access and opportunities to
33 Gulf of Mexico IFQ programs by equitably distributing IFQ shares,
34 and allocation held by NMFS and reclaimed from inactive accounts
35 or accounts not meeting certain eligibility requirements. Need:
36 The need for this action is to address access barriers creating
37 inequities in the Gulf of Mexico IFQ fisheries. Actions: 1. What
38 shares to redistribute (reclaimed, inactive, other); 2. What
39 allocation to redistribute (quota increases, other); 3.
40 Redistribution methods; 4. Eligibility criteria (shares,
41 allocation); 5. Appeals process. [The motion carried on page 222.](#)

42
43 [PAGE 226](#): Motion to make Alternative 2 the preferred alternative
44 in Action 1. [The motion carried on page 226.](#)

1 [PAGE 226](#): Motion to make Alternative 2 the preferred alternative
2 in Action 2. [The motion carried on page 226](#).

3
4 [PAGE 227](#): Motion to add an action to Framework Amendment 14
5 looking at bag limits. [The motion carried on page 227](#).

6
7 - - -
8

1 The Full Council of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
2 convened at The Lodge at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Alabama
3 on Wednesday morning, April 10, 2024, and was called to order by
4 Chairman Kevin Anson.

5
6 **CALL TO ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENTS, INTRODUCTIONS**
7

8 **CHAIRMAN KEVIN ANSON:** Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the
9 299th meeting of the Gulf Council. My name is Kevin Anson, chair
10 of the council. If you have a cell phone, or similar device, we
11 ask that you place it on silent or vibrating mode during the
12 meeting. Also, in order for all to be able to hear the proceedings,
13 we ask that you have any private conversations outside. Please be
14 advised that alcoholic beverages are not permitted in the meeting
15 room.

16
17 The Gulf Council is one of eight regional councils established in
18 1976 by the Fishery Conservation and Management Act, known today
19 as the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The council's purpose is to serve as
20 a deliberative body to advise the Secretary of Commerce on fishery
21 management measures in the federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico.
22 These measures help to ensure that fishery resources in the Gulf
23 are sustained, while providing the best overall benefit for the
24 nation.

25
26 The council has seventeen voting members, eleven of whom are
27 appointed by the Secretary of Commerce and include individuals
28 from a range of geographical areas in the Gulf of Mexico with
29 experience in various aspects of fisheries. The membership also
30 includes the five state fishery managers from each Gulf state and
31 the Regional Administrator from NOAA's Southeast Fisheries
32 Service, as well as several non-voting members.

33
34 Public input is a vital part of the council's deliberative process,
35 and comments, both oral and written, are accepted and considered
36 by the council throughout the process. We will welcome public
37 comment from in-person and virtual attendees.

38
39 Anyone joining us virtually that wishes to speak during the public
40 comment should register for comment online. Virtual participants
41 that are registered to comment should ensure that they are
42 registered for the webinar under the same name they used to
43 register to speak.

44
45 In-person attendees wishing to speak during the public comment
46 should sign-in at the registration kiosk located at the back of
47 the meeting room. We accept only one registration per person.

1 Public comment may end before the published agenda time if all
2 registered in-person and virtual participants have completed their
3 comment.
4

5 A digital recording is used for the public record, and, therefore,
6 for the purpose of voice identification, I would ask that meeting
7 participants seated at the table identify him or herself, starting
8 on my left.
9

10 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Susan Boggs, Alabama.

11
12 **DR. ANTHONY OVERTON:** Anthony Overton, Alabama.

13
14 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Tom Frazer, Florida.

15
16 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** C.J. Sweetman, Florida Fish and Wildlife
17 Conservation Commission.

18
19 **MR. ED WALKER:** Ed Walker, Florida.

20
21 **MR. BOB GILL:** Bob Gill, Florida.

22
23 **MS. JESSICA MCCAWLEY:** Jessica McCawley, South Atlantic Council.

24
25 **LTJG JACOB SHINNICK:** Lieutenant Junior Grade Jacob Shinnick,
26 United States Coast Guard.

27
28 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Mara Levy, NOAA Office of General Counsel.

29
30 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** Andy Strelcheck, NOAA Fisheries.

31
32 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** John Walter, Southeast Fisheries Science Center.

33
34 **MR. TROY WILLIAMSON:** Troy Williamson, Texas.

35
36 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** Kesley Banks, Texas.

37
38 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Dakus Geeslin, Texas Parks and Wildlife
39 Department.

40
41 **MR. DAVE DONALDSON:** Dave Donaldson, Gulf States Marine Fisheries
42 Commission.

43
44 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** Dale Diaz, Mississippi.

45
46 **MR. MICHAEL MCDERMOTT:** Michael McDermott, Mississippi.
47

1 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** Joe Spraggins, Mississippi.

2
3 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** Chris Schieble, Louisiana.

4
5 **MR. BILLY BROUSSARD:** Billy Broussard, Louisiana.

6
7 **VICE CHAIRMAN J.D. DUGAS:** J.D. Dugas, Louisiana.

8
9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Carrie Simmons, council staff.

10
11 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

12
13 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, everyone, and I apologize, Lt.
14 Shinnick, for not introducing you earlier in Mackerel, but welcome,
15 and thank you. One other announcement that I would like to provide
16 is thanks to the Alabama Charter Fishing Association for hosting
17 the social last night. It was well-attended, and well-received,
18 and we certainly appreciate it, and so thank you.

19
20 That will take us to Agenda Item Number 2, Adoption of the Agenda
21 and Approval of the Minutes, and so Adoption of the Agenda, and
22 are there any changes to the agenda that need to be made? Dr.
23 Simmons.

24
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so the
26 Federal Register notice had already been submitted, but we did go
27 ahead and distribute to the council, and amend the agenda, to add
28 in the MSA confidentiality proposed rule, and so there will be
29 somebody online to give us that presentation. There's a
30 presentation, and then the actual FRN with the proposed rule posted
31 on the Council's website, and so I just wanted to state that
32 change. Thank you.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, and I have one change. A request was
35 made for Lt. Shinnick to provide his presentation earlier today,
36 in this morning's session, if possible, and so that was scheduled
37 for tomorrow, the liaison report for the Coast Guard, and if we
38 can possibly move that up into some time in Agenda Item Number
39 III, before we break for lunch, if we're able to.

40
41 Any opposition to any of the changes that have been made, or
42 updates? Seeing none, is there any opposition to accepting the
43 agenda as written? All right. Thank you.

44
45 That will take us to the Approval of Minutes. Are there any
46 changes needed for the minutes from the last meeting? Seeing none,
47 is there any opposition to accepting the minutes as written?

1 Seeing no opposition, the minutes are approved, and so that will
2 take us to our presentations. Dr. Simmons, a Brief Update on the
3 Recreational Initiative.

4
5 **PRESENTATIONS**
6 **BRIEF UPDATE ON RECREATIONAL INITIATIVE**

7
8 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I'm
9 pleased to let the council know that the steering committee for
10 the recreational initiative met on Thursday, March 21, and we
11 reviewed applicants for the consulting and facilitating position,
12 and we selected the consultant, and that's going to be Andrew
13 Loftus and Willy Goldsmith of the Pelagic Strategies company, and
14 we have a signed contract with them, and we're going to be very
15 busy working with council staff, and Regional Office staff, and
16 Science Center staff, as well as with the consultant, to think
17 about what those meetings are going to shape out to be, bring that
18 information to the steering committee, and then to the council,
19 here in the next couple of meetings. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Any questions for Dr. Simmons? Seeing
22 none, thank you very much. That will take us to our next item on
23 the agenda, Opportunities to Advance Equity and Environmental
24 Justice (EEJ) in Gulf of Mexico Fisheries through the Southeast
25 EEJ Implementation Plan, Tab A, Number 8(a). Mr. Strelcheck,
26 you're listed on the agenda, but do you have someone here to
27 present?

28
29 **OPPORTUNITIES TO ADVANCE EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EEJ)**
30 **IN GULF OF MEXICO FISHERIES THROUGH THE SOUTHEAST EEJ**
31 **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

32
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I have a great team of people who have
34 worked on the EEJ plan, and so they'll be presenting, and I will
35 let them introduce themselves, but I just wanted to say thank you
36 for all the council's input upfront, and we have submitted our
37 draft EEJ plan to Headquarters, and we certainly look forward to
38 hearing feedback and input today, as well as showing you how we've
39 addressed your comments.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So, go ahead and introduce yourselves.

42
43 **MS. HEATHER BLOUGH:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Andy. I'm
44 Heather Blough, and this is Christina Package-Ward. We're with
45 NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office, and we'll be covering
46 the topic today, with support from our Southeast Fisheries Science
47 Center colleague, Suzanna Blake, who is with us virtually today.

1
2 You all have received a number of briefings on this effort over
3 the last several years, first on the development and finalization
4 of our national equity and environmental justice strategy, which
5 really provides the framework and support structure for the
6 regional implementation plan that we'll be talking about today,
7 and we also briefed you on the public engagement work that we
8 conducted last summer and fall, throughout the Gulf and the rest
9 of the Southeast region, to get stakeholder feedback and input on
10 ways that we can advance the six national objectives that you see
11 here on this slide in a way that is most responsive, and specific,
12 to our Southeast regional needs.

13
14 Then, most recently, Christina and Suzanna briefed you all, at the
15 last meeting in New Orleans, on that very comprehensive list of
16 suggestions that came out of that public engagement work, last
17 summer and fall, and, since then, we've really went through and
18 considered all the suggestions we received, along with subsequent
19 feedback that we received from Gulf Council staff and from our
20 South Atlantic and Caribbean Council partners, as well as staff
21 inside both of our organizations, at the center and the regional
22 office, and we used all of that information to draft our Southeast
23 Equity and Environmental Justice Implementation Plan.

24
25 That plan was due to headquarters late last week, and so it's
26 currently under review. It's intended to be a living document
27 that we will review, and update, every five years, and perhaps
28 sooner, as needed. You know, this is the first really
29 comprehensive and coordinated effort we've ever made to try to
30 advance a common set of objectives around this topic, and we are
31 definitely learning as we go, and so we expect this to be a really
32 dynamic and iterative process that continues to improve, both in
33 inputs and outputs, as we gain additional information and the
34 continued involvement and support of you all, our other councils,
35 and the rest of our stakeholders.

36
37 We structured today's conversation really to share with you the
38 feedback that we received from Gulf Council staff on that initial
39 list of actions that we were considering carrying forward into the
40 plan, and also to preview with you the refined list of action items
41 that we did incorporate into the draft plan.'

42
43 Those were separated into distinct categories. We identified
44 forty-seven items as immediate or near-term, which we intend to
45 accomplish with existing resources during like the first life cycle
46 of the plan, and then the remaining items we binned into a longer-
47 term unfunded list of actions that we believe are important to

1 achieving the agency's national EEJ objectives, but we don't have
2 the resources to support at this time.

3
4 We understand that there's a lot here to consider, and digest, and
5 so we have organized this content under each of the six objectives,
6 and we're going to walk through them one objective at a time, and
7 then we'll just pause, after each objective, to invite questions
8 about the material, what you're hearing, and also hopefully hear
9 some input from you around topics, or areas, that you're interested
10 in supporting or collaborating with us on in some way, and there
11 is that Tab A-8(b) handout, if you follow along the see the
12 specific details of the action items, and you can follow along
13 there. Are there any questions about the background, or the
14 process, before we jump into the first objective? All right. I'm
15 going to turn it over to Christina to cover research and
16 monitoring.

17
18 **MS. CHRISTINA PACKAGE-WARD:** Our research and monitoring actions
19 aim to improve and expand the social science needed to fully
20 identify and understand our underserved communities and our EEJ-
21 related concerns, needs, and interests. The feedback we received
22 from the Gulf Council staff on this objective was generally
23 supportive. It highlighted relevant council priorities and
24 recommendations from the recently released National Academy of
25 Sciences report, and then it expressed interest in aligning
26 priorities, where appropriate. They also cautioned us to manage
27 expectations and the disappointment that can be created by
28 signaling that we want to increase co-development, and
29 coproduction, of priorities where there are not resources
30 available to fund this work.

31
32 In response, we looked for opportunities to align research and
33 monitoring priorities with council priorities, where possible. We
34 used the council's current priorities but note that staff mentioned
35 that they will be updated this year, as well as the National
36 Academy of Sciences report, noting that some areas of overlap on
37 these topics are social vulnerability indicators, diversification,
38 and allocation.

39
40 Then we very carefully vetted our funded versus unfunded lists,
41 taking a hard look at whether the items included on each list were
42 realistic, and so our resulting immediate or near-term actions --
43 They are focused, in large part, on conducting research and
44 analysis to identify underserved communities and understand their
45 issues and challenges.

46
47 This includes analyzing the barriers to entry in federal fisheries,

1 expanding demographic data collection, and undertaking interview
2 work to better define and identify underserved communities in the
3 Southeast, examining historical factors and processes, observing
4 crew members, and analyzing this data, and that survey has already
5 been completed in the Gulf, but it will be completed in the South
6 Atlantic also, and then conducting interview work with IFQ
7 participants, and managers, to identify IFQ-related challenges.

8
9 Our immediate or near-term actions also include some items
10 partnering to explore and engage on several key topics, such as
11 using specific tools to identify and understand underserved
12 communities, involving underserved communities in participatory
13 research and citizen science, and then examining the effects of
14 allocation decisions and the impacts of seafood imports.

15
16 We also identified several longer-term research and monitoring
17 actions needed to effectively improve our service delivery to
18 underserved communities across the region. We intend to prioritize
19 this work additional work, as funding is identified in future
20 years, and these include evaluating equity issues in fisheries,
21 including underserved community challenges, and procedural equity
22 in the fishery decision-making process.

23
24 Then analyzing the impacts of services and management decisions,
25 and also examining the expected versus actual impacts of fishery
26 management actions, examining the importance of diversifying
27 operations in fisheries, conducting research to illuminate
28 specific underserved populations and issues, including consumptive
29 or subsistence use of fisheries and women in fisheries.
30 Identifying challenges and lessons learned from disaster events,
31 and I will just pause here for any questions, or discussion, on
32 this item.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have a question from Ms. Boggs.

35
36 **MS. BOGGS:** So I understand that you're going to identify and
37 understand underserved communities, things like that, but what is
38 being done, once you identify them, and I thought that, by asking
39 this the other day, when we were having a conversation here, and,
40 for instance, when we put out the fishermen tool, and things like
41 that, are we putting them in out in multiple languages, and do we
42 put our applications out in multiple languages, because that is a
43 barrier, and so I appreciate the research, and the identifying,
44 but then how do we engage them?

45
46 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** Yes, and that's a big part of it, and we
47 definitely have some later items looking at, you know,

1 communication, and definitely translation is part of that. Sorry.
2 Go ahead.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I have a question, and I'm looking at the draft
5 action items, and, under the long-term actions with the research
6 and monitoring, and it's conduct a situational analysis of marine
7 aquaculture development in the U.S. Caribbean, and I'm curious,
8 and what would be your focus, or how would the analysis score
9 relative to location, the physical location, of those aquaculture
10 sites? I mean, how is that viewed? It could be a positive, on
11 one hand, if it's relative close for employment, and access to
12 employment, but, on the other hand, there's also the aesthetics,
13 and the potential environmental degradation and such, and so is
14 there some sort of metric, or scoring system, that you utilize to
15 kind of flesh that out, or rate a project that might be better, or
16 not better, for those communities?

17
18 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** We haven't -- There's a lot of things that we
19 have to work through, and the idea of this project, and it's
20 actually like a joint center-SERO project that we have proposals
21 in for, but it's to really try to do sort of a SWAT analysis, to
22 look at the infrastructure issues they're having, and they are
23 very interested in aquaculture, in their region, and they're also
24 really concerned that people are going to bring it over from the
25 mainland, and not build it from the bottom-up, and, you know, have
26 it community developed, and so it's like kind of focused around
27 that, and working with the community themselves to see what would
28 be the infrastructure needs to support that, what would be
29 realistic for them, considering just the way things work there,
30 and their own cultural needs, and so I don't know, John, if you
31 want to add anything about the Caribbean situational analysis
32 project.

33
34 **DR. WALTER:** Just briefly, and we are doing marine spatial planning
35 for offshore aquaculture siting in the Caribbean, and along with
36 offshore wind siting, and so it's a joint effort to try to identify
37 the right places for things in the blue economy in the Caribbean.
38 Thanks.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** J.D.

41
42 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm looking at slide
43 4, or page 4, on the right side, the near-term funded actuals, all
44 the way down to the bottom, where it has the bullet of impacts of
45 seafood imports, and can you give us some explanation of what does
46 that mean, impacts of seafood imports, and my question goes back
47 to our shrimp issues that we're having.

1
2 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** Yes, and I think definitely shrimp is an example
3 of that, and there is a project going on looking at shrimp impacts.
4

5 **MS. BLOUGH:** We heard, throughout all the subregions, that market
6 competition of imports is really a huge barrier for them, in terms
7 of profitability and ability to survive, and shrimp was a big one,
8 probably the people we heard the most from, but it did really span
9 all the fisheries, and so we are looking at using, or
10 collaborating, with the National Seafood Strategy folks, to look
11 at ways to get at that, by working across the federal government.
12 You know, there's so little what we can do, NOAA Fisheries, to
13 address that, but it's like we can develop those partnerships and
14 come at some of these issues more holistically. The shrimp pilot
15 is one of those.
16

17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other questions at this time? I'm not seeing
18 any, and you can continue. Thank you.
19

20 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** Our policies and plans actions aim to address
21 various institutional complexity and access barriers that were
22 identified during our stakeholder engagement work. Feedback we
23 received from Gulf Council staff on this topic questioned the
24 purpose, or objective, of several of the activities that we were
25 considering, including some terminology that was unclear.
26

27 They encouraged us to try to present the activities at more
28 consistent scales, as some were very generalized, and others were
29 fishery-specific, and they also encouraged us to identify more
30 meaningful metrics, in some cases, and use language that more
31 clearly distinguishes our role and authorities, and they noted
32 their preference for more informal best practices, versus policy
33 directives that were proposed to address certain barriers.
34

35 In response, we substantially refined, and revised, the list of
36 items we were considering under this objective, and we clarified
37 terminology, in some cases, and so our resulting immediate, or
38 near-term, actions focused on ensuring equitable access to
39 offshore aquaculture opportunities and to climate-related benefits
40 and services, working with our observer program to determine if
41 any changes would be appropriate to address some of the suggestions
42 we heard there and to develop an informational handout on the
43 program that can be shared.
44

45 Establishing best practices for how we develop and deploy fisher
46 surveys and collaborating with you, and others, to address equity
47 issues in the shrimp and IFQ fisheries, along with any

1 unintentional procedural barriers to engagement. Then working
2 with our General Counsel and Headquarters to develop policy
3 guidance addressing the use of various forms of financial
4 assistance to support our underserved community engagement
5 objectives.
6

7 We also identified two longer-term actions we believe are important
8 to ensure the equitable distribution of our mission-related
9 opportunities and services in the Southeast. We intend to
10 prioritize this additional work, as funding is identified in future
11 years, and these are focused on simplifying our fishery permit
12 application process, and renewal processes, and developing a
13 policy framework to support more routine and consistent efforts to
14 gather, consider, include, and apply local and traditional
15 ecological knowledge in our data collection, science, and
16 management processes, and I will pause here for any questions, and
17 discussion, on this item.
18

19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.
20

21 **MS. BOGGS:** Can you give me an example of, on page 6, the bottom-
22 left, develop best practices, versus policy directives? Help me
23 understand what that might mean or look like.
24

25 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** I think that was actually related to the fisher
26 survey guidance that we wanted to develop. We had an action there
27 related to developing a policy directive for how we conduct fisher
28 surveys, like how they're developed, are they translated, are they
29 simplified, you know, do we want to -- How can we best streamline
30 them and be consistent across-the-board and address them, and we
31 did hear a lot of comments, from communities, about the way that
32 they're receiving them, you know, and so they're coming with
33 threats, like you have to complete this, or you won't get your
34 permit, and, you know, they're just looking for more information
35 on why we need the data, how the data are going to be used, how it
36 will be protected, and so I think the comment was there, just about
37 we can do the same thing with best practices, without developing
38 additional policy directives, which can seem more formal.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.
41

42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just a comment, and, obviously, we're talking
43 about policies and plans here, but this is, to me, where we're
44 seeing the synergies with the work the council is already doing,
45 right, and so we're building our EEJ plan around work that's
46 already happening, or is in motion, and the other thing that I
47 just wanted to note, and I really want to thank Bob Gill.

1
2 He reached out, a while ago, about the Fisheries Finance Program,
3 and trying to get more information about that, and, although that's
4 not the policy guidance, we're actually talking to them now about
5 opportunities to come to council meetings, going forward, as a way
6 to, obviously, interact with fishermen, as well as potentially
7 other mechanisms for them to meet with industry members. I just
8 wanted to note that this doesn't have to be new stuff, right, and
9 it can be stuff that we're already doing, and we're just building
10 the EEJ plan around those activities.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other questions at this time? I am not seeing
13 any, and if you can continue. Thank you.

14
15 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** Our benefits actions focus on leveling the
16 playing field with respect to the opportunities and services we
17 provide, so that all stakeholders have equal access. The feedback
18 that we received from Gulf Council staff on this objective
19 emphasized the importance of social and economic data collection
20 and analysis needed to characterize benefits and beneficiaries,
21 and they pointed to the National Academy of Sciences
22 recommendations on that topic and noted that our social
23 vulnerability indicators work is a research priority for the
24 councils.

25
26 Staff also cautioned us to manage expectations regarding our
27 ability to increase stakeholder access to grants and benefits, as
28 competitive funding is limited, to carefully consider our ability
29 to address stakeholder requests for national-level policy changes,
30 and support with federal fishery disaster assistance, given our
31 limited roles and responsibilities in those areas. These comments
32 were very helpful to us in developing a shorter, more refined, and
33 meaningful list of actions to advance this objective.

34
35 Our resulting immediate and near-term actions include tracking the
36 percentage of opportunities that accrue to underserved
37 communities, where we're able to do so, so that we can get an
38 understanding of what that looks like. The types of opportunities
39 we're thinking about in this context would include things like
40 contracts and grants, experimental fishing and research permits,
41 educational training, and internship opportunities.

42
43 We included several items focused on reducing barriers to accessing
44 grants, careers and mission-related jobs, and the capital needed
45 to successfully compete for fishery and aquaculture opportunities
46 and maintain profitability. We want to promote the consideration
47 of underserved community needs and federal fishery disaster

1 assistance allocations, in collaboration with Headquarters,
2 states, territories, and other partners.

3
4 Other items would have us collaborate at all levels of government
5 to explore and pursue opportunities for preserving or creating new
6 infrastructure and working waterfronts, and this is a critical
7 need in all three regions, and there are a number of opportunities
8 that we could explore and take advantage of, if we allocate time
9 to do so, and we've included a couple of items that try to address
10 requests to use our authorities to help communities mitigate the
11 threats they're facing from large-scale infrastructure and energy
12 projects related to natural resource injuries.

13
14 We also identified just a couple of longer-term actions that we
15 believe are needed to effectively support this objective, but would
16 require additional resources, and these include advancing and
17 improving science and management in the U.S. Caribbean,
18 collaborating with underserved communities, the aquaculture
19 industry, and the fishing industry, to develop, or support, high
20 school technical courses and other vocational training and
21 technical assistance programs in fishing and marine aquaculture,
22 with a focus on underserved community members. I will just pause
23 here for any questions, and discussion, on this item.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any questions? I am not seeing any, if you can
26 continue.

27
28 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** Our outreach and engagement actions are focused
29 largely on further diversifying our community platforms and tools,
30 and so, really, in response to some of the barriers that were
31 identified during our public engagement effort, and so that we're
32 not unintentionally impeding underserved community participation
33 in the work that we do, and the council is particularly skilled in
34 this area.

35
36 They had a lot of comments, and good suggestions, for us on the
37 actions that we were considering here. They highlighted the
38 popularity of the stakeholder conference calls that we used to
39 organize, on occasion, to discuss topic-specific issues, like red
40 snapper, and they suggested that we consider incorporating more of
41 those types of things, along with podcasts and more use of radio
42 to help get at some of the identified technological and literacy
43 barriers.

44
45 They expressed a desire to help support our interest in increasing
46 outreach and engagement of our female stakeholders, and Emily had
47 some really great ideas around that topic, and so we're hoping

1 that we'll be able to support those in some way, moving forward,
2 and they highlighted challenges with -- Information collection
3 challenges with some of the actions that we were looking at that
4 would have us tailor outreach products to other underserved
5 community members, and those were really related to considerations
6 about the lack of demographic data that we have on our
7 constituents, and also the related PII limitations and
8 restrictions, with how we're using that information.

9
10 They emphasized the importance of incorporating retention criteria
11 into our performance metrics, and also supported the need that was
12 identified for additional plain-language training, and then,
13 finally, they raised some important questions about our ability to
14 control critical messaging, if we were to rely on non-agency-
15 affiliated community NGOs to share information and translate some
16 of the information that we want to get out to communities.

17
18 These comments also were really helpful to us in both prioritizing
19 the list of actions that we decided to carry forward as well as
20 fine-tuning and supplementing some of our performance metrics and
21 modifying the text of some of the actions that we carried forward,
22 just to address the challenges that they had identified.

23
24 Our immediate, or near-term, list of actions now includes
25 organizing a facilitated workshop with our regional Sea Grant staff
26 to try to start the process of institutionalizing more formal
27 communication pathways with our underserved community,
28 constituents throughout the region, and we would like to develop
29 guidance, and options, for more consistently meeting translation
30 needs, using the resources that we already have on-hand, and we've
31 made some great strides in this area since your last meeting.
32 Headquarters, at the national level, the leadership, has
33 established two contracts that are loaded for FY24 that the regions
34 have been called to use for these needs.

35
36 We've also started to look at greater use of the non-official
37 services, like Google translate, to address some of the other needs
38 that we have, as appropriate, and so that action is really around
39 formalizing a process for using those types of services, and
40 others.

41
42 We want to develop tailored, topic-specific outreach strategies to
43 communicate about prospective and current regulatory changes, the
44 grants and opportunities that are available to communities, the
45 status, and schedule, of fishery disaster declarations and
46 assistance, and also, as we mentioned earlier, the why, and the
47 how, behind the fishery-survey-related research that we are

1 conducting. We also have an action in there that would improve
2 our ability to meet our plain language mandates and directives,
3 and we want to look at working with our regional collaboration
4 teams, and other NOAA partners, to see if we could possibly find
5 a way to establish some virtual meeting hubs within underserved
6 communities, to help increase access to those virtual meeting
7 opportunities for people who are struggling to do that.

8
9 Our other longer-term actions would have us pursue funding to
10 increase our ability to meet identified translation needs, by more
11 formally allocating resources to that purpose and including that
12 in our annual budgeting and planning processes. Then identify, or
13 create, one or more multilingual stakeholder liaisons, both at
14 SERO and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Really, the goal
15 here is to provide more of a one-stop shop support to constituents
16 who are calling in with a range of questions, so they're not
17 getting handed off constantly, and to be able to do that in
18 multiple languages.

19
20 We would like to continue, or expand, on the work that we began
21 through the Sea Grant workshop this year to establish really a
22 formalized community liaison network, throughout the region, to
23 help us meet our outreach and engagement objectives in like the
24 most strategic and cost-effective way, and then that final action
25 is additional strategies to facilitate more frequent meaningful
26 outreach and interaction with female stakeholders, including maybe
27 supporting some of the items that the councils would like to
28 accomplish there.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have a question from Ms. Boggs.

31
32 **MS. BOGGS:** So, have two -- Well, a question, and then maybe a
33 comment, and, with the outreach and engagement, do you have ways
34 to measure your success with engaging the people, once you start
35 this process?

36
37 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** So, we have incorporated some performance
38 metrics in the table, and I'm not sure that they're all perfect.
39 We're still working on those too, and they're going through a
40 review, but I know part of the metrics that we're including for
41 those is the feedback of the communities themselves, right, like
42 how they think that we're doing on that topic, and we would be
43 interested if you have other ideas around that, and it wouldn't be
44 too late to work those in.

45
46 **MS. BOGGS:** I will certainly take a look at it.

1 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** Okay.
2
3 **MS. BOGGS:** The other comment that I wanted to make, because your
4 last comment about the female stakeholders -- I get a lot of
5 magazines, being a marina owner, and I see more and more women
6 fishing organizations, and it's becoming something that is very
7 popular among women, and, if you do the research, you also see the
8 women are particularly the ones that bring their children fishing,
9 and that's important too, to get them engaged as well.
10
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other questions? If you can continue.
12
13 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** Okay, and our inclusive governance objective,
14 and these actions are really the ones that touch the work that you
15 do most directly, and we also received a number of comments, and
16 suggestions, from staff on these actions. They expressed interest
17 in working with us to increase participation in public meetings
18 and input processes, and they also noted opportunities to take
19 advantage of existing, or maybe modified, council products to
20 support that work, like the videos on the fishery management
21 process, the navigating the council process brochure, and the
22 Fisher Feedback tool that we talked about earlier this morning, to
23 meet both these and other inclusive governance objectives that we
24 have here.
25
26 They noted agreement with one of the actions that we were
27 considering that would have us engage communities earlier in our
28 Endangered Species Act decision-making processes, and they
29 highlighted information challenges, and needs, related to several
30 of the actions that we're aiming to further diversify
31 representation on council committees and advisory bodies.
32
33 Recommended alternative approaches, or suggestions, include, for
34 example, making use of existing council committees, and advisory
35 panels, versus standing up new ones to support the implementation
36 strategy, as a more cost-effective way to do that, and then they
37 also noted the need to really clearly articulate, and distinguish,
38 our roles, and authorities, related to several of the items
39 addressing council appointments and the Marine Resources Education
40 Program, and, finally, they identified some funding, and other
41 feasibility issues, related to some of the suggestions that would
42 have impacted logistics, council meeting logistics.
43
44 All of these also were helpful to us in helping to refine, and
45 prioritize, the items that we carried forward under this objective,
46 and our final list of items has us working with the councils to
47 increase underserved community participation in public meetings

1 and input processes, and on council and other advisory bodies,
2 including those internal to the work that we're doing within the
3 region, and this would include exploring options to help ensure
4 that all stakeholders feel secure to voice their perspective, and
5 also work, on our end, to amplify messaging that's coming out of
6 Headquarters about the status and schedule and process for council
7 nominations and appointments, to help people better understand
8 what that looks like and what that pathway would be.

9
10 We've included an action that encourages the council to consider
11 the use of committees, and advisory panels, to advise on EEJ issues
12 related to the work that they're doing, and also to support some
13 of our regional EEJ goals and objectives, and we would like to
14 work with the councils to develop, or increase, distribution of
15 some materials to help meet some of the educational barriers
16 identified under this objective, and also with the Marine Resources
17 Education Program steering committee, to look at underserved
18 community participation and opportunities there.

19
20 We've incorporated an action that would have us work with --
21 Continue working with the council's SSCs, and APs, to identify
22 collaborative research priorities and pair that with work on our
23 end, to look at how we can maybe better use competitive grants,
24 exempted fishing permits, and other mechanisms to help better
25 enable fishers to contribute to and participate in that work that
26 is able to be funded, and, finally, that last item is about -- We
27 did carry forward the item to earlier engage communities in ESA
28 decision-making, prior to making listing decisions and developing
29 recovery plans and critical habitat designations and those other
30 types of things that affect them. We're looking to do that through
31 informational meetings, public hearings, and those types of
32 mechanisms.

33
34 Then the longer-term actions we've included here would have us
35 explore opportunities to leverage the support of community
36 liaisons to gather and report input from communities that are in
37 rural areas, and other areas, or types of communities that have
38 more limited capabilities to participate in decision processes,
39 and we're thinking this work might could be an offshoot of the
40 NOAA Sea Grant work that we start this year.

41
42 We would like to develop new targeted competitive grants, and pilot
43 projects, if we can secure additional funds for that work, to help
44 support greater participation in regional research and monitoring
45 activities, and then that list item would have us increase funding
46 to the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils to support some of the
47 identified translation needs, in the form of real-time

1 professional translation, where it makes sense to do so, of
2 meetings, dubbing of council meeting recordings, or other
3 approaches, as identified.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

6
7 **MS. BOGGS:** I do like the idea, on page 12, about information
8 sharing about council appointment opportunities and the process,
9 and I think that's something that's not consistent across the
10 states, and it seems like, when we get to that process, and I've
11 had conversations of how do I do this, or how do I do that, and so
12 I think, if there's any way to have any type of consistency of,
13 you know, how you get the applicant applications out, the
14 opportunity to apply, and how to apply, and just kind of -- As it
15 says here, a process that people clearly understand what they need
16 to do and how they need to do it.

17
18 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** Thank you for that, and we've actually been
19 talking with Headquarters Office of Sustainable Fisheries, that's
20 kind of in charge of that, and they're already developing --
21 They're also doing their own plan, EEJ plan, and they're trying to
22 incorporate some of this in and developing more consistent
23 messaging and websites around that.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other questions at this time? I'm not seeing
26 any, and you can proceed.

27
28 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** We're in the homestretch. This is our last
29 objective here, and the actions that we're considering here are
30 really designed to provide us the internal support structure to
31 get this work done, and so we did receive less feedback on these,
32 because they're more inward focused, but staff did reiterate
33 support for plain language training here, and they also highlighted
34 the National Academy of Sciences recommendation to develop
35 investment strategies for increasing social science capacity and
36 leadership within the agency, and they cautioned us to manage
37 expectations about our ability to implement several of the
38 suggestions that we were considering here, given funding
39 limitations. We took that advice to heart when considering how to
40 prioritize what we carried over, and also how to bin what we were
41 including in the funded versus unfunded categories.

42
43 Our resulting immediate or near-term, items would have us integrate
44 the items that we've included in the plan as immediate or near-
45 term into our organizational priorities, through strategic
46 planning processes, to help us track those and make sure we get
47 them done, and then also to pursue a funding strategy to address

1 the longer-term items that we hope to pursue in future years.

2
3 We want to either continue using the existing EEJ teams that we've
4 already established, and we have, right now, the Council
5 Coordinating Committee EEJ reps participating on those, and we
6 feel like it's been working really well, and we'll set up some
7 sort of new teams to help support implementation of some of these
8 items.

9
10 We want to work with Headquarters to provide both national and
11 regionally-centric EEJ training to our staff in the regions, and
12 also to the councils, to talk about the national and regional
13 objectives in the implementation plan, and we would like to
14 continue to build partnerships and support scholarship,
15 internship, and mentorship programs, really to provide underserved
16 communities increased access to careers within our organizations,
17 and then we also want to continue to organize and participate in
18 interagency workshops, and other discussions, to help us leverage
19 resources and the help that we need to address some of the more
20 pressing and complex cross-jurisdictional challenges that were
21 identified in the plan.

22
23 The longer-term actions we've identified here are to increase our
24 organizational capacity for this work, by hiring EEJ coordinators
25 at both the Regional Office and the Southeast Fisheries Science
26 Center, bringing on more full-time anthropologists, or other non-
27 economic social scientists to support work in this area, and also
28 hiring some additional biologists to support our work in the
29 Caribbean, which has been kind of chronically underfunded.

30
31 We would like to do more routine plain language training to all of
32 our staff within the organizations, and also some specialized
33 training for grants, agents, port agents, and other people who
34 interact with underserved and other communities really more
35 directly, and then we would also like to identify folks within our
36 organizations who can provide more technical assistance with
37 grants and other funding opportunities that are sometimes
38 challenging for folks to navigate. Any questions about this
39 objective?

40
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any questions? I am not seeing any.

42
43 **MS. BLOUGH:** As we noted early in this presentation, the draft
44 plan is currently undergoing review at Headquarters, and it's
45 tentatively scheduled for a June rollout, and so we'll take into
46 account the additional input that you provided today, when it comes
47 back to address Headquarters' review comments later this month,

1 and then, once it's finalized, it will be reviewed, and updated,
2 on a five-year schedule, and we look forward to your continued
3 involvement and feedback in this work, and I'm really appreciative
4 of your considerations and comments.
5

6 **MS. PACKAGE-WARD:** For all the really thoughtful comments, and I
7 know it took time to go through that, but we got a lot of good
8 stuff from the council staff, and also from Max's -- First from
9 Natasha's, and then Max's, participation on our team. It's been
10 great.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you for the update, and the presentation.
13 Dr. Simmons.
14

15 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted
16 to say that I think you guys did a great job. This was a really
17 heavy lift, and I appreciate the extra time after the January
18 council meeting, for us to really kind of digest this, and think
19 about it, and the meetings we had afterward to go through those
20 comments, and I think we have a really improved product that I
21 feel a lot more comfortable putting out there, and I really
22 appreciate that process, and I think it was very well done, and
23 that's how I would like to do a lot more things. Thank you.
24

25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** General Spraggins.
26

27 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I just appreciate what you're working on, and
28 I would like to offer up that, in Mississippi, if there's anything
29 -- We have a large Asian community, that we could definitely use
30 a lot of help with, and, if there's anything we can do for you
31 there, please don't hesitate to call us and let us know, and we
32 will be glad to offer up any information we can, and try to work
33 out anything we can, because a lot of the things you talked about
34 here today, you know, being able to communicate with them, and
35 also being able to help serve that community, is a huge thing, and
36 we would appreciate your help on that. Thank you very much.
37

38 **MS. BLOUGH:** Thank you very much. That's great to hear.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other questions? I just have one question,
41 that is more for Dr. Simmons, maybe, and Mr. Strelcheck, and I
42 have not discussed this with you prior, but, you know, Andy, you
43 mentioned that you were going to try to integrate as much of the
44 ongoing work, or maybe tweak a little bit, of the things, the
45 processes and such, that you have internally, to try to meet some
46 of these objectives, but I'm just wondering, and has there been
47 any discussion relative to including, in any of the documents that

1 we develop, where there are instances where these EEJ objectives,
2 or processes, would be utilized to help formulate any of the --
3 Again, the documents that we oversee and approve, and is there
4 going to be a section that's added to kind of highlight any
5 special, or extra, work that might be related to EEJ outreach, or
6 EEJ activities, that are used to develop the document?
7

8 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think that's a great question. I
9 think we have some opportunity to build that into our documents,
10 and we would have to figure out the best place for that, but, maybe
11 at the social effects and the communities analysis that's done,
12 but we would have to think about that some more.
13

14 I guess, as far as the interaction, or, you know, the synergy that
15 we have going on here, and I think especially for the research and
16 monitoring priorities, and many of the things that were identified
17 in this were also identified in the council's research and
18 monitoring priorities, and we're going to be updating those in the
19 next four years, and bringing that back to the SSC and council,
20 and I think there was a lot of overlap there, in those efforts,
21 and refinement, I think, with this as well, to help get better
22 data to inform our amendments and try to identify what projects
23 could help further that effort as well, and so I think we are
24 drilling down a little bit more to that, but we still have a lot
25 of resource limitations.
26

27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.
28

29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** A couple of thoughts, and I agree, right, and I
30 think there is an opportunity to insert this into amendments, and
31 council actions, and, ideally, right, some of the data and research
32 and information that we're gathering will naturally help inform a
33 lot of our actions, going forward, or better inform them maybe,
34 but, you know, my comment earlier -- I talked to my team about
35 this just being a cultural shift for the agency, right, and so
36 this is inherently then going to be part of our culture, and kind
37 of business as usual going forward, and this is integrated as part
38 of our work.
39

40 With that said, you know, we've tried to be very thoughtful with
41 regard to what we think we can do in the short-term with the
42 resources we have, versus those longer-term efforts, and, in order
43 to really make substantial progress on this, we need resources,
44 and, you know, we need the extra bandwidth, and that's certainly
45 our goal that we'll be striving toward, but I think what we'll
46 have to do, in the short-term, is take this implementation plan,
47 once it's finalized, and be very thoughtful, and measured, in terms

1 of what actions we take on, how we coordinate with Carrie and the
2 council, what do we believe we have the capacity for in the short,
3 medium, and long-term.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Walter, did you have your hand up?

6
7 **DR. WALTER:** I did, and I really want to thank the team who put
8 this together, and Christina and Heather for presenting this on
9 behalf of the team, under the pretty advanced timeframe of getting
10 all of this together and putting it before us, and it was really
11 great work, and I think, in terms of what we're going to do, in
12 terms of evaluating the science that we bring to the table, and
13 our social science I think is going to inform a lot of the social
14 science actions, and activities, that we do, as well as things
15 that we might do with regard to engagement with the communities,
16 in terms of trying to bring that science and make it available to
17 people to understand, and so we're going to incorporate that.

18
19 Again, as Andy said, it's sort of a cultural change for us, and a
20 wakeup call for the lens by which we conduct our work, and I think
21 that's probably the main thing that we can do, absent then
22 hopefully getting further resources to do this, and we'll do what
23 we're currently doing through this lens that I think will be a big
24 advancement. Thank you.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Any other questions, or comments,
27 related to this topic? I am not seeing any, and I will echo those
28 same comments. Thank you for all your work, and there's a lot of
29 heavy lift going on here, and I certainly appreciate all your
30 efforts, and so thank you.

31
32 That will take us to -- I had requested to modify the agenda to
33 include a liaison report from the Coast Guard, and Lt. Shinnick,
34 if you ready to do that, we'll go ahead and insert that here.

35 36 **U.S. COAST GUARD**

37
38 **LTJG SHINNICK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, everyone.
39 I'm Lieutenant Junior Grade Jacob Shinnick, and I'm the Living
40 Marine Resource Officer out of Sector Mobile, and I'll be giving
41 a brief presentation on the 8th District enforcement update for
42 living marine resources.

43
44 This slide shows the 8th District area of responsibility, and, as
45 you can see, it covers a large portion of the United States. It
46 covers some of the major rivers of the U.S., and it also covers a
47 significant portion of the Gulf of Mexico.

1
2 Exclusive Economic Zone enforcement, this slide covers Fiscal Year
3 2021 to 2024, and it covers the interdictions and red snapper
4 seizures in the EEZ in regard to foreign fishing vessels, and, as
5 you can see from this slide, looking at Fiscal Year 2021, there
6 were seventy-eight interdictions, and about 14,640 pounds of red
7 snapper seized, in comparison to Fiscal Year 2023, where there was
8 fifty-three interdictions, and about 5,895 pounds of red snapper
9 seized.

10
11 Overall, this data seems to show a trend downward in EEJ
12 interdictions, but there are some comments to note of this data.
13 Like other military services, the United States Coast Guard is
14 experiencing personnel shortages, which have limited cutter patrol
15 hours, and it does not necessarily mean that there are fewer
16 lanchas within our EEZ. Additionally, assessing illegal red
17 snapper catch is difficult, depending on when the cutter boards
18 the lanchas, depending on where they are in the fishing process,
19 whether they have either just started fishing or have completed
20 their catches, and it can cause variation in seizure sizes. Cutter
21 patrols are effective in routinely recovering miles of illegal
22 longline on each patrol.

23
24 Looking ahead to the remainder of 2024, with the goals of
25 increasing cooperation with Mexico, and performing joint
26 operations, and targeting enforcement operations, and so, in
27 response to the personnel shortages, that goal would be to have
28 more tactical operations with cutter patrols, and basing them on
29 sound intelligence, to ensure that patrols are as effective and
30 efficient as possible, in regard to the LMR mission.

31
32 Domestic fisheries enforcement, this slide touches on Fiscal Year
33 2023 and 2024, and, as you can see, in Fiscal Year 2024, so far,
34 we have 310 boardings. Since we're about halfway through the
35 fiscal year, it looks like we'll be on course to meet past year
36 boarding metrics. Some of the most common violations we see are
37 turtle excluder devices, or TEDs, and bycatch reduction devices,
38 and, again, looking ahead to 2024, or the remainder thereof, we
39 would like to increase our maritime domain awareness, and, again,
40 targeted enforcement operations, and then continue to develop
41 partnerships with NOAA and state law enforcement agencies.

42
43 We recently had a joint boarding with NOAA on a shrimper off the
44 Coast of Mississippi, which had zip-tied the covers over the TED,
45 which this modification would have prevented larger turtles from
46 being able to escape the nets, and this boarding resulted in a
47 significant violation, and it wouldn't have been possible without

1 working with our partners, and so with goals of increasing
2 operations with them, to make sure that we're as effective as
3 possible.

4
5 Marine protected resources, we haven't seen too many requests for
6 assistance for interactions, with 2023 showing two and 2024 showing
7 four, but some of the most common interactions we do see are
8 entangled sea turtle and whale sightings, and, just looking ahead
9 to 2024, with a goal to conduct outreach to local communities and
10 to continue to respond to and coordinate with additional resources
11 for marine protected resources sightings and responses. With that,
12 that concludes my presentation. Thank you to the council for its
13 flexibility and for the opportunity to present today.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Any questions? Dr. Frazer.

16
17 **DR. FRAZER:** Thanks for the presentation, and the update, and I
18 just have a quick question. On that last slide, where you said
19 you have those most common interactions on whale sightings, do you
20 guys just keep a log of all the times that you see whales, and do
21 you have them by species?

22
23 **LTJG SHINNICK:** I believe that is just referencing from the
24 community reaching out to the Coast Guard, and I know our cutter
25 operations are always seeing dolphins and whales, and those marine
26 protected resources, but I don't believe they keep a log on those
27 specific species interactions.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other questions? I am not seeing any. Thanks
30 again, Lt. Shinnick. We appreciate it. Okay, and so that will
31 take us then to the Update from the Bureau of Ocean Energy
32 Management (BOEM) on Wind Energy Development in the Gulf of Mexico,
33 Tab A, Number 9. Ms. Lyncker, are you on the line?

34
35 **MS. LISSA LYNCKER:** Good morning. I am here. Thank you.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Good morning, and we can hear you.

38
39 **UPDATE FROM THE BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT (BOEM) ON WIND**
40 **ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN THE GULF OF MEXICO**

41
42 **MS. LYNCKER:** All right. I do have a slide deck. Good morning.
43 My name is Lissa Lyncker, and I had the pleasure of presenting to
44 the council in January, and so thank you for having us again.
45 Today, I plan to cover BOEM updates since January, and we've had
46 a couple of big ones. I will cover our recent announcement on the
47 second wind proposed sale in the Gulf. At the end, if we have

1 time, I can touch on the most recent oil and gas announcement for
2 the Gulf as well.

3
4 We're in a current formal comment period for our proposed sale
5 notice, and I will get into those details. Again, our
6 communication, and collaboration, is ongoing, and we look for the
7 newest information, and comments, at all times, but, especially
8 while we're in these comment periods, we definitely want to hear
9 back from our partners, and our stakeholders, and from the
10 community, and to make sure we're making the best-informed
11 decisions.

12
13 This is a timeline for the federal leasing process, starting on
14 the left, the request for information, all the way to the auction.
15 As you can see here that little red drop, this is where we are in
16 the process, nearing a proposed auction time, and we are in that
17 public comment period.

18
19 On March 20, BOEM announced that we're proposing a second offshore
20 wind auction in the Gulf. The proposed sale notice was published
21 in the Federal Register, and that's the docket number, and so, as
22 we collect formal comments, we encourage people to go to
23 federalregister.gov and use that docket number.

24
25 Our proposed sale notice describes the four lease areas, and I
26 will get into those, the proposed conditions and stipulations, and
27 much of this is consistent with the last lease, but we do have
28 some enhancements in reporting, and engagement, that I will go
29 into. Bidding credits, those are the same, and I will cover those.
30 We did change the auction format a little, and so we are holding
31 different roundtables, and seminars, to help the potential bidders
32 understand that those new instructions, et cetera.

33
34 We are seeking specific feedback, and so we have about thirteen
35 questions inside of this proposed sale notice, and I will get into
36 what those topics are, and then, of course, a sixty-day comment
37 period, which ends on May 20.

38
39 These are the four proposed lease areas that would be held in a
40 second sale. Two of them are new. The ones to the left are in
41 Wind Energy Area I, and those were included in the first Gulf of
42 Mexico sale, and then there's the two ones in the right. All of
43 them are approximately 100,000 acres, based on the latest industry
44 input for economically viable acreage required, and so two are
45 new, and two are the same, and it also shows the proximity to the
46 other lease area that was sold in the last auction.

47

1 The takeaway is that it's almost 400,000 acres, and BOEM is
2 proposing these four lease areas off the coast of Texas and
3 Louisiana. That has the potential for providing electricity for
4 up to a million homes, and providing, you know, hundreds of jobs,
5 and so wind energy has the potential to -- It's well-positioned in
6 the Gulf of Mexico, with the infrastructure that we have, the
7 workforce, the business, and expertise, and so this would just
8 continue to build on what we started last year with our lease sale.

9
10 BOEM's objective with this proposing a second sale, and I will get
11 into, at the end, proposing potentially a third sale, is to provide
12 a predictable schedule to allow developers to effectively plan an
13 investment strategy.

14
15 The PSN, the proposed sale notice, is asking a number of questions,
16 and some of them are specific to the lease areas, such as the size,
17 the number, the orientation of the specific lease areas, but, in
18 these -- You know, looking at the bidding credits for the
19 developers, but what I want to focus on is the questions that are
20 focused, that are targeted, on enhancing our engagement efforts,
21 looking at benefits to underserved communities, looking at how we
22 currently outreach to tribal nations, and other ocean users, other
23 agencies, and are there ways we can do this better, and so they
24 lay out, and we lay out, in the proposed sale notice, and I'm
25 saying my leasing team, but we lay out, in this proposed sale
26 notice, a number of questions that we are looking for meaningful
27 comments on, and can we do better at reaching out to our partners?
28 Can we do better bringing people to the table earlier? We're also
29 looking to enhance our approach.

30
31 A couple of new things here, and the number of lease areas per
32 bidder has changed, and so we're looking for comments on that.
33 The model, in other parts of the nation, has states buying
34 electricity, and there's a limit of one per customer, but, in the
35 Gulf of Mexico, where it may be more beneficial, you know, based
36 on economy of scale, and one bidder may need multiple leases in an
37 area to make it work, where we currently don't have a process for
38 it to move onshore into the grid, and I think I will get into that,
39 but any questions on the layouts, et cetera, and all of these are
40 laid out -- It's really important, and we're looking for
41 information, and new information we may have not seen yet, or if
42 there's concerns that we haven't considered.

43
44 Looking at the lease-specific terms, conditions, and stipulations,
45 these are consistent with what was used in the past, and so some
46 of these site characterizations, the requirement for reporting,
47 national security and military operations, standard operating

1 conditions, all of that. I would say what's new here is reporting
2 and enhancement of engagement, and so progress reports are required
3 to be submitted every six months, and they must include
4 communication plans for fisheries, tribes, and agencies, federal
5 and state.

6
7 Then we're also requiring that, if there's multiple lessees in a
8 region, that they talk to each other as well. When looking at the
9 project labor agreements, it's not required in the Gulf of Mexico,
10 like it's required in other regions, but the lessee must make every
11 reasonable effort to enter into one, if that works for them, and
12 this was consistent with the last sale.

13
14 Then supply chain statement of goals, and the lessee must submit
15 a statement describing the plans, including engagement with
16 domestic suppliers, for contributing to the creation of a robust,
17 resilient, U.S.-based offshore wind supply chain.

18
19 Another thing to note here is the bidding credit calculations --
20 The way that it's being calculated as changed. Historically, last
21 time, it was based on the cash bid only, and so the percentages
22 were a little higher, and now it's being based -- Those bidding
23 credits are being based off of the total winning bid, and so it's
24 a larger proportion, and so the percentages, for the bidding
25 credit, have gone down, but nothing has changed, and it's just way
26 it was calculated, and so, if you have any questions on that, and
27 I am also learning about it, but our econ division said, to us,
28 the way that it was calculated last time was on a partial, and now
29 it's on a whole, and that's why those numbers look slightly
30 different.

31
32 Another thing that we wanted to point out that's an edit, or
33 relatively new, in addition to this, is that we are allowing leases
34 to propose green hydrogen production, and so it is something that
35 we have authority for, and we did have language in the last lease
36 sale, and lease instruments, and, when our solicitors reviewed,
37 they said it was not as clear, and so we went back and made it
38 very clear, and we do have the authority to permit and allow this,
39 and this is -- You know, hydrogen is one type of offtake that is
40 considered -- This energy production is considered possible now.

41
42 Looking at our upcoming meetings, we are making sure we make
43 ourselves available to help everyone understand what's in the
44 proposed sale notice and what the next steps are. Today, earlier
45 this morning, we had a wind auction seminar, and an industry
46 roundtable combined meeting, to help industry understand how to
47 qualify and move through the bidding process, as well as ask any

1 questions on the proposed sale notice.

2
3 It's important to note that we will have our fifth
4 intergovernmental taskforce coming up on April 18, and so please
5 do go to our website and register for that. Then we have focus
6 group meetings planned as well, later in the month. We have a
7 fisheries, and we have an environmental non-governmental
8 organization meeting, two separate meetings, so we can target
9 specific topics of interest.

10
11 All of these are to help everybody understand where we are in the
12 process, really to make sure, you know, we have an opportunity to
13 listen, and then the comment period closes on May 20.

14
15 What happens next? We have a number of meetings, that we look
16 forward to hearing input, and hearing back on the number of
17 questions we have posed in our sale notice, and then we're going
18 to take time to review that information, and so the next steps are
19 hypothetical. There's been no decisions made. We're proposing a
20 sale, but there's still no decision, but we would then take the
21 information that was provided and review the current lease areas
22 and decide on final lease areas, final lease stipulations and
23 terms, and those would be published in the final sale notice.

24
25 That would have to happen approximately thirty days before a lease
26 auction, and, again, our lease auction would have to happen within
27 the IRA coverage, and it would have to happen sixty days before
28 December 23, if we were going to have IRA coverage for these
29 leases, and so, with that being said, that leaves us at about the
30 end of the fiscal year, and so about the end of September, or early
31 October, for a lease auction, and potentially about end of July,
32 or early August, for our final sale notice, when that would come
33 out, and so that's the timing on that.

34
35 Just to expand a little bit, BOEM in general is looking at four
36 sales this year. We'll do the central Atlantic approximately mid-
37 summer, one in the Gulf of Mexico, approximately early fall, as I
38 mentioned, and then potentially two others, Oregon and Gulf of
39 Maine, later in the fall.

40
41 The week of April 22, we have BOEM regional and departmental
42 leadership attending the International Partnering Forum, and so we
43 will have our full team coming down to the International Partnering
44 Forum on Offshore Wind, and the Secretary of Interior, Secretary
45 Haaland, will be there making some announcements, likely including
46 some of these details that I just shared with you.

1 Looking forward, we are looking, and planning, for a GOMW-3, and
2 so we do have our GOMW-2 on the table, but we are looking ahead,
3 and it takes time to, you know, continue this outreach and
4 engagement, and conduct data refreshes, and we're doing that now,
5 and working with NOAA's National Center for Coastal Ocean Sciences,
6 NCOS, and so a huge thank you to them and their team and their
7 expertise.

8
9 We're also looking at transition planning, beginning now and
10 working with the Department of Energy and NCOS, to better
11 understand the most deconflicted corridors for transmission, and
12 then we have ongoing hurricane research. We've funded a number of
13 studies with NREL to get the latest wind speeds across the Gulf
14 and understand the latest hurricane technologies.

15
16 BOEM's goal is, again, to provide a predictable schedule to allow
17 developers to -- We're not sure if industry is going to -- You
18 know, if it's going to be similar to the last sale or not, and,
19 you know, we've kept in contact over the last year, but what we've
20 heard is predictability helps in planning, and so we can do that,
21 and we will continue to ensure the appropriate engagement with
22 tribes and fisheries and other agencies, including this council.

23
24 The last thing that I -- Then I'll take all the questions, and I'm
25 sure you all have lots of questions on all of that, and the last
26 thing that I would just mention is for oil and gas. On March 29,
27 BOEM announced the notice of availability of the area
28 identification for the Gulf of Mexico, and the area ID is not a
29 decision to lease. It's not a prejudgment, and it determines which
30 areas are identified in the call for information that will receive
31 further consideration and analyses for oil and gas sales.

32
33 In December of last year, the department announced our national
34 OCS leasing program, and there were three in the Gulf of Mexico.
35 The first proposed sale, under that program, is tentatively
36 scheduled for 2025, and so we are -- A decision to lease must be
37 preceded by several steps, including completion of environmental
38 analyses, including NEPA consultations under environmental and
39 other statutes, and so there will be lots of opportunity for input
40 on that as well, but that's just the heads-up that we have wind
41 and oil and gas moving forward together, and that is -- That's all
42 I have right now, and I will take any questions. Thank you.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Diaz.

45
46 **MR. DIAZ:** My first question is one of your slides for hydrogen -
47 - It's called a minor edit, and it's talking about edits were made

1 to lease instrument and PSN to allow lessees to propose green
2 hydrogen production as an energy product of offshore wind
3 generation. Does that mean that, in your proposal, they can say
4 that they're going to use offshore wind as the energy source to
5 produce green hydrogen onshore, and is that what you're referring
6 to there?

7
8 **MS. LYNCKER:** It would -- Thank you for the question, and it would
9 be offshore. If electricity was sent onshore, and it was produced
10 onshore, it's not a BOEM -- It's out of our jurisdiction. This
11 specifically pertains to if they were going to create a hub
12 offshore to produce green hydrogen.

13
14 **MR. DIAZ:** Okay. That sounds like a little bit more than a minor
15 edit, but my next question is, is there any interest, outside of
16 this process, for any sites off the coast of Mississippi at this
17 point?

18
19 **MS. LYNCKER:** Just to go back to your last comment, there would be
20 subsequent review, and so they could put their intent is to produce
21 this wind energy to develop hydrogen, and, after that, there would
22 be subsequent site-specific reviews on what that would entail, and
23 there would be additional NEPA consultations, et cetera, and so
24 it's not just a -- This was included in the last, and so the minor
25 edit is to make it clear this is possible this time.

26
27 To your second question, our call area that we currently have our
28 environmental compliance for, and we have our consultation, and we
29 have our wind energy areas, that is west of the river, and so,
30 looking east, and further to Mississippi, we have had some
31 companies come in and want to understand the potential in those
32 areas, and they have proposals, and we have worked with our NCOS
33 partners to look at what's there.

34
35 The reason why that area was not included in our current call is
36 there was a number of environmental resource conflicts that, at
37 the time -- There was limited industry interest at the time, and
38 so we are working -- There is nothing formal, at this point, as
39 far as an unsolicited proposal to BOEM, but we have looked into
40 that area, with a company's specified interest in an area, and are
41 working with them to minimize conflicts. As we move into GOMW-3,
42 and we're revisiting the area in the Gulf, we are going to expand
43 our approach, and understand the conflicts across, including areas
44 further east.

45
46 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you very much for your response. I appreciate
47 it.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Just to be clear that the Mississippi/Alabama
3 project -- They have not -- They have not even started in the
4 timeline that you presented on your first slide, or your second
5 slide, of your presentation, correct?
6

7 **MS. LYNCKER:** It's a separate process that came in with -- It's
8 outside of the call area, and this process is moving forward with
9 the area, the geographic area, inside of our call area, which is
10 all the way from the southern boundary of Texas to the most western
11 part of the river. The company that has proposed a project on the
12 east, they have come in, and where we are with that is
13 understanding exactly what they were proposing, and understanding
14 the conflicts in the area, so we could maybe help them define
15 something that would work as a project, and so, yes, it's outside
16 of this, but it would have its own full-blown process, with
17 environmental review, consultation, et cetera.
18

19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. I had Mr. Gill.
20

21 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the
22 presentation, and I always appreciate you all coming and keeping
23 us up-to-date, and particularly those that are here, and listening
24 in as well, and I hope you would continue that in the future,
25 because I think it's very helpful on the outreach side.
26

27 My comment relates to the intersection of the council providing
28 feedback to you that's consistent with your timeline. The body
29 that is primarily interested in this, from the council's
30 perspective, is the shrimp industry, and our access to that is the
31 Shrimp Advisory Panel. They meet infrequently, and, as you know,
32 we meet five times a year.
33

34 Recognizing that you've got your timeline, that you want to
35 continue and expedite, it doesn't necessarily mesh with our ability
36 to provide that input from the section of the shrimping industry
37 that's represented by the Shrimp AP in a timely basis, and this is
38 a problem that was mentioned back in Mr. Celata's days, several
39 months ago, but I don't see a resolution, and so I would ask that
40 you consider working with council staff on a way that we might be
41 able to provide the input from the industries that are affected,
42 that we have purview over, to provide that input to you, other
43 than the individual, or organizational, outside the council
44 process, the input that you would get, so that we can have the
45 council perspective as well. I don't have the answer, but I would
46 just hope that you would consider and work with council staff to
47 see if there's some nexus in making that happen. Thank you.

1
2 **MS. LYNCKER:** Thank you for that comment. I definitely took a
3 note, and I would like to add that Mr. Celata did attend the last
4 Shrimp Advisory Panel, and he did present, and, again, we do have
5 our formal comment period ongoing now, with the start and end date.
6 However, we are always open to taking comments, and concerns, and
7 so I look forward to finding a solution to that concern.
8

9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I was going
10 to say the same thing. We did have Mr. Celata give a presentation
11 at the recent Shrimp AP meeting, and I think, also, Ms. Bosarge
12 gave a quick overview of the workshop that was done in California,
13 and I believe she attended that as well. I would note that we had
14 a quick call with our RWE, the lease block, and they are working
15 on a communications plan, and we'll be bringing that to the council
16 as well in the future.
17

18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.
19

20 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I will just add that I feel like BOEM has done a
21 tremendous amount of work reaching out to the industry, and there's
22 been really good communication on both sides. I can also be used
23 as a resource, and I certainly won't carry the full bucket of water
24 for the council, but I am a taskforce member, just like John Walter
25 is, and we will be speaking, with regard to environmental
26 compliance associated with wind energy, next week during the
27 taskforce meeting.
28

29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Donaldson.
30

31 **MR. DONALDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the
32 presentation, and, as Mr. Gill said, we appreciate you keeping the
33 council informed. On slide 7, you mentioned the fisheries
34 compensation mitigation fund, and I'm wondering if there's any
35 details on that fund, who is going to oversee it, and how that's
36 going to work. I know there's been talk about it, but I haven't
37 heard any details about it, and I was wondering if you had any
38 additional details about that particular fund.
39

40 **MS. LYNCKER:** BOEM does not administer the fund. The way that
41 this is written in, it's not required. It is required in oil and
42 gas, and we found it very important, and we're adding it in, and
43 we're incentivizing it as a bidding credit, and so BOEM does not
44 administer it, but we do oversee it, and so they will provide their
45 bidding credit, their proposal to us, and we have an auction panel
46 that reviews it for adequacy, but, really, how it's done, in the
47 Northeast, is there was a number of lessees that got together and

1 created a coalition.

2
3 They created a fund that they put funds into, and another way would
4 be a third party could be hired to create a fund, and so it's
5 really the onus is on the developers for this. BOEM's role is
6 going to be overseeing, you know, the adequacy of their application
7 for it, and then the adequacy of when they're pulling the fund
8 together to -- You know, how they plan to administer it -- We will
9 review that, but it is really the onus is on them, until, you know,
10 law would be created to require it.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

13
14 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you very much for the presentation. I want to
15 go back to slide 9, about the meetings, and you said the detailed
16 information about these meetings is on your website?

17
18 **MS. LYNCKER:** Yes, it is.

19
20 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you.

21
22 **MS. LYNCKER:** We encourage you all to join any and all of these
23 meetings, and the same information for the proposed sale notice
24 will be covered, but it's always great to hear from others, and
25 the questions, and, if you want to speak as well, please reach
26 out. We have points of contact on our website, or reach out to
27 me, and, you know, in addition to these meetings, we met with
28 Southern Shrimp Alliance at the end of March, right when this
29 announcement came out, and we went map-by-map, block-by-block,
30 looking at moderate to high shrimping and considering, you know,
31 ensuring that we minimized impacts, and so I heard the comments
32 about, you know, the main targeting being the shrimping, and we
33 take it seriously, and we want to make sure we cover all the ground
34 for that.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Walter.

37
38 **DR. WALTER:** Lissa, thanks so much for coming and presenting this
39 to us, and I think that the engagement has been very strong from
40 BOEM here, and as evidenced by the upcoming slate of meetings. I
41 really want to thank you for scheduling the taskforce meetings,
42 and that was something we had said would be a good idea, and I
43 think you've gone above and beyond on these opportunities, and so
44 I hope the people who are interested attend these meetings and are
45 able to provide comment.

46
47 We'll be providing a letter of comment on the proposed sale notice,

1 and I had one question. In the addition of green hydrogen to the
2 opportunities that the lessee has in the areas in the areas that
3 they lease, do you want us to comment on that, and then the follow-
4 up question is that, in our marine spatial planning, we did not
5 actually consider the substantial water removals that would have
6 to occur with green hydrogen, and so I think that does probably
7 warrant comment on our part, and, also, if you could just elaborate
8 on whether you're expecting us to provide comments, and, if not at
9 this notice, what would be the process, going forward, for
10 commenting on that? Thanks.

11
12 **MS. LYNCKER:** Yes, please comment now, and please comment with
13 your foreseeable issues now, and so this does not have a company
14 the ability to go produce hydrogen. This is acknowledging that,
15 with the current business portfolio, business line in the Gulf,
16 that there's no offtake to the grid at this time. Companies are
17 looking at other ways, and BOEM is looking to provide access to
18 other uses, potentially.

19
20 You know, right next to leases could be other ways, and so one
21 thing that makes a lot of sense about this too is that, as we
22 create our renewable energy program, and our renewable energy
23 regulations, we are focused on wind, because wind is what we have
24 right now, and it's what we know, and it's what we're working with,
25 but the Gulf of Mexico is a multiuse basin, and so we are continuing
26 to encourage that view of expanding that this is all of the above.

27
28 In the future, there could be solar, or there could be hydro, and
29 so hydrogen is another energy form, but we're really moving in the
30 direction of what does it look like if wind is going to produce
31 energy, to produce another form of energy, and that is a
32 conversation that's happening internally, and down the line, but
33 we really want to get everybody thinking like that, and so, yes,
34 please add your comments in for that.

35
36 It's currently a wind lease, but it is going to be allowed to, you
37 know, potentially -- We're looking at what that means for the lease
38 instrument, and that's why we have this comment now.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you for that question, Dr. Walter. That
41 was a concern of mine that I had, when Ms. Lyncker was answering
42 Dave's question earlier, and the volumes of water that that's going
43 to take, and it reminds me of the LNG days, with the water that
44 may not be physically removed, but, you know, the entrainment
45 issues, and the actual mortality from the process of, you know,
46 converting water to hydrogen, and with larval fish eggs and those
47 types of things, and so that is, I would think, a concern to look

1 into. Dr. Simmons.

2
3 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so sorry,
4 and I need to circle back regarding -- I think it was the Shrimp
5 AP's concern after Mr. Celata gave his presentation, and that was
6 specific to the unsolicited bid process, where there's only a
7 thirty-day comment period, which is not conducive for our process
8 for the AP, or for the council, and so I guess it's still unclear
9 if that process has been fully fleshed-out for the unsolicited
10 bids, and how we would engage on that, and I apologize if I missed
11 some of that earlier, and could you please explain that again?

12
13 **MS. LYNCKER:** Thank you for that, and I did not hear his
14 explanation, but I will do my best to try and help, and there is
15 -- He could have been referring to those requests for competitive
16 interest that is required to go out, and that is thirty days, where
17 we're ensured that there's no other company there in the area that
18 wants this same area. If not, we would have to have an auction,
19 and so the request for competitive interest is a timeframe, but
20 that is not the only timeframe for comment and input.

21
22 This would move through an environmental review that would have
23 some type of environmental assessment. If not an EA, likely an
24 environmental impact statement, and it would have public meetings,
25 and comment periods, associated with it, and we would have a
26 consultation, and so it would not -- The thirty days, and I don't
27 want to -- I don't know what he was referring to, but I really
28 think it's the request, the initial request, for competitive
29 interest, that we would put in the Federal Register notice that
30 would initiate that this area was under consideration, and is there
31 any other competitive interest, and that's part of our authority.
32 We have to ensure -- You know, if there's competitive interest, we
33 would then do, for fair market value -- We do an auction, to ensure
34 the American people got the fair value of it.

35
36 I think that's what he's talking about, but it is not the only
37 time period, because that would be likely, you know, a three-year,
38 or more, process for this to happen, and it's very different than
39 moving through like we did where we did the programmatic on this
40 large geographic scale, and we're moving through with these wind
41 sales over there, and this is a site-specific process, and it would
42 include all the steps, and so hopefully that helps.

43
44 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you very much. That's very
45 important, and very helpful. Thank you.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. I am not seeing any more questions,

1 Mr. Lyncker, and we do appreciate you coming to our council
2 meetings on a regular basis, the agency, and we look forward to
3 any information you can provide to us regarding wind energy, and
4 so thank you very much.

5
6 **MS. LYNCKER:** Thank you for your time.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so that will take us to our
9 scheduled break, or very close to it, and so we're going to break
10 for lunch, and we'll reconvene, and begin public comment, at 1:30.

11
12 (Whereupon the meeting recessed for lunch on April 10, 2024.)

13
14 - - -

15
16 April 10, 2024

17
18 WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

19
20 - - -

21
22 The Full Council of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
23 reconvened at The Lodge at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Alabama
24 on Wednesday afternoon, April 10, 2024, and was called to order by
25 Chairman Kevin Anson.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, everyone. I think we're ready. I
28 apologize for the delay. Good afternoon. Public input is a vital
29 part of the council's deliberative process, and comments, both
30 oral and written, are accepted and considered by the council
31 throughout the process.

32
33 The Sustainable Fisheries Act requires that all statements include
34 a brief description of the background and interest of the persons
35 in the subject of the statement. All written information shall
36 include a statement of the source and the date of such information.

37
38 Oral or written communications provided to the council, its
39 members, or its staff that relate to matters within the council's
40 purview are public in nature. Please give any written comments to
41 the staff, as all written comments will be posted on the council's
42 website for viewing by council members and the public and will be
43 maintained by the council as part of the permanent record.

44
45 Knowingly and willfully submitting false information to the
46 council is a violation of federal law. We will welcome public
47 comment from in-person and virtual attendees. Anyone joining us

1 virtually that wishes to speak during public comment should have
2 already registered online. Virtual participants that are
3 registered to comment should ensure that they are registered for
4 the webinar under the same name they used to register to speak.
5 In-person attendees wishing to speak during public comment should
6 sign-in at the registration kiosk located in the back of the
7 meeting room. We accept only one registration per person.

8
9 Each speaker is allowed three minutes for their public testimony.
10 Please note the timer lights on the podium or on the webinar. They
11 will be green for the first two minutes and will blink yellow for
12 the final minute of testimony. At three minutes, the red light
13 will blink, and a buzzer may be enacted. Time allowed to
14 dignitaries providing testimony is extended at the discretion of
15 the Chair.

16
17 If you have a cellphone, or similar device, we ask that you keep
18 them on silent or vibrating mode during the meeting. Also, in
19 order for all to be able to hear the proceedings, we ask that you
20 have any private conversations outside the meeting room. Please
21 note that public comment may end before the published agenda time,
22 if all registered in-person and virtual participants have
23 completed their comment. First, we will rotate between those in-
24 person, and then we'll go to virtual, until we run out of either
25 list, and so first we will go to those in-person, and we have Mr.
26 Lawrence Marino, and Brian Lewis will be our virtual person. Mr.
27 Marino.

28
29 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

30
31 **MR. LAWRENCE MARINO:** Good afternoon. My name is Larry Marino,
32 and I'm here on behalf of Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill.
33 I would like to address the quota redistribution program under
34 Amendment 60.

35
36 As for shares going into the program, shares in inactive accounts
37 should obviously included, though there should be a grace period
38 of a year to two, to account for sickness or boat problems, and we
39 all know that this category is small potatoes, because, if someone
40 can't fish their shares, they're going to lease or transfer them.
41 They shouldn't be able to lease shares for more than a year or two
42 either, because then they're no longer a fisherman, but this should
43 be dealt with under Amendment 59.

44
45 Adding the annual allocation above certain thresholds is a great
46 idea. The threshold should be the quota at the institution of the
47 IFQ program, since that was what was actually given away when these

1 shares were created. Shares should also be recovered upon the
2 death of the shareholder. Transfers to others, and especially to
3 companies, can't be allowed to be used to circumvent this.

4
5 Termination should depend on the death of the original grantee of
6 the share, since it was their catch history that gave rise to the
7 share in the first place, but it may be that there's no way to
8 track the original recipient to any given share, and, if so, then
9 we now have to look at the death of the current shareholders, and
10 it would have to be tracked through the companies, and
11 partnerships, to the individual level, as NMFS showed that it can
12 do in the appendix to the presentation yesterday.

13
14 Perhaps, more simply, there could be a fixed exploration based on
15 a likely working lifetime, such as twenty years, running from the
16 last transfer before the amendment is effective. Lastly, there
17 was no discussion yesterday regarding annual or periodic
18 reclamation of percentages of shares. Adaptive management, or
19 whatever you may want to call it, was discussed in several
20 presentations to this council within the last couple of years, and
21 I think it needs to be one of the options explored.

22
23 As for distribution of the shares, whatever you call it, a quota
24 bank or a reserve pool, my understanding is that the middle man
25 has to be outside of NMFS in order to charge fees, and I think you
26 need to charge fees to cover the cost of the thing, and to help
27 the fishery, though much less than the \$3.00 to \$5.00 a pound, or
28 more, that is being charged now, and so presumably this operator
29 would have to be a non-profit entity, and its governance will be
30 critical.

31
32 It needs to be governed by council appointees and directives to
33 address how distributions are made, and distributions should be
34 based on the needs, such as those that have already been discussed
35 or others that the council identifies, now or in the future, and
36 the quota should be distributed as allocation, and not as shares.

37
38 You have the chance to correct the original error of giving out
39 all the shares. Give out allocation instead, so you can address
40 different problems as they are identified.

41
42 One last idea that I've heard recently actually addresses both the
43 from and to aspects of the redistribution, and the idea is to
44 cancel all shares, and provide a credit to the shareholders in the
45 amount of the current value of those shares, and then auction the
46 quota each year. The shareholders can use their credit until it's
47 gone, while others have to pay cash. This will take a while, but

1 eventually it would dig us out of the private ownership hole that
2 we're in, and it would allocate the fish efficiently, according to
3 the highest bid, and it would make the fish equally available to
4 everyone.

5
6 Set-asides can still be reserved as well, and there is other
7 details that would have to be addressed, but this idea starts with
8 everyone having to pony up, instead of just a few starting with
9 the advantage of already owning the right to the fish, and the
10 proceeds for the fish would go to the public, instead of the
11 private shareholders. This idea also should be considered among
12 the alternatives. Thank you.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Marino. Next up, we have Brian
15 Lewis.

16
17 **MR. BRIAN LEWIS:** Good afternoon. My name is Brian Lewis. I own
18 a commercial fishing vessel that fishes out of Clearwater, Florida.
19 We harvest all the different reef fish, and I want to just commend
20 all of you guys for the hard work that you put into trying to
21 manage our fisheries, and you've got a heck of a job to do.

22
23 I want to just shed some light on some things. Number one, the
24 gag grouper, right, and so I just want to let you know that we're
25 tossing back anywhere between 300 to 600 pounds of gag grouper a
26 trip, because we don't have any allocations, okay, and so,
27 initially, the IFQ program allowed us to be able to -- I own some
28 shares, which I purchased, and then I lease the rest, and so I was
29 averaging about 3,000 pounds of gag grouper as allocations, at the
30 beginning of the year.

31
32 This year, I was only allocated a hundred pounds, and so I already
33 landed that, in one trip, and now I'm forced to throw back, because
34 we have no access, and so, that said, we were also selected to
35 fill out the logbook for discards and bycatch, which we're
36 complying with, which will be noted on that, and this allocation
37 that's been being withheld for all these years -- Let's see.

38
39 The IFQ program for grouper-tilefish was started in 2010, and here
40 we are in 2024, and we've had no access to any of that allocation
41 that's been, you know, withheld. In 2007, red snapper, the same
42 thing.

43
44 I support a quota bank. I participate with the Shareholders
45 Alliance group's quota bank, leasing red snapper, averaging about
46 10,000 to 12,000 pounds of red snapper for our bycatch, and so,
47 that said, we also need to find a solution for all us fishermen

1 here in the Gulf to address the bycatch of gag grouper. I believe
2 that our gag grouper fishery is much healthier than being prognosed
3 at, and so, that said, that's all I've got, and I appreciate the
4 opportunity.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you for giving your testimony. Any
7 questions? Ken Haddad, and Katie Fischer is on deck.

8
9 **MR. KEN HADDAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman and council members. My
10 name is Ken Haddad, American Sportfishing Association, and I am
11 going to focus on FES, and so pardon me, but it's just something
12 that's bugging us at this point. I think this may follow some of
13 your discussions to back off using FES-based management decisions
14 until the pilot is completed and BSIA is determined. In Draft
15 Amendment 58, you are directed to determine recreational
16 commercial allocations while recognizing the council has passed a
17 motion to make FES-based allocation -- Not to make any FES-based
18 allocations until after BSIA is determined.

19
20 At the last meeting, we were kind of assured that no decisions
21 would come up relative to allocation that impacted the recreational
22 sector. Well, here it is, and so we again ask that you rescind
23 that motion on FES-based allocations.

24
25 We're uncomfortable with any FES-based actions until the FES issues
26 are identified and fixed. You're using FES to determine stocks
27 and continuing with management plans, knowing that data are likely
28 inaccurate, and, as a former manager, it's just contrary to
29 anything I've ever seen. We ask that you back up and look at what
30 you're doing, and I'm going to make an analogy that I will probably
31 regret.

32
33 Think of it as a can in beans in a production line. The production
34 manager determines that the cans are only being half filled, and
35 an error has occurred. The manager doesn't say, well, we will
36 just let a bunch of cans go out half-filled until we solve the
37 problem. He shuts down the production line and solves the problem
38 and starts back up with a full can of beans, and so I would argue
39 that you're giving us a half a can of beans and a lot of gas.

40
41 Very quickly, on mackerel, we don't want any management actions
42 that don't have an impact in solving whatever the issue is, that
43 we're not exactly clear on yet. For example, if you were to go to
44 a two-bag limit, would it reduce catch meaningfully, or just reduce
45 access for those that fish for three fish, and we don't understand
46 that yet, and we would not support a bag limit below two fish with
47 the current unknowns in the fishery, and we know that seasons, and

1 the migratory aspects, make this confusing, but we're more cautious
2 on where is the problem, and how do you fix it, and I don't think
3 that's been fully vetted yet. Thank you.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Ken. We have a question from Ms.
6 Boggs.

7
8 **MS. BOGGS:** I'm going to put you on the spot. I'm a little
9 confused. You want the council to rescind the motion, but then
10 the analogy you gave was to stop production and fix the problem,
11 and so help me understand.

12
13 **MR. HADDAD:** Well, right now, there's just a motion that addresses
14 half of the FES picture, and there is no motion that says hold off
15 making any management decisions until the FES problem is solved,
16 and it's just hold off making any FES-based allocation decisions,
17 and so does that --

18
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Captain Walker.

20
21 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Ken, you said that you could
22 probably live with a two-fish bag limit on king mackerel?

23
24 **MR. HADDAD:** I'm winging-it when I say that.

25
26 **MR. WALKER:** I understand that you don't want one, and it's three
27 now. What are your thoughts there?

28
29 **MR. HADDAD:** We heard -- I think it was Ryan that kind of explained
30 there's a small gain in the bag limit setting overall, unless you
31 go to one, and, typically, in the private recreational world, a
32 two-fish bag limit is the minimum, and you start losing the will
33 to fish when you get below that, and so, unless there is clear
34 evidence that this is a fishery issue that can only be addressed
35 by bag limits, we wouldn't want to consider anything below two.

36
37 **MR. WALKER:** Right, and, on those same lines, what are your
38 thoughts on the Spanish mackerel bag limit?

39
40 **MR. HADDAD:** Not any clear thoughts. I think Alternative 2 and
41 was that the -- I think we're good with Alternative 2.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other questions? Ms. Boggs.

44
45 **MS. BOGGS:** I mean, I was just going to point out that Alternative
46 2, for that action, was the ABC and ACL. This particular document
47 that we currently have doesn't address bag limits, and we're trying

1 to figure out if that's something we should --

2

3 **MR. HADDAD:** Right, but there was an Alternative 2 that was a
4 motion for a preferred, and we're good with that.

5

6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other questions? Thank you, Ken. All right.
7 Next, we have Katie Fischer online, followed by Bob Zales. Katie,
8 are you there?

9

10 **MS. KATIE FISCHER:** Katie Fischer, Matlacha, Florida, fish house
11 owner, and also a vessel owner, and I would like to thank you all
12 for the discussion on distributing the IFQ shares yesterday, but
13 I would like to ask the council, and what is the deadline that you
14 have set to make a decision on these issues, and why aren't
15 deadlines set for all issues, outside of the assessments discussed
16 at meetings?

17

18 I know this is a painfully-slow process, but there is no
19 accountability to any timeframes for many of the topics discussed
20 at meetings, and, to everyone at the table, you know, timeframes
21 really don't matter to you all, because you aren't affected by
22 these decisions, but it affects the fishermen. Deadlines would
23 help the council stay on track, so we can continue moving forward
24 to better our fishery and the lives of the people who participate
25 in it.

26

27 I think I can speak for a majority of fishermen who participate in
28 these meetings when I saw distribute the shares held by National
29 Marine Fisheries. You guys have been talking about this for five
30 years. Just distribute them to the IFQ accounts with landings,
31 but no shares, and be done with them. It's such a small amount of
32 fish that, I mean, I hate to say it doesn't matter, but it doesn't,
33 you know, and it's such a small amount.

34

35 I do believe, when distributing these shares, regional fisheries
36 should be taken into account for red grouper. Red grouper is a
37 Florida-centric fish, fishery, and it would help restore the access
38 to our area that has been sold out over time.

39

40 In regard to active accounts, this is a substantial amount of fish
41 that represents lost fishing opportunity for those who are actively
42 fishing. I support a periodical process by National Marine
43 Fisheries to reclaim inactive shares every three to five years.
44 Inactive would mean there is no movement within the account, no
45 leasing, no nothing, and the shares are just sitting there. I
46 know that hardship was brought up, in regard to an account
47 yesterday, and chances are that that fisherman would be leasing

1 their shares during that time, you know, in order to make money,
2 because they're not making money fishing at the time, and so that
3 really wouldn't be an inactive account.
4

5 There was also discussion on definitions of "new entrant"
6 yesterday, and I think a very simple definition of a new entrant
7 now would be any fisherman who has entered the fishery post-IFQ
8 implementation and that did not have the opportunity to qualify in
9 the beginning for shares.

10
11 I support these inactive accounts, the shares from these inactive
12 accounts, being redistributed to fishermen who weren't initially
13 awarded shares. Any future distributions would go to any fisherman
14 who has entered the fishery since the last distribution, and then
15 the IFQ program as a whole -- I just want to talk about this.

16
17 You know, I'm not sure why we're always trying to reinvent the
18 wheel, every time issues come up, and the IFQ system that we
19 currently have works well. However, its major flaw is the one-
20 time qualification for shares. A fluid program would be a very
21 easy solution to the issues we are facing today, with the lack of
22 the next generation of fishermen. A periodical qualifying program,
23 say every five to seven years, would solve a lot of our issues,
24 and it would be relatively easy for National Marine Fisheries to
25 achieve, since we've already done that process.

26
27 Then, lastly, I would like to say, Bob Gill, thank you for your
28 motion, and we support that, and then, also, I do also support a
29 stop on all allocation decisions until we figure out what's up
30 with FES, because we all know it's an issue. There's something up
31 with it, and so thank you so much for the time. I hope you all
32 stay staff out there with that weather.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Katie. All right. Next, we have Bob
35 Zales, followed by Ronald Chicola online.

36
37 **MR. BOB ZALES, II:** Bob Zales, II, Executive Director of
38 Southeastern Fisheries Association. First off, and I'm going to
39 try to be quick, and my favorite subject lately is the excessive
40 discard mortality from private rec anglers and the lack of
41 accountability.

42
43 We would really like to see, because we think this would help with
44 a lot of the problems we've got in various fisheries, if we can
45 get a handle on the effort that these people are putting on the
46 fish, so that you can then try to identify the number that's out
47 there and work on trying to get the data system fixed, so that you

1 can collect the data, so that we know what the fishing mortality
2 from discards is in a better way than we do now. That's been a
3 big issue.

4
5 Amendment 53, a court case is going through the process, and we
6 support Bob's motion yesterday about getting involved in 53 again,
7 and, if I remember, I think somebody, staff or somebody, indicated
8 that there really wasn't any new information on 53, because the
9 FES system is still years away from getting fixed, but clearly we
10 do have new information.

11
12 Number one, when it comes to the economic analysis, we know for
13 certain that it was wrong, because, the year after 53 changed
14 allocation, the recreational sector went from a year-round fishery
15 to a closed fishery, and it's closing sooner and sooner every year,
16 and that clearly is contrary to what the economic impact analysis
17 said.

18
19 When it comes to the data itself, we know that the recreational
20 part of that was overestimated by at least 40 percent, and so
21 there's information to play with now, so we can try to move this
22 forward to get something in there.

23
24 Lastly, I will talk a little bit about the king mackerel stuff,
25 and I sent you all a couple of emails about Spanish and king, and
26 providing a little bit of the history there, because, in looking
27 at the table, there's really nobody here that knows the history of
28 king mackerel from way back when we started in management, and,
29 when it comes to the charts you showed, on the one graph with the
30 migratory patterns, years ago -- If I remember correctly, and I
31 don't remember the guy's name, but the mitochondrial DNA system
32 was just beginning, and so they looked at king mackerel. They
33 identified a western stock and an eastern Gulf stock; the western
34 stock being attributed to Mexican fish.

35
36 At that time, we used to have Karen Burns, who worked with the
37 Mote Lab, and you used to have information that you knew a little
38 bit about Mexican fish, and the catches, and that hasn't been
39 mentioned in years in the king mackerel fishery in the Gulf of
40 Mexico, and I don't know if that's part of the problem, and it
41 could be, and I'm not sure that playing with harvest levels of
42 kingfish is the problem.

43
44 I don't know that they're not there, and I think they're somewhere,
45 but they're just not where they have traditionally been, and that's
46 something that we've got to try to figure out, and so any
47 questions?

1
2 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I have a question from Mr. Schieble.
3

4 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So I wasn't on the council, obviously, when the
5 analysis that you're talking about, with the eastern stock and
6 western stock of king mackerel -- Can you elaborate a little bit
7 more on that, but kind of not take real long, and we don't have a
8 lot of time, I guess, but --
9

10 **MR. ZALES:** I'm sorry. Could you say that one more time?
11

12 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So, elaborate on the eastern and western stock with
13 king mackerel that you talked about just a minute ago here.
14

15 **MR. ZALES:** We went through this years ago, because the mixing
16 zone was the big thing back then, right, in the Keys, and the South
17 Atlantic and the Gulf stocks and the two councils playing together
18 the whole time. Then they got into a situation to try to figure
19 out -- Because it started with -- It was basically on the
20 commercial side, if I remember, because you would have the western
21 stock of fish move from Mexico all around up to Louisiana.
22

23 On the east side, they would go the other way to Louisiana, and
24 the shrimpers were catching the king mackerel stock, or they were
25 fishing kingfish, and they're shrimping catching them, and they
26 were hook-and-line catching them, and they were catching the quota
27 before the eastern side could get to it, and so they got into the
28 thing of, okay, let's figure out where they are, and that's where
29 that mitochondrial DNA study came from, and it showed the two
30 separate stocks.
31

32 The information that Karen Burns was able to bring back to the
33 council, and I don't remember all the details for it, but I know
34 it was significant in trying to figure out how that went, and then,
35 once she passed away, and Mote kind of fell off to the side of not
36 doing that anymore, then we lost that information, and that
37 history, and, how that will play into the overall stock of
38 kingfish, I don't know, but it was there, and, to my knowledge,
39 the stock hasn't been reidentified, and so we're still looking at
40 a Mexican stock and an eastern Gulf stock.
41

42 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** A real quick question, and so the mixing, or the
43 conversion, zone, I guess, for those two stocks, is off of the
44 mouth of the river, right, the dividing point?
45

46 **MR. ZALES:** What now?
47

1 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** The dividing point for the two different stocks is
2 the mouth of the river, the Mississippi River?

3
4 **MR. ZALES:** Yes, and it was kind of -- It wasn't -- I don't know
5 if they really thought of the mixing zone like off of Louisiana,
6 but they converged there, and I know that, back then -- This is
7 I'm talking the 1970s, is when I first noticed this, and we were
8 in the charter business in the Panhandle, and, in the wintertime,
9 there were no tourists, and so we went to Louisiana and worked in
10 the oil field.

11
12 Working over there, people were catching twenty, thirty, forty,
13 fifty pounds of kingfish, and we're telling that, okay, I wish we
14 had those there, and I wouldn't be here, and I would be in Panama
15 City, and they didn't really want them, and they were catching
16 them, but those big fish showed up, and then we had a couple of
17 commercial fishermen from the Panhandle, and one of them was a
18 fellow by the name of Bubba Hanson, and he went to Louisiana and
19 started the commercial fishery there, and so that's how it got
20 started. The bigger fish seemed to live off of Louisiana, more
21 than they did, you know, from the eastern side of the Gulf anyway,
22 and so how that plays in there I don't know, but that history is
23 there.

24
25 I know Doug Gregory -- He has that history, because he was involved
26 from the get-go, before me, but there are very few people around
27 that still know the history of that whole mackerel fishery.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Diaz.

30
31 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Captain Zales, for coming. Your historical
32 knowledge, and a lot of the other fishermen's historical knowledge,
33 is very valuable, especially on this issue, and many times you've
34 told me that the bait was not good off of Panama City, when you
35 all were not doing good with kings, and what specific bait fish
36 were you referring to whenever you made those comments?

37
38 **MR. ZALES:** What we call cigar minnows, and the technical name I
39 can't remember right now, but cigar minnows, but even the herring,
40 and, over the past -- I'm not going to go all the way back to the
41 oil spill, but after the oil spill, the bait was kind of not
42 around, and so clearly kingfish aren't coming up from the Keys to
43 look at bikinis on the beach, right, and they're looking for food
44 and looking for temperature and stuff like that.

45
46 Over the past several years, and you've heard me say this many
47 times, and last year was the best year that I've had in kingfish

1 over the past five years. It wasn't real good, but it was better
2 than the other four, and so what it's going to be this year I don't
3 know, but clearly there's an issue with kingfish, and so I don't
4 know, and I think it's more about maybe the bait, the ecosystem,
5 or something, that they're traveling someplace else that
6 historically they weren't traveling before, and so I don't know
7 that there's a problem with the stock, other than a problem of
8 where the stock is.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

11
12 **MS. BOGGS:** In thirty seconds or less, what's your opinion on
13 Spanish mackerel?

14
15 **MR. ZALES:** What now?

16
17 **MS. BOGGS:** Spanish.

18
19 **MR. ZALES:** Spanish, from what I'm hearing, because I'm not in the
20 charter business now, but from what I'm hearing, they're catching
21 them good, and last year we caught them good, and right now they're
22 catching them good, and I don't think there's a problem with
23 Spanish mackerel.

24
25 I think that, you know, clearly fifteen fish, which you all saw
26 the email that I sent, is way too high, but that was done in a
27 period of time where we were trying to prove a point, and, you
28 know, the point it proved, in a sense, because we never caught
29 what they said was available, but, you know, ten fish I think is
30 a reasonable limit, and I don't think there's a problem with that
31 fish.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, Bob. Thank you.

34
35 **MR. ZALES:** Okay. Thank you all.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Next, we have Ron Chicola online, followed by
38 Jeremy Young.

39
40 **MR. RONALD CHICOLA:** Thank you, Andy, for your motion yesterday on
41 Amendment 60, trying to get something going on 60 and 69 tomorrow,
42 hopefully, or 60 and 59. On the kingfish, I talk to fishermen,
43 almost once or twice a week, down in Mexico, and there ain't no
44 kingfish down there either, and there hasn't been for two or three
45 years. It's really fell off down there.

46
47 Kingfish went by the same place as the sharks, and they ate all

1 the little kingfish, and they've taken a toll on the kingfish, and
2 the Spanish in the western Gulf, and the groupers in the western
3 Gulf -- They will never be like they were in the 1980s, I mean,
4 when we slaughtered them, but there are still plenty of grouper
5 just scattered along in the mud bottom, you know, and you've got
6 to dig through the eels to get them, but there is a few, and you
7 can do 3,000, 4,000, 5,000 a trip, and it's hard work, you know,
8 but you can do it in the Gulf.

9
10 As far as dividing it in two, it needs to stay in three, like the
11 science has said, because it's really three different fisheries.
12 I mean, the western Gulf is a totally different fishery than the
13 middle part, and then the eastern Gulf is definitely a different
14 fishery, and so I think it should be divided into three, and the
15 EEJ presentation today was really good, if the council would really
16 do something about it and take their word to listen to Lawrence.

17
18 Every meeting, Lawrence gets up there and tells you all what he
19 thinks, and nobody ever takes his recommendations, and they're
20 really good, and that's about all I've got today, and I enjoyed
21 the EEJ presentation, and thank you, Andy, for pushing the council,
22 and keep pushing on, and maybe they will do something for a change.
23 Thank you very much.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chicola. All right. Next, we
26 have Jerome Young. Next would be B.J. Burkett online. Mr. Young.
27

28 **MR. JEROME YOUNG:** Jerome Young, Florida Keys Commercial Fishing
29 Association. I'm not sure how I got on there, but since I'm up
30 here anyway, one comment that I made to FWC earlier is, as far as
31 the king fishing, the fleet this year, three boats were not able
32 to fish, and so, when you're looking at the ACLs, or the catch
33 limits, and the landings, there's three boats that did not fish,
34 and so that's a hundred-and-twenty-something thousand pounds that
35 you're not going to see. They're trying to get out, but they may
36 or may not, and so take that into consideration when you're looking
37 at that.

38
39 I noticed that a lot of your data that you're using -- It seems to
40 me that you're using the ability, or the landings, compared to the
41 ACL, as an indication of the stock, and I don't know if that's
42 true or not, but that's the impression I got, at least with the
43 commercial side, and so I wanted to offer that to you, and that's
44 all I've got.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Young, we have a question for you from Captain
47 Walker.

1
2 **MR. WALKER:** So, you said that three boats weren't able to get
3 out, and was that like for the entire three-month season they
4 couldn't get out, and they were just offline?
5
6 **MR. YOUNG:** Well, they started out fishing, and they ran into some
7 issues, and they're trappers, and they ran into some issues getting
8 the traps in in time, and so they had to go back to that, and they
9 haven't been able to get it back together, and they say they're
10 going to go, but I don't know if they're going to be able to or
11 not, but, you know, within that group of guys, there's only eleven
12 boats, and so they've allocated, amongst themselves, 61,000
13 pounds, and, if they don't catch that, it just goes uncaught, and
14 so that's how -- The other boats aren't making it up.
15
16 **MR. WALKER:** Very good. Thank you.
17
18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you.
19
20 **MR. YOUNG:** All right.
21
22 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so Mr. Burkett is not currently
23 online, and we will follow-up with him later on, at the end, but
24 next will be Brad Gentner, followed by James Stevens online.
25
26 **MR. BRAD GENTNER:** Good afternoon, everybody. Brad Gentner,
27 Gentner Consulting Group, and I'm here representing Coastal
28 Conservation Association. First off, I want to thank the council,
29 and the agency, for thinking about collecting adequate economic
30 data on recreational anglers and for-hire businesses and trying to
31 balance burden with needs.
32
33 I fully agree that good scientific management requires that
34 economics be used proactively in the management process. Humans
35 are a part of the ecosystem, and incentives matter when developing
36 policies. Cost and earnings data is the keystone to capturing
37 incentives and designing incentive-compatible management options.
38 To that point, better private recreational data is needed to help
39 improve proactive scientific management as well.
40
41 We can do much better than choice experiments, which seem to get
42 thrown around a lot, for private recreational values, and the new
43 state surveys are a perfect vehicle for capturing real preferences
44 for fishing trips, instead of hypothetical preferences. I would
45 urge NMFS, and staff, to begin using economic data proactively to
46 improve fisheries management decisions and outcomes.
47

1 I also want to draw attention to and thank the states for improving
2 catch data collection in the Gulf. From what I saw yesterday, the
3 state reports were proof that state management, and state data
4 collection designs, are providing a much higher level of
5 recreational access, while protecting sustainability of the
6 stocks, and nobody went over last year. Well, except for
7 Mississippi. They get ten fish, and they caught eleven.

8
9 Finally, you have a data system that would allow the in-season
10 monitoring, in nearly real-time, as the management system demands,
11 and we need to work towards declaring state data BSIA for
12 monitoring and assessment, as it's clearly a better system. We
13 can't continue to make decisions based on FES, while all these
14 questions are out there, and we also need to work towards more
15 state management of species that are important to the recreational
16 sector. That's all I have today.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Brad. I don't see any questions.
19 Thanks again. All right, and so, next, we have James Stevens
20 online, and apparently Mr. Burkett is back with us, and so we'll
21 go to him after James Stevens. Mr. Stevens, are you there?

22
23 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** No, it's not working. All right. We're
24 going to move on right now, and we'll see if you can get you guys
25 back.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So, Emily, is -- You've got them both? Okay.
28 All right, and so that will take us then to Elizabeth Boggs.

29
30 **MS. ELIZABETH BOGGS:** Good afternoon. My name is Elizabeth Boggs,
31 and I'm from here in Orange Beach, Alabama. I'm a second-
32 generation charter fisherman, and I'm one of three offshore
33 fishermen, or fisherwomen, in Orange Beach, Alabama. I wanted to
34 talk to you all today about a couple of different fish, especially
35 king and Spanish mackerel.

36
37 The Spanish mackerel in Orange Beach, we do see a lot of them, but
38 I would like to see us reduce the bag limit to ten fish per person,
39 and possibly even a thirty-fish-per-boat-per-trip limit.

40
41 Lots of women and children come get on our boats, and so, when we
42 have those limited number of people, it's very interesting to look
43 at the number of fish they take home, and so the smaller ten-fish-
44 per-person bag limit I feel would be very suitable for what people
45 typically utilize on our trips, and then, on king mackerel, I just
46 wanted to say that the number of fish, and also the summer, was
47 very low, and we didn't see a lot come into the docks or to the

1 marina.

2

3 Cobia is another one that I wanted to speak about. I don't see
4 any of them come into our docks or hear about anyone bringing any
5 in. We have several captains, at our dock, who have moved here
6 from the east coast fishery, where they are saying it's absolutely
7 shocking to see the very few number of cobia that we have here.

8

9 Amberjack is another one that I wanted to speak to you all about.
10 Amberjack, what we're seeing right now is amberjack that are so
11 small that juveniles are being harvested, due to their similarity
12 to almaco jacks, and it's amazing to look at the different species
13 of fish and see how similar they are, and we're seeing so few
14 legal-sized amberjack that there are many smaller amberjack that
15 are barely even twelve inches long being harvested.

16

17 You don't see any of these fish, king mackerel, cobia, or
18 amberjack, coming into the docks, and you don't see people going
19 out and targeting them, just because that's something they don't
20 feel they have the ability to catch, because the stocks are in
21 such poor shape.

22

23 I would also like to touch on king mackerel again and say that I
24 would like to see them go to a one-fish-per-person-per-day bag
25 limit, and that's kind of what I have.

26

27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

28

29 **MS. BOGGS:** So, Elizabeth, please tell the council how old you
30 are.

31

32 **MS. E. BOGGS:** I am eighteen, and I will be nineteen in two days.
33 If you can't tell, I'm kind of freaking out about being up here in
34 front of all of you all.

35

36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Elizabeth, Ms. Boggs, we have a question from
37 Andy.

38

39 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So not really a question, but I'm going to just
40 say that your mom was bragging on me, and so I've been told that
41 you submitted for your hundred-ton license, as of when you turn
42 nineteen, and is that correct?

43

44 **MS. E. BOGGS:** Yes, and I went and filed my paperwork today, and
45 it will be sent in on the 12th, on my birthday.

46

47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Congratulations.

1
2 **MS. E. BOGGS:** Thank you.
3
4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Elizabeth, you're popular this afternoon. Dr.
5 Walter.
6
7 **DR. WALTER:** I'm from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and
8 I knew that you had been studying for your license, and so I have
9 a question about the navigation rules of the road.
10 Congratulations.
11
12 **MS. E. BOGGS:** Thank you.
13
14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Congratulations, and happy birthday, Elizabeth.
15 All right, and so we're going to go back to the phone, or online,
16 and Emily is -- Who do we have up, B.J. Burkett or Mr. Stevens?
17
18 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** I think James is up first. James, are you on the
19 phone, sir?
20
21 **MR. JAMES STEVENS:** Yes, ma'am. Can you hear me?
22
23 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** We can hear you now. Go ahead. Your three
24 minutes starts now.
25
26 **MR. STEVENS:** Yes, ma'am. My name is James Stevens, and I
27 commercial fish out of Apalachicola. I've been commercial fishing
28 for about thirty-five years now, and we mainly target gag groupers.
29 You know, for most of my life, about the last probably ten or
30 twelve years, we've been targeting snappers as well, because they
31 have gotten -- over here, and so our gags are mainly -- They mostly
32 have been a bycatch.
33
34 You know, we have caught our full quota that we get every year,
35 and we've released probably another full quota, plus some of our
36 -- quota. Now, the last three years on the gags, it's getting
37 better every year, and so went from catching maybe, you know,
38 20,000 or 30,000 pounds of gags as a bycatch, mainly, and we have
39 rarely ever targeted them, since we got the snappers to 1,800 this
40 year. We were not targeting -- We're throwing back a hundred head
41 a trip, trying to catch red groupers and snappers.
42
43 The stock is fairly healthy, and is it like it was twenty-five or
44 thirty years ago? No, but it's a lot better than it has been in
45 a long time, and it's really putting pressure on the other species
46 as well, and we're losing, you know, half of our yearly paycheck.
47 I just felt that I had to say something, you know, about this, and

1 I don't know what we can do to change it, and maybe do away with
2 IFQs, so, you know, you don't have to target -- You know, you can
3 get away with a bycatch, so to speak, and you don't have to put
4 pressure of one species of fish that --

5
6 Do away with IFQs, but you don't get paid for them like the
7 snappers, and, you know, we've got to catch a lot of them to make
8 any money, because the lease is so high on them, and so you're
9 really -- You're catching a lot of other things that we wouldn't
10 normally be catching. I guess that's it.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you, Captain Stevens. Any
13 questions? I don't see any questions. Thank you, and so, next,
14 since we have the phone, Mr. Burkett, are you there?

15
16 **MR. B. J. BURKETT:** Yes, and my name is B.J. Burkett, and I own and
17 operate two charter boats in Panama City, and also a commercial
18 fishing boat. I also want to touch on the gags. I mean, it's --
19 I know you're trying to rebuild it, but you all got in this -- In
20 the avenue of just doing all these drastic cuts. I mean, we told
21 you all, four or five years ago, that, hey, you need to start
22 looking into this, looking into this, and maybe a smaller
23 reduction, and there's nothing small. Everything that I've
24 noticed, over the last few years, that fisheries does is drastic,
25 and, I mean, and you're cutting people out of the loop.

26
27 I mean, -- in the fishery, to where we can all have our jobs
28 together, but, between gags, we're throwing back -- It's kind of
29 sad that -- You mark my word, and, in three or four years, your
30 data is going to show this, but your data is so far behind that
31 it's not showing what is out there and being caught, and hopefully
32 not wasted. Hopefully the dolphins, and the sharks, are being
33 nice to the gags, and letting them swim back down, but I kind of
34 doubt it. You all need to pay attention to what these fishermen
35 and all are telling you all just a little bit more, and it would
36 go a long way.

37
38 I also want to touch on the amberjack, for the rec side of it, and
39 we appreciate the May season. A little more of a heads-up would
40 have been great, but my big concern about this is, if you -- If we
41 have this May season, we don't want this to overfish the stock,
42 and then we get penalized again next year, and so please tread
43 softly on that.

44
45 King mackerel, they need some help. Before we do anything drastic,
46 which is kind of the new way, I would love to see some data on it,
47 and let's start with some softer changes, before we go from three

1 fish to a half-a-fish, or one fish every three days, or something
2 crazy like that.

3
4 Spanish mackerel, I would be good going down to ten, or maybe
5 seven, and I feel like they may be declining a little bit, but
6 it's definitely nothing drastic, and I want to take "drastic" out
7 of your vocabulary.

8
9 State boats, we're having a huge problem with them outside of nine
10 miles, and also in our closed zone off of Panama City, and it's
11 about fifty miles south, and they're daily in there catching the
12 fish, in that zone we're trying to protect, with no enforcement,
13 and that's pretty much all I've got for you.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. All right. Next, we have Jim Zurbrick,
16 followed by Ryan Mallory, who is online.

17
18 **MR. JIM ZURBRICK:** Thank you, council. Jim Zurbrick, from
19 Steinhatchee, commercial fisherman and fish dealer and a long-time
20 participant in the process. Elizabeth there, that's being young,
21 right, and you're going to be nineteen in two days. When you get
22 to be my age, and I'm going back the whole 363 days, to whatever
23 that age is, and I'm not going forward.

24
25 I want to say, right off the bat, that Katie Fischer -- I like
26 that approach, and she made some good sense, and we spend a lot of
27 time on those few fish that have been in that account, and I will
28 say that the Shareholders Alliance has demonstrated, over these
29 years, that they're probably one of those, like Mr. Marino was
30 talking, those 501(c)(3)s that could actually know who to get these
31 fish to, if the bureaucracy doesn't want to get involved, and it
32 is a bureaucracy.

33
34 A couple of things. On Amendment 58, boy, that's going to be a
35 mess, when you really get into it, and it will be tough, you know,
36 especially with the IFQ component, and you're going to have, you
37 know, buckle up and hold for that.

38
39 Amendment 60, obviously, it's got a few caveats, and I support
40 allocation only, giving it out, allocation only, unless we think
41 that getting the actual share ownership is going to be more
42 beneficial, and we haven't seen that analysis, right, to see what
43 an actual ownership gives you, other than just access to
44 allocation, and so maybe that isn't important.

45
46 I disagree with, the moment a guy dies, the moment, that all his
47 shares are gone. That I don't agree with, but there needs to be

1 a phase-out period, if there's not somebody in the family
2 immediately that's going to take over the fishing business, and,
3 obviously, it's not going to -- In the future, it's not going to
4 be a leasing business, and there is going to be some kind of catch
5 component to it.

6
7 My State of Florida does a tremendous job, and I want to see them
8 manage the red and gag groupers both, from here on out, and I do
9 have faults with the SRFS, and I don't think that there's not a
10 mandatory component of groundtruthing, where you have intercepts
11 that are -- You know, you know where to go, and that's just a
12 component, but, as far as the data, my state does a much better
13 job, I feel, than what we've been doing at the federal level.

14
15 The deepwater groupers, we need to get a handle on it. People
16 have been talking about it for a while now, and there is a problem,
17 and I don't deepwater fish, but I talk to a lot of people who are,
18 and so let's not get to the point where, you know, we sounded the
19 alarm early, and we don't do anything. We need to do something,
20 and I don't know what that is, and, as far as king mackerel, I've
21 listened to a lot of conversation, and I think precaution, because
22 maybe it's not about the stock itself, and maybe it's about other
23 things that are causing it, and I thank you very much.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, Captain Zurbrick. We have a couple of
26 hands. Captain Walker.

27
28 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Captain Jim. You're familiar with the
29 fishery, and do you have any thoughts on how the council might
30 equitably divide up the shallow-water quota among shareholders,
31 you know, if we have to split the scamp and the black, as most of
32 us refer to it?

33
34 **MR. ZURBRICK:** Well, we all remember the foul-up initially, when
35 we were calling black groupers gags, and vice versa, and we worked
36 through that, and so I have to believe that the agency is thinking
37 that through, and we'll have to see what the analysis is, before
38 I could even speak intelligently about it.

39
40 **MR. WALKER:** It's going to be tricky. Any input on that topic, at
41 any time, please let me know.

42
43 **MR. ZURBRICK:** You got it.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Frazer.

46
47 **DR. FRAZER:** Hi, Jim, and so I'll stay on 58, and so how -- I mean,

1 how important is multiuse in your fishery, in your business?

2
3 **MR. ZURBRICK:** I think the multiuse, over all the species, is a
4 pretty good -- That's that ecosystem management, where we're
5 fishing -- Like the guys that don't have the gags, but maybe
6 they've got snappers, and maybe they'll give up a two-to-one, or
7 one-to-one, and maybe we can start massaging what we're actually
8 catching by exchanging fish that we have, you know, in our IFQ,
9 and so maybe multiuse is not just a grouper type of multiuse, but
10 a whole complex.

11
12 **DR. FRAZER:** I guess, maybe more specifically, do you take
13 advantage of the current multiuse flexibility?

14
15 **MR. ZURBRICK:** Yes, it is important, and especially there's times
16 when -- I mean, we're all into multiuse on gag right now. I'm
17 sorry. There is no -- Just gag.

18
19 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Captain Zurbrick. All right. Next,
22 we have Ryan Mallory online, followed by Captain Randy Boggs.

23
24 **MR. RYAN MALLORY:** Good afternoon. I just wanted to touch on what
25 Mr. Zales and Mr. Young said about the king mackerel fishery, that,
26 you know, in the late 1970s, and early 1980s, there was a lot of
27 east coast fishermen that went to Louisiana, and partaking in that
28 fishery, and, I mean, we've seen trends over the years. In 2010,
29 they didn't fill the quota. The season opened on July 1, and they
30 didn't fill the quota until February.

31
32 The year after, we caught it in sixty days, and then, every year,
33 it would go a little less, or a little earlier, whatever it may
34 be, and I just don't want to see us, you know, shooting first and
35 asking questions later, and I think we really need to figure out
36 what's really going on before we start cutting all these ACLs,
37 because this isn't just going to affect one sector, and this is
38 across-the-board.

39
40 You're talking -- If you do seasonal closings, and, when the fish
41 are up there, give people the opportunity to fish, they're not
42 going to be able to fish, because, in the northern Gulf, that's
43 when they're spawning, and I just don't want to see people lose
44 opportunity to partake in a fishery.

45
46 As for what Mr. Young said about the roller boats fishing in the
47 Keys this year, there is a lot of issues we had with weather. I

1 mean, the hook-and-line, we could have easily caught our fish, if
2 we had ample weather to fish this year, and, even right now, I
3 mean, you all can see it. You're having bad weather, and it's
4 blowing twenty to twenty-five down here now, and so I just -- You
5 know, I really think we need to step back and try to identify
6 what's really going on and see what we can do, as opposed to just
7 cut everybody across-the-board and then be like, all right, well,
8 what's the problem, and so that's my input on the king mackerel
9 fishery. Thank you.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have a question for you, Mr. Mallory, from
12 Captain Walker.

13
14 **MR. WALKER:** So, are you a participant in the commercial king
15 fishery down there in south Florida?

16
17 **MR. MALLORY:** I, for years -- For years, all I did was travel
18 chasing kingfish, and I've caught -- The year of the spill, I
19 actually went and fished in the Carolinas, and then, you know,
20 every year since, I've fished in the Gulf, and I've fished, you
21 know -- I've unloaded kingfish from Texas to Key West, and I know
22 that the chart that you guys showed, that those fish in the
23 northern Gulf, and I lived in Louisiana for eight years, and fished
24 there year-round, and it really gave me an understanding of the
25 kingfish.

26
27 May, June, and July, you need to be from Galveston to off the
28 Atchafalaya. September and October, those fish are in the west
29 delta, right there in the pocket, and that's where they just --
30 They settle in, and then, by November and December, those fish
31 would be right off of say Cameron, Louisiana, and they're heading
32 -- They're gone. They're heading south.

33
34 **MR. WALKER:** (Mr. Walker's comment is not audible on the recording.)

35
36 **MR. MALLORY:** I'm sorry, Mr. Walker. You cut out.

37
38 **MR. WALKER:** So, are you still a traveling king fisherman, and, if
39 so, do you still go to the western Gulf?

40
41 **MR. MALLORY:** I'm really -- I don't know if I'm going to go to the
42 western Gulf this year, but I actually -- When I stayed in
43 Louisiana, I fished snapper, and then, during the kingfish season,
44 I would fish it, but then it got -- The lease got so high on
45 snapper, I did better chasing kingfish.

46
47 **MR. WALKER:** All right, and so, if you didn't go to the western

1 Gulf, why would that be? Would it be the lack of fish or other
2 factors?

3
4 **MR. MALLORY:** A lot of people don't factor in -- You can actually
5 look at your landings, and 202 was really your last significant
6 year of landing for kingfish in the western Gulf, for the fact
7 that there's not many fish houses left, because of all the
8 hurricanes, and that was -- I king fished July and August in
9 Cameron, Louisiana, and Hurricane Laura came and just wiped it off
10 the map, and the same thing in 2021, with Ida, and it shut down
11 Grand Isle and Leesville, and these areas -- Leesville and Grand
12 Isle, I would feel comfortable to say that 70 percent of the
13 western Gulf quota is landed at those points, and so, if you don't
14 have the infrastructure to support the fishermen, whether it's
15 ice, fuel, or facility, you're not going to have the production of
16 the fish, and I truly believe that's another reason that you don't
17 have the participation, commercially, that you've had
18 historically.

19
20 **MR. WALKER:** That's great input. Thank you very much.

21
22 **MR. MALLORY:** Yes, sir.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Next, we have Captain Boggs, followed
25 by Captain Scott Hickman, who is online.

26
27 **MR. RANDY BOGGS:** Good evening. My name is Randy Boggs, and I've
28 been with the council process for quite a few years. I don't come
29 as much as I used to, and, in the 1990s, I was on the king mackerel,
30 cobia, and Spanish mackerel stock assessment, and it was one of
31 the first -- Or advisory panel, and it was one of the first ones
32 that I sat on.

33
34 I remember when they talked about the east and west split of the
35 Gulf, and the fish congregate, in the wintertime, where they're
36 constrained by temperature, in the Keys and off of southern
37 Florida, and we've allowed the roller boats down there, and the
38 hook-and-line fishery there, for many, many years, and it's a huge
39 harvest -- Years ago, the numbers -- This is from years ago, and
40 it was three-plus-million pounds that were harvested when the fish
41 were aggregated by temperature, and they couldn't go anywhere,
42 because the water was too cold to support the fish.

43
44 You get them aggregated, and a lot of the fish that are caught in
45 there are huge fish, which are the spawners, and there was a lot
46 of talk about them. With the DNA sampling that the fish have,
47 it's like a homing instinct, where they go east or west, and they

1 could go up the Atlantic coast or come into the Gulf of Mexico and
2 go to the western oil rigs and stay. When you harvest those older,
3 bigger fish, if it is true that they do have the homing instinct
4 to go to the western Gulf, that's where they've gone.

5
6 I run a headboat every day, and my predominant fishery now is
7 beeliners, and, in the 1980s, the 1980s or 1990s, when we came off
8 the closure, and we had a closure back then for a year, or eighteen
9 months, and they completely closed the kingfish down, and they
10 opened it back up with a one-fish-per-person-per-day bag limit,
11 and, back then, we had eight to ten or twelve cutoffs a day from
12 kings eating the beeliners off the line, you know, and so that was
13 a regular occurrence.

14
15 Nowadays, you don't see that. I don't think it's that the kingfish
16 stocks have moved, and we may discover some kingfish that are
17 migrating to a different area, but I think that the kingfish are
18 in trouble, and they need some help. There's a lot of harvest.
19 You know, when you've got fish that's constrained by temperature,
20 they get harvested.

21
22 One of the fish that I've heard a little bit about today is cobia,
23 and like the cobia are in dire straits. The fish are in trouble.
24 I know they're catching fish when they get off the rigs in
25 Louisiana, but they really need to do something with those.

26
27 Spanish mackerel, very quickly, ten fish per person would be
28 fantastic, and I think that's enough fish. Thirty fish per day,
29 or per trip, on a boat, and that would be five fish on a six-pack
30 boat, and it would be less fish on a multi-passenger boat, and
31 that would kind of constrain the harvest a little bit, and I think
32 that's a fair and adequate bag limit. Thank you, guys, and that's
33 pretty much all I've got.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Randy, we've got a question for you. Ms. Boggs.

36
37 **MS. BOGGS:** I'm not going to ask your age.

38
39 **MR. BOGGS:** This is a trap. She ain't talked to me in three days
40 at home, and so I know this is a trap.

41
42 **MS. BOGGS:** You're the first charter boat captain that's come up
43 here that I can ask this question. I know that you report to the
44 Southeast Regional Headboat Survey, but do you support a data
45 collection system for the charter-for-hire, the six-passenger,
46 multi-passenger boats, and is there anything that you would like
47 to see or not see in that data collection?

1
2 **MR. BOGGS:** I would love to see the data collection put back in
3 place for the charter-for-hire. We all know that one of the
4 biggest things is always the stick in the deal, and it's the
5 economic reporting of what they make, and that's -- We have some
6 fishermen that believe that they don't want VMS on the boat because
7 the government is going to give away the rocks off of Panama City
8 where they fish, or Destin, or whatever part of the Gulf you fish
9 in, and, well, you can buy a charter and do that.

10
11 The charter-for-hire needs data collection. You know, the economic
12 part of it, I know it's important, and I talked to the officers in
13 the state, and, you know, if we do have economic injury, the states
14 generally administer those programs, and they figure it out by
15 trip logs, and by what we report in the state now, and we have to
16 report the red snapper and the other stuff, but they have a pretty
17 good idea of what these guys are fishing, and what they're making.

18
19 It's just getting them to report the economic side of it is going
20 to be very, very hard, because a lot of these guys believe that
21 they're going to turn it into the federal government. When I was
22 part of the Headboat Collaborative -- I know how hard it is for
23 data sharing among the agencies, and, being part of that, it's
24 next impossible for them to share anybody's data, and you guys
25 that have been a part of that know what that's like, and so, yes,
26 we need a data program for the charter boats, and we really do.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Next, we have Scott Hickman online,
29 followed by Captain Dylan Hubbard.

30
31 **MR. SCOTT HICKMAN:** Thank you. Captain Scott Hickman, from
32 Galveston, Texas, Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen of the
33 Gulf Council. Thanks for hearing me today. First off, I would
34 like to say a little bit about myself. I'm a charter-for-hire
35 permit holder, a commercial IFQ shareholder, a thirty-seven-year
36 professional fisherman out of Galveston and western Gulf of Mexico.
37 I'm one of the original Charter Fishermen's Association founding
38 board members, and I'm a commercial king mackerel permit holder
39 and fisher.

40
41 I would like next to speak to the IFQ system for reef fish in the
42 Gulf of Mexico. It's a great system, and it's one of the few
43 things in the Gulf that's currently working, and its conservation
44 based, and it's accountable.

45
46 As far as these unused shares, and these unclaimed accounts, I
47 think the Gulf Council has got a unique situation right now to do

1 something good for our country, and another thing is, given their
2 service to this country in a way that most people have not, and I
3 would recommend the Gulf Council develop a veterans' new entrants
4 fisher program for the unused shares.

5
6 I would like the council to keep working on the fishery ecosystem
7 plan. With all the issues we're having with climate change, it's
8 a step in the right direction, and I would like to see that move
9 forward quicker.

10
11 You know, as far as the offshore wind presentation earlier, it was
12 great, and the Charter Fishermen's Association supports these
13 projects in the western Gulf of Mexico. CFA just recently signed
14 onto the Graves and Veasey reef bill, which we're fully behind.
15 Wind energy was not put into that, and I think these structures,
16 and some of those components from these offshore wind structures,
17 would be great additions to our artificial and natural reefs.
18 Access for anglers will -- be on these platforms and structures,
19 and so will be the recruitment of many fish.

20
21 As far as the king mackerel stock, in my thirty-seven years, I
22 can't believe a fish that's been a nuisance my entire life is now
23 something rare. The western stock is terrible, and I think a one-
24 fish bag limit is a step in the right direction. One of the
25 strange things I have is -- One of my old deckhands is a captain
26 down in Puerto Rico, and another friend of mine owns a lodge in
27 the Bahamas, and they've seen a large increase in king mackerel,
28 which leads me to believe that the record-high sea surface
29 temperatures the last few years -- Those fish are moving to new
30 areas.

31
32 SEFHIER, the apps that we were using worked well, and the new
33 technology, Starlink cellular bridge technology, will be in place
34 this time next year, where smartphones will work offshore, and you
35 will be able to do a hail-in and hail-out with a cellphone, with
36 no additional equipment, and it's easy for the captains.

37
38 The economic survey is an important part of that program, and,
39 from what I hear, the apps that are being used -- They can get an
40 algorithm in them that randomly selects fishers for an economic
41 survey, before they come in, and not to burden everybody with
42 having to do it everyday.

43
44 I've got a good friend, named Bill Platt, and he's the number-one
45 king mackerel tournament guy in the Gulf of Mexico, and he's the
46 Yamaha-sponsored guy, and he's well-known, and he does more
47 tournament king mackerel fishing than anybody in the last twenty-

1 four years, and he says it's that bad, from his standpoint, and he
2 travels all over fishing for them, and he spends a lot of money
3 fishing for them, but I think a one-fish bag limit is the
4 conservative approach, and let some people go catch some fish, and
5 we can get the data, and we can get the science.

6
7 I think the fishery is worse off than people think. I went weeks
8 last year without seeing a fish, and, five years ago, on my trips,
9 I would catch 600 or 700 pounds a day, and I'm lucky if I get one
10 or two fish, and so, that being said, I appreciate you all's time,
11 and it's a lot nicer here over in west Texas, and I hope the
12 weather clears up for you all, like it has for us here.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you, Scott. We appreciate it.
15 All right. Next up, we have Dylan Hubbard, followed by Jesse
16 Heiser online.

17
18 **MR. DYLAN HUBBARD:** All right. Thank you for the opportunity to
19 speak. First off, on amberjack, thank you for the added access.
20 It's great. It's a great opportunity to sell some more trips and
21 provide more access for our private recreational angling fleet
22 across the Gulf. However, it is a little disappointing to have
23 this positive news overshadowed by some negativity or a lack of
24 understanding of why it's such a last-minute season announcement,
25 due to having such a delay from state management data collection
26 programs.

27
28 Gag grouper, I was really hoping to leave this meeting with a plan
29 for our business in the fall, and the fleet was really hoping for
30 this as well. It's a super economically important fishery to our
31 region, and we're happy to see all the effort going into preserving
32 access and working on the acceptable draft numbers that came out
33 of MRIP-FES to start.

34
35 Also, it was good to see the shore numbers not used in the ACL
36 overage consideration, due to that unacceptably high PSE. While
37 there are some positives in this extremely-dark circumstance, we
38 really need to have as much advanced notice as possible to plan
39 out our fishery businesses, and I would like to ask this council,
40 and NOAA, to try to prioritize notice as soon as possible, so our
41 season projections are made known and we can move forward. It was
42 noticed, in the Federal Register, at this meeting that we would
43 see gag grouper season projections, but we've not seen them yet,
44 and we're all waiting on pins and needles.

45
46 I would also implore this council, and NOAA, and the Southeast
47 Fisheries Science Center, to expedite efforts to update the science

1 on this fishery, through interim analyses or whatever tools we
2 have. Due to the cyclical nature of this gag grouper fishery,
3 we're confident that we're seeing changes on the water that aren't
4 being captured in the latest science, especially since our last
5 assessment, that we're managing on now, has a terminal year of
6 2019.

7
8 For red grouper, we're happy to see the red grouper stock
9 assessment underway, and we look forward to positive information
10 that has to be forthcoming on this rebounding fishery biomass.
11 Also, we're thankful to have season projections at this meeting,
12 so we can better plan out our summer fishery. However, I would
13 ask NOAA, and specifically NOAA OST, to work with the State of
14 Florida, as these red grouper landings for Waves 1 through 3 start
15 to come in, so we don't get to the fall and have the issues with
16 Wave 4, like we did last year, and just really incredibly glaring
17 FES problems, and so hopefully, through closer collaboration, we
18 can ensure any issues are caught more quickly, and we can move
19 into the fall with confidence in our data and projections and core
20 statuses, and hopefully a fall red grouper reopening.

21
22 I also want to make sure that I mentioned the enforcement issues
23 on spatial area closures, and our federal enforcement, and state
24 partners, have an impossible job. Much like trying to count fish
25 in the entire Gulf, trying to enforce the entire Gulf of Mexico,
26 and these complex regulations, are very difficult. However, it's
27 hard to stay legal with all these changing regulations all the
28 time, but we're resilient, and we do what we need to for the health
29 of our fishery.

30
31 However, this twenty-fathom closure for recreational fishermen,
32 that we currently have in February and March for grouper spawning
33 aggregations, is impossible to enforce, and it only negatively
34 impacts our federal for-hire fleet. It doesn't apply to the
35 commercial fleet, and the recreational fleet is very hard to
36 manage, and, honestly, just blatantly ignored, and so we have a
37 very big enforcement problem, that is unenforceable, and it's a
38 regulation that's in place to protect spawning aggregations of gag
39 grouper, which aren't even open at this time anymore, and it's an
40 out-of-date regulation that needs to be removed, and I'm extremely
41 out of time, and so thanks for letting me run over.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Dylan. Ms. Boggs.

44
45 **MS. BOGGS:** So, Dylan, I know you do a lot with your fleet now in
46 Madeira Beach, and do you all fish for the king and the Spanish,
47 and, if you do, what are you all seeing down there?

1
2 **MR. HUBBARD:** In thirty seconds or less, so we do fish for Spanish
3 mackerel and kingfish. For me, in my business, it's more of a
4 bycatch fishery, and it's not a directed fishery. We do some
5 directed fisheries, but it's always in a very short-duration trip,
6 and so we would support the DCBA proposal of moving to five
7 mackerel per person and one king mackerel per person. I think
8 moving to two king mackerel doesn't do enough. One king mackerel
9 does something, and it has a small impact, and, as that fishery
10 hopefully cyclically rebounds, it will help form more fish, as
11 it's coming back, and so that's the idea, and I think it would be
12 a positive impact to start changing some stuff.

13
14 **MS. BOGGS:** Then, of course, about data collection, and is there
15 something that we can do to get the buy-in of the fishermen to
16 provide some type of economic data?

17
18 **MR. HUBBARD:** I think asking trip costs is important, from the
19 presentations that we saw, and there was a lot of stuff that wants
20 to be asked, but we have to keep it simple, and we have to keep it
21 to what needs to be there, and it seems like trip cost would be an
22 effective thing to ask, but it's already been said that only a
23 portion of the fleet, a subset of the whole, would accommodate
24 this, and so I think what Scott said earlier would be the best,
25 some sort of algorithm, and I know the good people at Bluefin could
26 accommodate that, in the VESL app. Andrew Peterson, and his team,
27 are very able, and willing, to accommodate that, and so I think
28 some sort of randomizer, to ask a certain subset of declarations
29 an economic question, would be a good solution to this problem.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Geeslin.

32
33 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Dylan, you provided your
34 comments in writing, and I appreciate that. I've got them pulled
35 up, and it's easy to digest, and it's good to see your notes also
36 correlate with those, and, regarding season closures for king
37 mackerel, what are your thoughts there? We talked about that, and
38 some of the complexities, and, from your perspective, what do you
39 think about that?

40
41 **MR. HUBBARD:** For king mackerel season closures, I would like to
42 try to avoid a seasonal closure. They're only here for a certain
43 amount of time, especially in my area, and they're very quick, and
44 it's very weather dependent, and so trying to get a season would
45 be very difficult, and I don't think it would do much in our area.

46
47 **MR. GEESLIN:** Okay. Thank you.

1
2 **MR. HUBBARD:** Thank you.
3

4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Dylan. All right. Next, we have Jesse
5 Heiser, who is online, followed by Anthony Colletti. Jesse, you
6 might be muted. Jesse, we're having some technical difficulties
7 on our end. We'll come back to you here as soon as we can. Anthony
8 Colletti.
9

10 **MR. ANTHONY COLLETTI:** Good afternoon. I'm Anthony Colletti,
11 commercial fishermen and owner/operator. I would like to talk
12 about the kingfish. We've traveled from the east coast of Florida
13 all the way around the coast to Louisiana, for years on end, and,
14 a few years ago, we lost the fish house infrastructure, and we've
15 lost a lot of habitat, which has changed the migration pattern of
16 the fish, and we've lost fifteen legendary commercial mackerel
17 fishermen that used to come to Leesville every single year.
18

19 There's a lot of different variables that are changing, and no two
20 years will ever be the same with weather, and you can outstand
21 Mother Nature, no matter what you try to do. As far as the lack
22 of participation, these guys have retired, simply gave up after
23 the hurricane, why would you go back somewhere where you can't
24 really operate out of comfortably?
25

26 Personally, I've done fairly well mackerel fishing this past year,
27 and we fished -- We more stuck to the western Gulf, and we did see
28 what I could consider a flurry of fish through the summer months,
29 which was good, and, as far as south Florida goes, there was 500
30 pounds of small fish that were caught by the hook-and-line boats.
31 I'm friends with several of them, and I believe the stock is
32 healthy.
33

34 I'm under the impression that the migration pattern has changed,
35 just as it has with the amberjacks. I've been finding the fish
36 that I've been harvesting in deeper waters, where not many people
37 are willing to go, and, quite honestly, I found some of them by
38 accident, when I was reef fishing. You would see the mackerel
39 jumping, and you start fishing for them, and you catch your limit.
40

41 As far as the amberjacks go, I'm still seeing the amberjacks. The
42 last trip I was able to do with the thousand-pound limit, I had a
43 fifty-three-pound average on all of my fish. There's times that
44 I can't beeliner fish, because you can't get them in the boat, and
45 the amberjacks take them.
46

47 Another issue we're having is the sharks. If you start pulling

1 some kingfish, and you get them up and biting, and you're not
2 getting them past a school of sharks that are following the boat.
3 It's just not going to happen. We're going through more tackle
4 than ever. People are getting hurt trying to catch these fish,
5 and the sharks are a nuisance.
6

7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have some questions. Mr. Dugas.
8

9 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Two questions. The
10 first one is, on kingfish, are you fishing anywhere west of
11 Leesville?
12

13 **MR. COLLETTI:** Yes, I am. More so off of Cameron, and I've fished
14 off the mouth of the river as well, at times, and there is -- With
15 all of the oil rigs that have been removed, there is limited areas
16 where we're coming across these fish anymore, but, when we do find
17 them, normally the fishing is pretty good, despite the sharks.
18

19 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** What about -- Are you getting to Texas any?
20

21 **MR. COLLETTI:** No, and I haven't made it that far yet, but I may
22 be working my way that way this year.
23

24 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Last question. On amberjack, I'm not
25 asking for your specific location, but in what general area are
26 you fishing?
27

28 **MR. COLLETTI:** West of the river.
29

30 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you.
31

32 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I have a few people. I have Ms. Boggs, followed
33 by Dr. Frazer and Mr. Diaz.
34

35 **MS. BOGGS:** So, I have two questions, and they should be very
36 quickly, and do you own or lease allocation?
37

38 **MR. COLLETTI:** I own and lease the allocation.
39

40 **MS. BOGGS:** Okay, and then you referenced the fish in south Florida
41 are smaller king, and what do you identify -- Or how do you define
42 a small king?
43

44 **MR. COLLETTI:** Well, they grade them, you know, when we sell them,
45 five to seven pounds, ten to fifteen pounds, and then fifteen and
46 up.
47

1 **MR. BOGGS:** So, you're saying they're the five to seven-pound
2 range?
3

4 **MR. COLLETTI:** Correct.
5

6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Frazer.
7

8 **DR. FRAZER:** Thanks, Captain Colletti, for coming. When you
9 started your talk, you said -- You know, you were talking about
10 factors affecting the kingfish, and there is lost fish houses,
11 because of the hurricanes, and loss of habitat, because of oil
12 rigs, and then you made a reference to the fact that there are
13 fifteen of the kind of elite fishermen that are no longer in the
14 business, and so, as a traveling mackerel fisherman, how many
15 people do you typically travel with, and how is that kind -- The
16 fact that you've lost that many fishermen, how does that affect
17 the social dynamics of your industry, right, and your ability to
18 catch fish?
19

20 **MR. COLLETTI:** Well, all the way around, and it's hard to play
21 ball without a full team. I will, without the oil rigs being there
22 as well, and, you know, you get out of the pass and which way do
23 you go? You used to say this rig would hold these fish here, and
24 you would go catch 500 or 600 pounds, and then carry on to the
25 next set of rigs, twenty miles down the road, and then you would
26 find the mass of fish, and you will fill your boat up and go back
27 to the dock.
28

29 Without the participation, with everybody working together, and
30 I'm only one individual, and, like I said, there's really only
31 five guys left out of Leesville that will dedicate time to go look
32 for mackerel, and that goes for the Venice fleet as well. I think
33 they had maybe fifteen or twenty boats over there, and there might
34 only be six or seven of them left, and so the participation is
35 down drastically.
36

37 **DR. FRAZER:** Again, just to reiterate, that affects the efficiency
38 of your operation.
39

40 **MR. COLLETTI:** Absolutely.
41

42 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Diaz.
43

44 **MR. DIAZ:** I think you touched on some of my questions, but, when
45 you said habitat, you were speaking about oil rigs, was what you
46 were referring to, correct?
47

1 **MR. COLLETTI:** Correct.
2
3 **MR. DIAZ:** How big of a deal do you think the loss of oil rigs in
4 the Gulf of Mexico has been to your kingfish fishery?
5
6 **MR. COLLETTI:** Well, I believe it has affected the kingfish
7 fishery, the snapper fishery, every fishery, and it's not just one
8 -- You're removing habitat, you know, and it's a whole ecosystem,
9 and, when you remove that, you have nothing left but pipelines on
10 the bottom and mud. These fish are going to move. If there's no
11 bait, they're going to keep looking for their supper and somewhere
12 to call home themselves. I mean, if my house blows away, I'm not
13 going to sit there in the dirt and look for food. I'm going to
14 keep moving and find somewhere comfortable to live again.
15
16 **MR. DIAZ:** I want to thank you for your testimony. It's been very
17 helpful, and so thank you.
18
19 **MR. COLLETTI:** Thank you.
20
21 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Schieble.
22
23 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Captain. First of all, I just wanted to
24 tell everybody in here that, if you ever get a chance to talk with
25 him, tonight or anytime, about his hurricane story, it's very
26 compelling, and very interesting, and this is one of the bravest
27 guys I've seen around, based on that story, for sure.
28
29 My quick question, and I had another one, but it was already
30 answered, and, when it comes to amberjack, you said you had a
31 fifty-three-pound average in the last trip that you were able to
32 make of a thousand-pound limit still, right, before it changed to
33 seven fish, and so you're losing roughly -- Now you're losing about
34 600 pounds per trip that you cannot harvest any longer right, if
35 you had that average every time, right?
36
37 **MR. COLLETTI:** Fairly close to that average every time.
38
39 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Did you used to make amberjack trips, which were
40 solely for amberjack, or was it always a bycatch fishery for you?
41
42 **MR. COLLETTI:** I used to target amberjacks, when they were 2,000
43 pounds a trip, and we were reduced to 1,500 pounds, with the
44 rebuilding of the stock, and we went to 1,000 pounds, and now we're
45 at seven fish, to where my boat can't even afford to leave the
46 dock if I was strictly to go target them.
47

1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have Dr. Banks.

2
3 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you. I had a quick question. If I understand
4 correctly, you said, with the loss of habitat, the king mackerel
5 migration moved further offshore.

6
7 **MR. COLLETTI:** Correct.

8
9 **DR. BANKS:** About how far offshore are you finding that migration
10 pattern has shifted?

11
12 **MR. COLLETTI:** Approximately sixty miles or so, which most smaller
13 boats won't even put the time in, or the effort, to go look for
14 them, and, I mean, like I said, I was surprised that I found them
15 where I found them. I was reef fishing, and I saw the fish jumping,
16 and I started fishing for the mackerel, in 400 feet of water all
17 around, fishing on a lump, and, you know, in my opinion, there was
18 plenty of fish for me to catch my limit. Each trip that I made
19 this season, of 2024, when I was able to get out, I had my limit
20 almost every single trip. Thank you for your time.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Okay. Next, we have -- We'll go back
23 to Jesse Heiser online. Jesse, you might have to unmute yourself.
24 Jesse, we can't hear you. You might need to unmute. All right,
25 Jesse. We can't hear you. We'll try you again in just a little
26 bit. Thank you for your patience. Next, we'll go to Mark Tryon.

27
28 **MR. MARK TRYON:** Mark Tryon, commercial fisherman, Gulf Breeze,
29 Florida. I rod-and-reel fish for reef fish, primarily red snapper,
30 and I do have a king mackerel permit, and I have caught king
31 mackerel, over the years, as a bycatch, and not as a directed
32 fishery, and so I've seen, as you've heard, quite a decline in the
33 fishery, and I really didn't intend on speaking about it, but it
34 seems like a popular topic now.

35
36 It would seem, to me, that we went from, recreationally, two fish
37 to three fish, when nobody was asking for three fish, but we went
38 to three fish anyway, and the least I think we could do, at this
39 point, is go back to two fish, which puts us back where we were
40 originally, and consider going to one fish, to actually make some
41 sort of progress here in, you know, attacking this problem.

42
43 One of the things that I want to discuss, and there hasn't been
44 too much discussion about it today, is what is the council doing
45 to address the recreational overfishing in the Gulf of Mexico, and
46 I know there's somewhat of an effort that is getting underway, but
47 we need to make much more of an effort in that regard. We need to

1 accurately quantify effort, and ultimately have an accurate common
2 currency amongst all the states.

3
4 At the meetings, and in general with the use of the time of this
5 council, we seem to be spending lots of time, and resources, on I
6 guess what I would call IFQ reforms, and not much time spent on
7 addressing, which in my opinion is a much bigger issue, the
8 recreational overfishing.

9
10 Another thing is we need to -- I think we all know this, but we
11 need to react faster, and more efficiently, to changes in stocks.
12 I mean, this king mackerel situation is a textbook example of that.
13 We went from having easily catching the quota on the commercial
14 side, and having closures every year, to now, in aggregate, we
15 can't even catch the quota, you know, I guess even with the gillnet
16 people, and they seem to be more efficient than the rest of the
17 sectors.

18
19 You know, we've seen this is a problem, and now we're responding
20 to it, and I think we should have gotten, you know, ahead of the
21 problem a couple of years ago, and not when it becomes chronic,
22 okay, and the same can also be said about amberjack, cobia, gag
23 grouper, and, even oppositely, the triggerfish. If you remember,
24 this was an issue. We were catching tons of them, and it took us
25 time to get it increased to twenty-five fish, and now, all of a
26 sudden, we're going -- I don't know why, but we're kind of sliding
27 back the other way, and it's hard to catch the twenty-five fish,
28 and so, anyway, I guess that's about all I have to say for today.
29 Thank you very much.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. We have a couple of questions for
32 you, Captain Tryon. First, we have Mr. Geeslin, followed by Susan
33 Boggs.

34
35 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Tryon, specifically, when
36 you mentioned recreational overfishing, specifically what
37 fisheries are you referring to?

38
39 **MR. TRYON:** Primarily in red snapper, and I say that, and I've
40 testified before up here, or at public testimony, where, if you
41 were to -- I don't have the numbers right in front of me now, but,
42 if you were to take the total pounds of quota, and divide it by a
43 certain number of anglers -- I think, in the past, it's come out
44 to a very small amount of red snapper that each recreational
45 fisherman would be allowed, and yet we're fishing for months and
46 months now, and so I think it's obvious that there is overfishing,
47 and I see it, because my landings are going down.

1
2 You know, we have all this talk about folks don't like leasing.
3 Well, I would rather catch the fish than lease the fish, but, if
4 my catch rate is going down, and I'm catching less, and I'm leasing
5 more, and not because I want to lease more, but it's because I
6 can't catch those fish, because they're not there anymore to the
7 extent that they were before.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

10
11 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, he touched on something that's near-and-dear to
12 my heart, which is triggerfish. Do you see that species, and I've
13 heard a couple of other captains that I've talked to in the past
14 -- Of course, we've been on triggerfish for five or six years now,
15 and we still don't have any data on it, but do you see that they're
16 like a cyclical fish? You're saying now you're having a harder
17 time catching them, because we've increased the quota, but do you
18 see any cycles like that with triggerfish?

19
20 **MR. TRYON:** It's been -- Over the years, it's been up and down.
21 Now, when I first started fishing for them years ago, it was --
22 This is back in the early 1990s, but we had -- I know it was like,
23 recreationally, there was no bag limit, and I don't think there
24 was any, you know, trip limit, that I recollect, on the commercial
25 side, and the fish were quite small, and so I'm originally from
26 New Jersey, and I came here catching triggerfish, and they were a
27 foot long or so, and I assume that's -- You know, they didn't get
28 much bigger than that.

29
30 Then, when we started to put in these, you know, controls, to
31 control the harvest, all of a sudden, we started to get some big
32 ones, and they became quite common, but I don't know, and I can't
33 -- In this case, I'm not going to say recreational overfishing,
34 because the limit is only one fish per person, and I really don't
35 see that as, you know, causing the -- I think it's either a
36 temporary decline, or it may be they're just not where I'm fishing,
37 and they're somewhere else, and they could be fifty miles east or
38 west or whatever, but, right now, there's not a heck of a lot of
39 them. I'm catching, you know, three fish a trip on day trips now,
40 something like that, you know, whereas, before, when it was sixteen
41 fish, I could have caught thirty, forty, fifty fish easily in a
42 day, and so it's really gone the other way quickly, for some
43 reason, and I have no idea why.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you, sir.

46
47 **MR. TRYON:** Okay. Thank you.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. We're going to go back to Jesse
3 Heiser, one more time. Jesse, you're unmuted, or can you unmute
4 yourself?
5
6 **MR. COLLETTI:** I just spoke to Jesse on the phone a few minutes
7 ago, and, for some reason, it's not connecting, and would it be
8 okay if I called and put the phone up, so you could hear what he
9 has to say?
10
11 **MR. JESSE HEISER:** Sorry about that, guys. I tried everything to
12 be able to talk to you all, and it would not let me, and so here
13 I am. Most of this, I'm going to reiterate what Anthony said,
14 because I am one of the other two king fishermen out of Leesville,
15 out of the five that are left there.
16
17 I'm a fulltime commercial king fisherman, and I travel all the
18 Gulf zones, and I've been all the way to North Carolina. Like
19 what he said, mostly, there's a lot of things that has changed in
20 the last handful of years, and a big one, if we're talking
21 Louisiana, is the oil rigs being gone, and definitely don't count
22 out the oil spill, and what it's changed, and how it's changed the
23 bait situation and stuff over there.
24
25 There's less participation, and most of these older guys are
26 getting out, guys that I have looked up to, and, as everyone knows
27 there, there's not many new participants in commercial fishing,
28 and that's in every fishery that that seems to be an issue, and so
29 we just need to think about that one.
30
31 Also, the sharks and porpoise are -- Like it's the worst I've ever
32 seen, until next year, and we'll be saying it's the worst that
33 I've ever seen, and so it's hard to get fish past them, and, also,
34 what I've noticed in the last handful of years is, when you do
35 find the fish, they're moving at an alarming rate, and like we'll
36 be there one say, and they'll be gone the next, and, when you've
37 got only a handful of boats, and that's every zone a lot of times,
38 with only a handful, and it makes it hard to find.
39
40 They seem to be -- I don't know why they've started moving so much,
41 and, you know, sometimes we go out there and you'll think, man,
42 those fish are hurting, and, other times, you'll go out there,
43 and, a few times a year, you'll think where have they all been at,
44 and I think everybody in our fishery, that does what I do, would
45 say the same thing. There's a handful of instances this year where
46 I've went out there and actually thought, wow, where have they
47 been at, you know?

1
2 Somebody just touched on the gillnet down there, and, on that, if
3 they would have done what they usually do, and this year was
4 different for them, and they would have met the quota. I was
5 there, and I fished around them guys. They broke the quota up
6 amongst themselves, and so, instead of making -- They all stopped,
7 and, of course, like that one guy said, there was only a few that
8 didn't catch it, because they didn't go. If they would have
9 normally done what they do, they would have caught their quota.

10
11 Also, the last two years, I mean, I've started catching a lot more
12 smaller fish at certain times, and so I feel like that could be a
13 -- That's definitely a plus, compared to what we were doing, and
14 so, I mean, I do see it rebounding quite a bit the last couple of
15 years, as far as that, and that's all I've really got.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Jesse. We have a couple of questions
18 for you, and so hang on on the phone. Captain Walker.

19
20 **MR. WALKER:** Yes. Thank you. I have a question, and so I'm not
21 positive what you all are getting for your kingfish, but I know
22 kingfish prices have been really good, and it's up and down a lot,
23 but some of the highs that it's hit have been unprecedented, and
24 I still don't really understand why so many are leaving the
25 fishery, with such good prices on fish, and am I wrong there?

26
27 **MR. HEISER:** I couldn't hear that. I'm sorry. I can't answer
28 questions, I guess. I can't hear him.

29
30 **MR. COLLETTI:** He's wondering so many are leaving the fishery with
31 the prices being the way they are, and I think the majority of the
32 guys are simply retiring, and they're getting too old, and, I mean,
33 I'm not going to speak for you. If you want to answer that, go
34 ahead.

35
36 **MR. HEISER:** Once you hit sixty-five or seventy, this kind of
37 lifestyle is very tough, and it's getting tougher, and I'm still
38 young, you know, and the majority here is -- You've got to think
39 about, and Louisiana -- No offense, but it can be a tough place to
40 -- That is a big one, and Anthony touched on the other one, and
41 the infrastructure is even worse than what it was, and so --

42
43 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. No one else? All right, Jesse. Thank
44 you very much. Sorry for the issues we had getting you on the
45 phone here, or online.

46
47 **MR. HEISER:** Thank you, guys.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Next up, we have Kelia Paul. It looks
3 like we have cleared out all those folks that were waiting to speak
4 online, and so you can see your names up there, and just be prepared
5 to come up after the person finishes their testimony, and so Kelia
6 Paul.

7
8 **MS. KELIA PAUL:** Good afternoon, council. Thank you for the
9 opportunity to speak today. My name is Kelia Paul, and I own two
10 dually permitted vessels out of Panama City Beach, Florida, and
11 I'm the President of the Panama City Boatmen's Association. My
12 comments today will reflect the will of the association.

13
14 Again, I will be short and sweet, and I do want to thank NMFS for
15 the May amberjack season. As a whole, Panama City has stressed
16 the importance of our businesses having that May season, and we
17 are appreciative for it this year. We would have liked more
18 notice, but we'll make it work.

19
20 For Spanish mackerel, we do agree that the bag limit needs to be
21 reduced, but we would like to see it between seven and ten fish.
22 We believe that five fish will drastically increase an already
23 high discard mortality, and we do not want to further exacerbate
24 the issue. We do rely heavily on those short, family-based trips
25 during the spring break season, and so we would like to conserve
26 that fishery, while being able to still execute the fishery.

27
28 For kings, we also agree there's something that needs to be done,
29 and we're also struggling with the correct steps to take. While
30 we appreciate that the issue is most likely environmental, that
31 doesn't mean this council can't take some provisions now. We spoke
32 against the three-fish bag limit when it was passed, and, at
33 minimum, we want it moved back to two. If the stock would benefit
34 substantially, which we haven't seen yet, but, if it would, with
35 a bag limit of one, we would fully support it.

36
37 We are concerned with an increased discard mortality, just like
38 with Spanish, with a bag limit of one, however. We also support
39 an ACL reduction, based on the five-year dataset, and that's it
40 for me today.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you. We have a question from
43 Mr. Strelcheck.

44
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I apologize, and I should have asked some previous
46 charter captains this earlier, and so we are now pushing the
47 charter-for-hire season from June 1 into late August, and I've

1 heard a lot of input about that, and a mid to late-August timeframe
2 not being all that helpful to you, and I would be curious if you
3 are interested in modifying the season, and what you would like to
4 see.

5
6 **MS. PAUL:** We had a conversation around that in the meeting in --
7 At the January meeting, and we would like to see it mid-May,
8 because amberjacks in May are -- This is the first year we've had
9 it in how long, and we do have May tourism, and so, if we could
10 bump it to May, and not use them after -- Once, I don't know, that
11 first week, maybe first ten days, of August, it's dead at home,
12 and we are not utilizing those fish. They wouldn't be helpful to
13 us at the end of the fall season, when the waves would come out,
14 and, because of the wave data, that doesn't help us, and so we
15 would like to see a May 15 start, or somewhere in there.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

18
19 **MS. BOGGS:** I had to remember my question. Does PCBA have a stance
20 on the data collection system that the council is looking to do,
21 and any suggestions of how you might go about the economic data?
22

23 **MS. PAUL:** We fully support standing SEFHIER back up. We were
24 really disappointed when it fell. I think -- You know, I watched
25 the presentation this week on the economic piece of it, and it is
26 a big point of contention, and everybody knows that. There's a
27 lot of them that don't want to do it, and I think, if we take an
28 approach like the commercial fishery does, with that 20 percent
29 survey sampling size, it might be a lot more digestible, and you
30 may get a lot more participation.

31
32 As far as the VMS piece of it, I'm dually permitted, personally,
33 and so it's six-to-one-and-half-dozen of another, and I don't care
34 about the VMS. I think Randy is the one that said it, and you can
35 buy it now, and so it's not really required here anymore, but, if
36 we're going to lose the program over VMS, it's not worth it, and
37 so that's kind of where we stand. Thank you.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. We have Captain Dale Woodruff,
40 followed by Captain Clarence Seymour.

41
42 **MR. DALE WOODRUFF:** Good afternoon, guys. Thank you all, again,
43 for coming to the social last night. I thought it was pretty
44 awesome. The venue was awesome, and getting to see our family of
45 state guideboats and federal for-hire owners and crew members
46 together for that setting was also awesome.
47

1 Keep in mind that every federal for-hire boat in that marina that
2 you all saw, and all the ACFA for-hire charter boats, was in
3 compliance with the SEFHIER program, before it was shut down, and
4 there's only a couple of boats in our marina now, and they're new
5 entries, but they're for the data too, and they are ready. They
6 are up and ready to go.

7
8 The need for SEFHIER to be up and running again is urgent, and the
9 ACFA will support it. Yesterday, I heard a council member say,
10 "manipulating data", and I say the data was purposely, or
11 carelessly, manipulated, kind of like Bidenomics. You know, you
12 tell me things are great and then I go gas up my truck, and, you
13 know, you show up with an astronomical number of gag that was
14 caught from the shoreline, and somebody has to take a commonsense
15 approach to this.

16
17 I feel that all final reports should be carefully examined and
18 critically scrutinized before being brought to the public, and
19 that just fell through the cracks, and somebody didn't do their
20 job. The federal for-hire, it seems like that's what we've always
21 questioned, was the validity of the data, as far as the outcome.

22
23 King mackerel, I talked to the guys from the ACFA, and they support
24 the one king mackerel. They're okay with going to five Spanish,
25 and we feel like that could be a good step in the right direction.
26 Then, you know, all I ask is the amberjack -- I know we just got
27 a May season, and please be careful with that.

28
29 We don't want to go over, and, you know, I've stood up here for
30 years, and we've stood up here for years, and we want to stay
31 under. We want to stay almost there, but just a touch under, and
32 let's not bust this thing out of the water again.

33
34 This is a fish that we need to come back, and I will say this
35 probably to the day that I die, and I don't think you can hook-
36 and-line regulate the amberjack back to where it needs to be, and
37 we have to our grass back. We have to get the vegetation on top,
38 from offshore, back up to our beaches, and, if we start seeing
39 that, year after year after year, probably within five years, I
40 can guarantee you that we'll see a healthy amberjack fishery,
41 because we will have the other baits that we need that we're not
42 seeing as much of anymore, such as the hardtail, the abundance of
43 alewives, and the cigar minnows, and so, other than that -- Is
44 that it? Think you all are good? Okay.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. We have a question from Ms. Boggs.

1 **MS. BOGGS:** Two questions, Dale. Do you hold a CMP federal permit,
2 a coastal migratory pelagic permit?
3

4 **MR. WOODRUFF:** I do.
5

6 **MS. BOGGS:** Okay. Thank you for that, and the other thing, as far
7 as ACFA's position on data collection, with the economic component
8 of it, do you all have a stance on what you could --
9

10 **MR. WOODRUFF:** Just keep in mind we're always -- Human nature is
11 always to do the least thing as possible, a lot of times, and,
12 yes, a lot of people are scared of the federal government. With
13 the sampling, I like the sampling idea, and I think our guys --
14 We're for the SEFHIER, and, if we can go to a 20 percent, or 30
15 percent, and I like the idea with setting up an algorithm. You
16 know, maybe, once every ten or fifteen trips, you get sampled, and
17 probably the lingo on that economic is "as advertised", and what
18 is your trip as advertised, and I think that may relax a few
19 people.
20

21 I mean, I don't -- Personally, and not speaking for the ACFA, I'm
22 100 percent for it, and I'll tell you what I'm making, okay, and,
23 if you need to know exactly what I'm burning for fuel, or how much
24 it costs, what my trips are, and it doesn't matter with me. I
25 will do it. I don't have a problem with it.
26

27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.
28

29 **MS. BOGGS:** So, I'm going to ask Andy's question. With the seasons
30 of red snapper getting longer and longer, does ACFA -- I'm catching
31 you on the spot, but, if not this meeting, could you let the
32 council know, and would they look at, or entertain, extending the
33 season, or moving the season forward, to earlier May, or some other
34 start date?
35

36 **MR. WOODRUFF:** That's always a good talking subject, that we do
37 talk about, and, you know, as the president of the association,
38 and talking to our guys, we would love to have the flexibility
39 with all seasons, and not just red snapper, and that's why we need
40 the SEFHIER program. We feel like, once we get the SEFHIER program
41 going again, then we can have some flexibility.
42

43 You know, I understand that May would be a great time for some
44 people, and I understand that July and August would be a great
45 time for a group of charter-for-hire boats, and how can we get
46 that flexibility, and that's what we need to -- If we want to get
47 to that, I feel like how is to start getting our reporting system

1 back up and going, urgently.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Thank you, Dale. All right. Next,
4 we have Clarence Seymour, Captain Seymour, followed by Austin
5 Abrams.

6

7 **MR. CLARENCE SEYMOUR:** Good afternoon, and thank you, council, for
8 having me today. Captain Clarence Seymour, Charter Boat SYL,
9 Biloxi, Mississippi. I've got a few things. The SEFHIER program,
10 I'm on the Data Collection AP, and we've worked really well, and
11 so I think we still have a lot of things to work on, and I believe
12 it's moving in the right direction.

13

14 King mackerel, I can support one or two, and, yes, the king
15 mackerel are down. Spanish mackerel, our numbers were down in the
16 northern Gulf, out of Mississippi there, and so ten would probably
17 work for us.

18

19 The charter-for-hire buffer of 9 percent, since Amendment 40, we've
20 been under, and I think either the payback is not really a good
21 idea after the last wave, because it turns into a November season,
22 or October, and so maybe, like Andy was talking to the young lady
23 right there, a Memorial Weekend start would probably do good for
24 parts of the northern Gulf, as us, and, now, flexibility for Texas,
25 and they may want a longer -- Because I heard Texas weather is
26 terrible, and that's all I hear, but the buffer is pretty
27 important, because I think we can go to, you know, a 4 or 5 percent
28 buffer on our total catch limit.

29

30 The next thing is that I had a story, and a guy called me the other
31 day, and it's about cobia, and we know we all, for the last three
32 or four years, are at dire straits on cobia, and it -- We've got
33 the thirty-six-inch fish to the fork, and it's working pretty good,
34 as far as I can tell, and the thing that the fellow asked me was
35 he was confused about the federal law in the EEZ, inside the three-
36 mile boundary of our state, which is still two fish per person.

37

38 We're neighbors to Louisiana also, and so it's really a catch-
39 twenty-two, and anglers could get in trouble by not having the
40 same limits on the federal side as the state side, and so I think
41 it's a real slippery slope, that we probably need to address sooner
42 or later, but they always call me and ask me about different things
43 that's happening in the Gulf, and I try to keep everybody informed
44 on everything, but that's it for what I've got today. Thank you,
45 all.

46

47 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have a couple of questions. Mr. Diaz.

1
2 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Captain Seymour, for driving over in this
3 weather. I appreciate you making the trip. I know, at one time,
4 and I'm kind of putting you on the spot, and I know you're not
5 necessarily representing the whole charter boat industry, but if
6 you could help me understand.

7
8 I think there was a while when the Mississippi charter boat folks
9 were not very enthusiastic about SEFHIER, and my perception is
10 that more people have come around a little bit in Mississippi, but
11 where do you think they're at now? We're trying to move forward
12 with a new iteration, and do you think the Mississippi charter
13 boats -- I know I'm asking you to speculate, and I apologize for
14 that, but do you think they're generally more accepting now, or
15 they're still apprehensive, or what do you think the kind of pulse
16 of the fleet is there in Mississippi?

17
18 **MR. SEYMOUR:** Well, the consensus has been the start was it was
19 hard to convince it, because our fleet is getting older still on
20 the federal for-hire fleet. We do have some new participants,
21 which is my son and I think another fellow just got a federal
22 permit, and so I do get to -- We are seeing the younger guys
23 starting to try to get in in our area, which the SEFHIER program
24 is -- They understand it's going to be best for their future.

25
26 Us seasoned guys, that has had permits in Mississippi, we're going
27 out, and so that was the whole point of being able to get the
28 SEFHIER program, you know, and everybody get the kinks worked out
29 of it, when it comes to it, and one of the most arguments that I
30 heard about it was the VMS, of course, and, you know, that program
31 -- I don't want to see our 4th Amendment right violate our SEFHIER
32 program again at all, but I think what's left, out of the ten or
33 twelve federally-permitted in Mississippi, and I think the SEFHIER
34 program should -- They shouldn't have a problem with it this time
35 around, I believe.

36
37 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you for that. I like the way you refer to the
38 older gentlemen as seasoned folks too, rather than older, and I
39 think I'm going to start referring to myself that way, and so thank
40 you, Clarence.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I had a couple more people. Ms. Boggs, followed
43 by General Spraggins.

44
45 **MS. BOGGS:** So Dale pretty well touched on what I wanted to ask,
46 but I did want to say thank you for being here, because we don't
47 -- I don't think -- Very rarely do we see a charter-for-hire from

1 Mississippi at the meetings, and so I really appreciate you being
2 here and providing input today. Thank you.

3

4 **MR. SEYMOUR:** Thank you.

5

6 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** General Spraggins.

7

8 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Captain Seymour, thank you, once again, for
9 coming over, and I agree that we -- You know, maybe if they could
10 look at something for opening the season a little bit earlier for
11 you all, and, I mean, obviously, we're going to open it on Memorial
12 Weekend for the recreational type, but to be able to do the federal
13 at the same time, and I don't know what it would take to be able
14 to do that, and that's up to Andy and some of them, to be able to
15 make those decisions, but that does make a lot of difference,
16 especially because of the amount of traffic that we have there in
17 south Mississippi during that time.

18

19 I've been on boats, and they've said, man, we wish we could just
20 go out another few more miles, and we wish we could catch some for
21 you, because they're out there, but we can't do it, and so I
22 understand that, and we appreciate what you do, and thank you for
23 taking the time to come over here, and I hope you have a safe trip
24 home.

25

26 **MR. SEYMOUR:** Well, I appreciate all of what you all have been
27 doing lately. Our reef fish program is going really well, and I
28 have to commend the state, and all that good work you all have
29 been doing, your staff.

30

31 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Well, we're trying, and we've got quite a bit
32 more that we're about to put in the water, I hope, and so it should
33 be -- We're trying to get as much as we can to be able to help you
34 all be able to have more fish to be able to catch.

35

36 **MR. SEYMOUR:** You were gone a couple of meetings ago, but I did
37 talk to Trevor and them, at one of the CMR meetings, about doing
38 a public testimony on cobia for our state, where we could start
39 listening to the public on what they think about going with the
40 federal guidelines, and so I haven't reached back with them, but
41 I will when I get back.

42

43 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Okay, and I will touch base with him, too.

44

45 **MR. SEYMOUR:** Yes, sir.

46

47 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** All right. Thank you.

1
2 **MR. SEYMOUR:** You're welcome.
3

4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Next, we have Austin Abrams, followed by Captain
5 Alicia Paul.
6

7 **MR. AUSTIN ABRAMS:** First off, thank you for you all coming and
8 listening to us and doing everything that you all do. We know
9 what you all do is not easy, and then listening to us is pretty
10 hard, and so -- But my name is Austin Abrams, and I'm with Tarpon
11 Dock Seafood and Hunt's Oyster Bar, and I really want to talk about
12 the discard rate on the gag groupers right now.
13

14 Right now, we have most of our boats fishing west, and the only
15 boats that we've got fishing east are our red grouper boats, and
16 the discard rate on those right now is very high. The last two or
17 three years, we've had a very good season on gags, but, you know,
18 the -- Like B.J. said, I think you all will see that in the next
19 two years, when you all's -- But that's a real concern for us, is
20 the discard rate right now.
21

22 Then I want to talk about -- We had a meeting in Panama City, about
23 five months ago, about the closure of the free space, and we didn't
24 even know about this meeting until our fish sampler told us that
25 came to the shop, and they said, hey, they've got a meeting over
26 at the NOAA office in Panama City, and we didn't know anything
27 about it, and there is only two people in Panama City that are
28 tuna fishing.
29

30 The meeting concern was we want to close the free space and open
31 up the northern block, and we've been tuna fishing for fifteen or
32 twenty years on the free space, and the reason why they want to
33 close is because of the Rice's whale. I've asked every captain I
34 have, and they've never seen a Rice's whale in the free space, and
35 just to close the free space for the Rice's whale, that we've never
36 seen, is absurd.
37

38 You know, I know you all didn't talk about that today, but that's
39 a real big concern for us, and then the king mackerel, and we used
40 to have boats that would come to our dock that came from the east
41 coast, that followed them all the way east and west, and we haven't
42 seen those boats show up at our docks in eight years, and I don't
43 even know where they're at, and our boats aren't catching them
44 anymore. You know, we've tried, and we're not getting them, and
45 I don't know if it's because of they're moving farther out, or
46 getting in deeper water, but we don't really see that anymore.
47

1 Then I want to talk about the bluefins. You know, we used to start
2 tuna fishing in March, and we don't do that anymore, for the last
3 two or three years, and we haven't tuna fished until about June,
4 because the bluefin are so thick from March to June, and, I mean,
5 it's absurd, and they're outrageous right now. I mean, they're
6 sinking our gear, or our tackle is getting lost, and it's gone,
7 and I really think there's something that could be done about
8 bluefin, do a lottery, or open it up a little bit, because I feel
9 like there's a bunch of them out there, but, other than that,
10 that's it. Thank you.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** We have several questions, and so, first off, I
13 will go with Mr. Geeslin.

14
15 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Abrams. You mentioned, or you
16 alluded, to the problem with the discard rates in the gag fishery,
17 and what are your proposed solutions for that?

18
19 **MR. ABRAMS:** I know we talked about, at the last meeting, or a
20 couple of meetings ago, about the closure of gags for the first
21 six months, you know, for the spawning season, and a lot of people
22 were -- But, you know, it's really hard to do something. You go
23 red grouper fishing, and you're going to catch gags, but now, as
24 everyone says, we're catching gags for bycatch, and it's very --
25 You know, it's not really good when you're throwing 600 or 700
26 pounds back in the water, and it's just -- Nobody wants to see
27 that, but they are catching them, and they are there, but, right
28 now, we're just doing it as bycatch, and, when you're red grouper
29 fishing, we're pretty much catching all our gags doing that.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Captain Walker.

32
33 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Abrams. I know we were at your place
34 a meeting or two ago, and you have an extensive commercial
35 operation over there, an impressive operation, I might say, and
36 you've said that your kingfish guys are crying, and they're not
37 catching them, and I'm assuming these are veteran fishing guys.

38
39 **MR. ABRAMS:** Yes, sir, and we have Captain Smitty, and he's in his
40 lower sixties, and I remember, a couple of trips ago, he went to
41 go try to catch some kings, and he didn't have one, and he's been
42 doing this his whole life.

43
44 **MR. WALKER:** Along those same lines, where have the kingfish prices
45 been? I know it varies a lot, but --

46
47 **MR. ABRAMS:** I spoke to a couple of people down south the other

1 week, and they're pretty high, and I heard \$5.85 on kings, and
2 that was to me, and I just -- I couldn't do that. I try to help,
3 but I couldn't do it.
4
5 **MR. WALKER:** One more thing, and I'm not -- Is it a 1,200-pound
6 limit up here too?
7
8 **MR. ABRAMS:** For?
9
10 **MR. WALKER:** The kingfish trip limit, commercial?
11
12 **MR. ABRAMS:** Yes.
13
14 **MR. WALKER:** So, if you can find it, and catch a limit, you can
15 make six-grand in a day.
16
17 **MR. ABRAMS:** Yes, we could, and they're not doing it.
18
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Frazer.
20
21 **DR. FRAZER:** Thanks for being here, Austin, and so none of the
22 captains, that you're aware of, have ever seen any whales in the
23 free space?
24
25 **MR. ABRAMS:** No, we haven't seen one.
26
27 **DR. FRAZER:** Where do you normally see them?
28
29 **MR. ABRAMS:** We don't.
30
31 **DR. FRAZER:** Okay. I just wanted to know. Thank you.
32
33 **MR. ABRAMS:** Thank you for asking that.
34
35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.
36
37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I make a few comments, and one, the free
38 space I assume is the donut hole, and is that what you're referring
39 to?
40
41 **MR. ABRAMS:** Yes, sir.
42
43 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Okay, and two, it's pretty hard to see one of the
44 rarest species on the earth as well, and so --
45
46 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you for coming, Mr. Abrams.
47

1 **MR. ABRAMS:** Thank you, all.
2

3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** One other thing for you is that we don't regulate
4 HMS species, the bluefin that you were talking about, and we don't
5 yellowfin -- We don't regulate them at this body, and so --
6

7 **MR. ABRAMS:** Yes, sir. Thank you.
8

9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. All right. Captain Alicia Paul,
10 followed by Eric Brazer.
11

12 **MS. ALICIA PAUL:** Alicia Paul, Panama City. I own and operate two
13 dually permitted vessels, and I do own a commercial king mackerel
14 permit. I will start today with the jacks. Thank you all for the
15 May season. As much as I love it, I kind of hate it. We're going
16 to overfish it, I'm afraid, but it's good to set a precedent for,
17 you know, the future. We've asked for them jacks in May, and this
18 is going to show you that we are going to harvest a lot, and so
19 keep a close eye on it.
20

21 Kingfish, I support a two-fish bag limit, or even one, if we've
22 got to go to one, and we all know there's a problem there. I paid
23 for my boat, in 2017 and 2018, commercially harvesting king
24 mackerel. Since then, I have not been able to, and we have
25 unprecedented highs, as far as the price goes, and I would love to
26 go make six-grand in a night, but I can't go.
27

28 Spanish mackerel, we have a nice little family business in the
29 springtime, and we depend a lot on those Spanish mackerel, and so,
30 to go from fifteen to three is going to hurt, and I would like to
31 see a ten-fish bag limit.
32

33 Red grouper, I brought that up at a social the other night, about
34 the twenty-fathom closure, and it kind of gained some ground with
35 some of the other captains, and I've heard some testimony on it
36 already today. The only person that's hurting is the federally
37 permitted guys. The rec guys are running right past 120 foot of
38 water and catching them and bringing them home, and we can't -- I
39 know that it was implicated because of the spawn, but the gag
40 grouper -- It's kind of an outdated rule, and so I would like to
41 see a change there.
42

43 SEFHIER, please continue to support it and stand it back up. If
44 the 20 percent economic data is good enough for the commercial
45 sector, it ought to be good enough for the for-hire sector. Make
46 it a red robin, where you can do it on that app, but let's get it
47 stood back up. That's really all I've got for you all today, if

1 you don't have any questions.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Geeslin.

4

5 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Alicia, I always appreciate
6 your testimony. Back to Spanish mackerel and tell us what that
7 means to your business and what you would prefer as a bag limit.

8

9 **MS. A. PAUL:** In the springtime, we run a lot of three and four-
10 hour family trips, and I market them as an ecotour, with the
11 opportunity to catch a Spanish mackerel. The fish show up in our
12 bay, and they're thick, and they're quick. Fifteen fish is not a
13 problem, if we can catch them. Now, we've had some cold fronts
14 that has affected that in the spring, but we have many days where
15 we hit our limit, on a five or six-passenger trip, within a couple
16 of hours.

17

18 If fifteen fish is too many, and I would hate to see it go back to
19 three, because then I'm back to remarketing my brand, and selling
20 that trip in a whole different manner. Three or four hours doesn't
21 really give us enough time to get offshore, and so we troll for
22 those fish in the springtime, and it would drastically affect us
23 if we went from fifteen to three. Ten, or seven, and five would
24 probably even hurt, but seven to ten would be great.

25

26 You know, there is a little bit of a decline in the stock, and you
27 can tell that, because it's not as thick and quick as it used to
28 be, but I would definitely not see that huge reduction, or like to
29 see that huge reduction.

30

31 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you.

32

33 **MS. A. PAUL:** Thank you all, for you all's time.

34

35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Any other -- I have a quick question, going back
36 to the Spanish mackerel, and do you support a vessel limit, like
37 a ten-fish-per-person and a vessel limit?

38 **MS. A. PAUL:** Sure. If it's a sixty-head vessel limit, or something
39 like that, or fifty-head, whatever, ten fish per person or a fifty
40 or sixty-vessel limit, that would be fine as well. That's plenty
41 of fish, and, most of the time, you know, a lot of them, they don't
42 want that many, and they're just taking some to eat fresh that
43 night with their family, go to like a cooking restaurant, and so
44 my thoughts is, you know, I don't want to overharvest, but I don't
45 want the mortality rate to be high either, because, as with the
46 king mackerel, and the Spanish mackerel is the same way, and you
47 can't just throw him back in the water and he is going to swim.

1 All right. Thank you.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. All right. We have Eric Brazer,
4 followed by Jerry Whisenhunt.

5

6 **MR. ERIC BRAZER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Eric Brazer,
7 Deputy Director, Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance.
8 Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm going to lead with
9 Amendment 53, and that's probably no surprise. We are disappointed
10 that the council didn't take the opportunity yesterday to get out
11 ahead of the SEDAR 88 process and to initiate something to at least
12 get it on the action schedule now and to start thinking about it.

13

14 You know now that the economic analysis in Amendment 53 was wrong
15 that and that, quote, in final Amendment 53, the Fisheries Service
16 ranked allocation alternatives using the net economic benefit
17 analysis it rejected in adopting final Amendment 28, end quote.

18

19 You now know that the fundamental -- The foundational premise for
20 Amendment 53 has major concerns with its accuracy. FES
21 overestimates recreational effort by 40 percent or more, possibly,
22 and it's looking that way. Just look at how much concern, and
23 public comment, there's been about FES at this meeting, and the
24 last meeting as well, and how can we forget the last meeting? This
25 is what you based Amendment 53 on.

26

27 You know now that SRFS is a more appropriate methodology for gag,
28 and all signs are pointing to it to be more appropriate than FES
29 for red grouper as well, and so, whether you start an action this
30 week, or you wait another seven months to do it, the council should
31 have the opportunity to reconsider Amendment 53, including its
32 allocations and socioeconomic analysis, with a legitimate economic
33 analysis and a more trusted state dataset, and the public should
34 have the opportunity to participate in this in a transparent way.

35

36 It's not enough, frankly, for the agency just to provide the final
37 product. This record must be reopened, and the council, and the
38 public, must be a part of this process.

39

40 All right. Now that I've gotten that out of the way with, let's
41 go to IFQs. We support the process that you guys have identified,
42 and you're working through now, and we encourage you to approve a
43 vision and purpose and need statement tomorrow that focuses on
44 identifying the universe of shares to reclaim, that defines the
45 universe of recipients, and confirms the distribution methodology,
46 and it seems like those are the three primary components.

47

1 We also support the establishment of an appeals process and some
2 sort of provision that would require more timely notification when
3 a shareholder dies. I don't know what that process looks like,
4 but we're happy to support whatever that looks like.

5
6 As I have said before, we want you to consider how communities and
7 allocation, or quota banks, would participate in this program, and
8 you've identified them as useful tools that can support equity
9 issues and help facilitate shared allocation distribution, and we
10 just ask that you don't inadvertently prohibit or restrict
11 yourselves at this point in the game.

12
13 It's important to consider equity, but it's going to be up to you
14 guys to determine what that means, as there's no one-size-fits-
15 all, and I will wrap-up on this comment, but all we can say is
16 that we recommend that, as you move through this document, and
17 start to develop actions and alternatives, that you identify the
18 equity tradeoffs with each one of those and you determine how
19 you're going to evaluate those tradeoffs and prioritize
20 conflicting objectives, but to do it in a way that inspires
21 stakeholder confidence, and then we support the FFP. Sorry that
22 I ran out of time. Thank you.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Captain Walker.

25
26 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Eric. I'm going to ask you the same thing
27 that I asked Jim Zurbrick. Any suggestions on an equitable way to
28 split up the scamp and black grouper commercial allocation, because
29 I don't know yet. I am looking for all the help I can get.

30
31 **MR. BRAZER:** I wish I could give you an answer, Captain Walker. I
32 don't know. You know, I looked at the documents, and I actually
33 have my notes here, and so that document considers eight different
34 management actions across two IFQ complexes, three different
35 fishery sectors, two different fishery management councils, two
36 different recreational data currencies, and the potential for a
37 third, and eight different grouper species, including three that
38 have the word "yellow" in them, and so I can't answer your question
39 right now, Captain Walker.

40
41 **MR. WALKER:** You can see why I'm looking for all the help I --

42
43 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. I have Mr. Strelcheck, followed by
44 Mr. Gill.

45
46 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Eric, for your testimony. A similar
47 question that we also asked Jim about is flexibility measures, and

1 so can you weigh-in on that?

2

3 **MR. BRAZER:** I mean, that's -- I know they exist. I know they
4 provide opportunities for improved equity in the fishery, and I
5 think -- You know, I would defer to Jessica, and I hope that she
6 can bring back a dataset that really shows how those flexibility
7 measures are used, and for what species. If they're no longer
8 relevant, then we should consider streamlining and eliminating
9 them, but I can't -- What I can't speak to is the impact on the
10 marketplace for what something like that would look like, but, if
11 you put it in the document, we get to analyze that from a
12 socioeconomic perspective.

13

14 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Gill.

15

16 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Eric, I think you give good
17 testimony to the council, and I would like to hear what you didn't
18 get to say.

19

20 **MR. BRAZER:** Ed teed me up really well for that, and it was just
21 shallow-water grouper, and then just, you know, a plug for the
22 NOAA Fisheries Finance program, especially in the context of these
23 equity discussions. We really hope that -- We look forward to
24 seeing more FFP representation at these meetings, more
25 communications, more outreach, and we would, you know, continue to
26 ask the agency to consider how to improve accessibility to this
27 program, and it's not very easy to access these funds, and, if
28 there's ways to improve how fishermen can access them, then we
29 would like to help work with you on that.

30

31 **MR. GILL:** Thank you.

32

33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Eric.

34

35 **MR. BRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

36

37 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Next, we have Jerry Whisenhunt, followed by
38 Captain Jim Green.

39

40 **MR. JERRY WHISENHUNT:** Jerry Whisenhunt, and I have charter boats
41 on Dauphin Island. I have three of them myself, and, actually,
42 I'm speaking for a few of the other captains that I visited with
43 before I came. I started off, and I appreciate you all for having
44 this public forum to come and speak.

45

46 I sent letters to the state, and, fortunately, they got me in touch
47 with Susan, who clued me into what was going on here, and I found

1 out this is where I am supposed to come to speak to get things
2 done.

3
4 Our concern was simply moving the start of snapper season up to
5 match the vacationers, especially us in small, six-pack boats that
6 revolve around vacation season, and adding more dates to the end
7 doesn't help us much as catching the early vacationers, especially
8 Memorial Day, and that was my primary reason for showing up.

9
10 Having been here, I've heard a lot of discussion on the SEFHIER,
11 the VMS, and we had those on our boats, and I was okay with it,
12 but I know that became a hanging issue, and a suggestion from me
13 is give us some flexibility with dates if we're willing to put
14 them on there. The guys that don't, don't be flexible, and they
15 will come over.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Captain Walker.

18
19 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you. You said your primary motivation today
20 would be to see if you could get snapper season moved up, and what
21 would be a good time for you all that would maximize your season,
22 if you were to move snapper season forward a little bit?

23
24 **MS. WHISENHUNT:** Mid-May, and that's about the time we see the
25 vacation folks show up, especially Memorial Weekend. I mean, it's
26 from there on, and it's wide open.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

29
30 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, first of all, I would like to thank Scott Bannon
31 for getting you in touch with me, and I appreciate you driving
32 over here today. The ferry wasn't running, and so he had to take
33 the long way around from Dauphin Island, in this terrible weather,
34 and so I appreciate that, and I hope that you stay engaged. I
35 hope we don't just see you at this meeting, but, since you're here,
36 I'm going to put you on the spot about king mackerel and Spanish
37 mackerel and what you all are seeing over on Dauphin Island.

38
39 **MR. WHISENHUNT:** The kings, our season has been slow the last
40 couple of years, and it's not been as hot as it has in years past,
41 and so it is a little slower. The king mackerel, yes, it's been
42 tough for the last few years. The Spanish, I don't fish for them
43 a lot, and we're pretty much offshore, and they're nearshore. I
44 see the guys fishing for them, but I will just be honest that I
45 can't give you any intelligent input, but, yes, the king mackerel
46 -- It's been tough for the last few years and cutting our numbers
47 back a little probably wouldn't hurt.

1
2 **MS. BOGGS:** I want Emily to raise her hand, because she can help
3 you get signed up for newsletters and other things to stay in touch
4 with the council process.

5
6 **MR. WHISENHUNT:** All right. Thank you so much.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. All right. Next, we have Captain Jim
9 Green, followed by a former council member that I forgot to
10 recognize, Captain David Walker.

11
12 **MR. JIM GREEN:** Hello. Captain Jim Green, President of the Destin
13 Charter Boat Association and President of the Charter Fishermen's
14 Association. Both organizations appreciate the council's effort
15 on moving the for-hire data collection document forward. We have
16 a wealth of knowledge from our experiences, and we need some
17 guidance moving forward with the agency on validation, which we
18 are happy to help with in any way, Andy, but we're moving forward,
19 and, on behalf of both organizations, we are really grateful for
20 this council's commitment to that.

21
22 With that, we support, and request, these preferred alternatives
23 in the document. Under Action 1, Alternative 2, under Action 2,
24 Alternative 2, and then, under Action 3, Alternative 2a and b.

25
26 It's important to remember that reporting at the trip level
27 supports harvest data validation, which is really the cornerstone
28 of any data collection program, and I think anything other than
29 reporting at the trip level will undermine that validation effort.

30
31 We also believe that trip declarations for all permit holders is
32 vital, for several reasons. During the committee, Captain Walker
33 spoke about checking traps, and I saw the issue right there, with
34 it being considered fishing, and I think we need to take a look at
35 the wording in Action 3, and maybe apply it to "engaged in federal
36 and state-managed fishing", or something of that nature, and
37 wordsmith it to where it includes the report -- The fish that were
38 in the reporting, and checking bait traps should not be included,
39 or the intended capture of fishing activity, when it comes to the
40 context of this document to our industry.

41
42 When it comes to declarations, we believe it's important to capture
43 any commerce activity of the vessel, and I also believe that Mr.
44 Strelcheck spoke, in committee, about the declarations helping
45 with enforcement, when it comes to non-reporting, and so, with
46 that, declarations should be required at the trip level, because
47 these attributes, and what they provide, helps with the integrity

1 of the program.

2
3 Both organizations support a reduction in kingfish to one from
4 three, and we think that this will help protect the fish as they're
5 coming back, as they're rebuilding. We support a fifteen-fish to
6 five-fish reduction on Spanish mackerel. Destin has always found
7 that fifteen to be a little too high, and they try to stretch those
8 out as much as they can.

9
10 When it comes to gag and red grouper and lane snapper, we support
11 Captain Dylan Hubbard's testimony on those species. I want to
12 thank Mr. Diaz for bringing up the buffer for the for-hire fishery,
13 concerning red snapper, and we have -- We have always underfished,
14 since Amendment 40, and we've always took pride in that, that we've
15 maintained not overfishing, but we want to maximize that, and I
16 think that we have a good enough track record now to where we can
17 fine-tune that and look at reducing that buffer, where possible.

18
19 You've heard a lot today about kingfish and habitat, and both of
20 our organizations are really supportive of the offshore wind energy
21 initiative in the western Gulf. Since idle iron, under the Obama
22 administration happened, we've seen a decline in red snapper,
23 amberjack, cobia, king mackerel, and, even though it's anecdotal,
24 you've heard a couple of people here, and it just lends to the
25 fact that a reduction in habitat goes to a reduction in biomass,
26 and so, with that, we support that, and I really appreciate the
27 opportunity to speak today. Thank you.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

30
31 **MS. BOGGS:** So, have you all discussed a move in the opening of
32 red snapper season, and when you all might like to see that, as
33 our seasons continue to get longer?

34
35 **MR. GREEN:** We've discussed it at DCBA, and we're kind of -- I can
36 just speak to DCBA, and, of course, CFA is Gulf-wide, and there's
37 a wide range of what that entails, but, in Destin, we've talked
38 about it. We've talked about how it used to be a spring and fall
39 season, back when I was a kid, and to be honest with you, we really
40 have to see what those numbers are. You know, I can understand
41 us, in the eastern Gulf, wanting those couple of weeks of May, and
42 I can understand where, if I was in Texas, I would not want that,
43 if it was just going to take more days away from me, and I think
44 we need to weigh what that is.

45
46 You know, in the charter industry, we sell opportunity, and, if
47 one May day equals three days in September, then, you know, I think

1 that's that we need to look at, and what is that opportunity for
2 the anglers to come when it's not so busy, when the prices are
3 lower to come to our towns, and rent a condo and do that kind of
4 stuff, and so I would say none of us are opposed to looking at it,
5 but we really would want to know what that actually means, you
6 know, and what does one day in May equal on the backside of what
7 we already have. Thank you all so much.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, Captain Green. Thank you. Next up,
10 we have Captain David Walker, and the other former council member
11 that's in the audience is Captain Johnny Greene, in the back there.
12 Johnny, if you can stand up. Thank you. It's nice seeing you.
13 Next up, we would have the last person, and that would be Captain
14 Johnny Williams.

15
16 **MR. DAVID WALKER:** Good afternoon. It's good to see everyone.
17 David Walker, Alabama, Walker Fishing Fleet, Fishing Vessels June
18 Sue and Lovella, commercial. My first fishing trip in the Gulf
19 took place in 1975, at the age of twelve, aboard the New Florida
20 Girl, out of Destin, Florida. The good lord willing, I'll be back
21 offshore next week, continuing to celebrate forty-nine years of
22 fishing in the Gulf of Mexico.

23
24 The IFQ program has been the most successful FMP we've ever had in
25 the commercial fishing industry, and it has met its goals. I think
26 the Fisheries Finance Program provides opportunities for others to
27 enter the fishery, and, if the Fisheries Finance Program needs
28 more flexibility, I support that.

29
30 I am concerned, as others have mentioned, about king mackerel and
31 amberjack, and I would also like to make the comment that gag
32 groupers appear to be coming back, and we've already caught up our
33 quota in the first few trips. In closing, I would like to say
34 congratulations to Elizabeth, and I think she's already left, and
35 I know that Susan is proud of her, and just thank you for the
36 opportunity to speak.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you, Captain Walker. We have a question
39 from Captain Walker.

40
41 **MR. WALKER:** I waited for that. David, you've been around a long
42 time, and you're one of the more experienced guys up in this neck
43 of the woods, and can you give us your input on the status of the
44 king mackerel population?

45
46 **MR. D. WALKER:** King mackerel is more abundant than many years
47 ago, and it seems like, each year, and I have get back maybe around

1 the oil spill, during that time, and it seems to slow down a little
2 bit after that, and -- Some other areas, you know, some guys are
3 saying that there's plenty of them, but I know, in Leesville, in
4 talking with those guys, it's been pretty said, and I can remember
5 catching a lot of king mackerel, but I can't ever hardly -- I could
6 eat the king mackerel that we caught last year.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. All right. Last on the list, but
9 certainly not least, Captain Johnny Williams.

10
11 **MR. JOHNNY WILLIAMS:** Good afternoon. I'm Johnny Williams,
12 Williams Party Boats, Incorporated, a third-generation party boat
13 operator out of Galveston, Texas. I'm here today to request that
14 you all convene a panel again to examine Amendment 42 again. I
15 think it was a very successful pilot program that we had, and I
16 encourage you to look at the advantages for everyone that this
17 program offers.

18
19 Number one, it offers an advantage to me, and I can prosecute my
20 fishery, my business, better than the federal government can, and
21 so why not give me that opportunity? As far as my customers, it
22 gives them an opportunity, too. At the current situation, we're
23 able to fish starting on June 1, and we don't even know how long
24 we're going to fish normally, until close to when the season
25 starts. We would have a lot more clarity if we had 42, because we
26 could start fishing on January 1, and finish on December 31, if we
27 want, and we get to choose the days that we want to fish.

28
29 Also, the fish. If we're fishing outside the normal season, like
30 in the wintertime, like we would be doing often, we would have a
31 lower fishing mortality, and the fish have a much higher survival
32 rate during the winter months, when the water is cooler. I mean,
33 I've been saying this over all the years.

34
35 The recreational fishermen, we get an awful lot of pressure all at
36 one time out there in the summer months, and, if we had 42, we
37 could have, you know, the pressure throughout the year, rather
38 than all at one time, and there's a lot of release mortality that's
39 due to that pressure of these spots getting hit over and over again
40 all the time.

41
42 It would be good for the charter boats, because they wouldn't --
43 A lot of them fish some of the same spots that we fish, especially,
44 you know, off of places like Orange Beach, Alabama. It better
45 serves all the National Standards, or most of them, especially the
46 safety-at-sea, because some vessels go out probably in weather
47 they shouldn't be going, because the weather is inclement, but

1 they go anyway, because they know that they're going to lose a day
2 if they don't get to go fishing then.

3
4 Like I said, we've already had a program, and it was working really
5 well. We have a -- We basically have a catch share program for
6 the states right now, and they get to choose the days that they
7 think is more beneficial for their fishermen, for the recreational
8 sector, and so, basically, we already have a catch share program
9 for the recreational fishermen, and I would like to be offered
10 that same opportunity.

11
12 One of the pitfalls that we had in the commercial industry was the
13 initial allocation. At that time, there were no fish basically
14 being caught in the eastern Gulf, as far as red snapper were
15 concerned, but we don't have that issue now, and red snapper have
16 been abundant in the eastern Gulf for a number of years.

17
18 Just to kind of wrap it up again, you know, I hope you all become
19 more dynamic. Anybody can look at data that comes in front of
20 them and says, okay, you know, we're going to get a two-fish bag
21 limit, and we're going to get June 1 to -- What's the other date?
22 It's seventy-three days, or something like that, and, I mean, it
23 doesn't take a whole lot of work to do that, but hopefully you all
24 can be more dynamic and try to get something in place that's going
25 to benefit everyone, like I just tried to point out. I don't
26 really see where anybody is going to be disadvantaged by this, and
27 I encourage you to bring it back up for consideration. Thank you
28 very much and have a great evening.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

31
32 **MS. BOGGS:** You know there's no bigger champion than I am for
33 Amendment 42, Johnny, but, that being said, if -- You're here for
34 -- I know Gillian fishes in Texas, and I know you're not there
35 that much, but if this council looked to at least move the start
36 date, what would work for -- Or change some dates, and what's
37 better, more flexible, for the State of Texas? Then I have a
38 follow-up question.

39
40 **MR. WILLIAMS:** What would be better for the State of Texas, as far
41 as what?

42
43 **MS. BOGGS:** For the charter fleet. I mean, I know you all have a
44 lot of rough weather, a lot of times.

45
46 **MR. WILLIAMS:** We do, and, like I said, one of the National
47 Standards is safety-at-sea, and this would certainly satisfy that.

1 Also, the fact that we have, you know, people, in the summertime,
2 flock to Galveston, and then it's really robust at that time of
3 the year.

4
5 If we were fishing outside of the normal season, we would have --
6 I'm not saying we would have a tremendous impact on the economy in
7 Galveston, but we bring a lot of people into Galveston to go
8 fishing, but, I mean, you all -- The whole coast is really a
9 tourist location, and you can see there are certain lulls, and
10 there are certain other times where you're real robust, and it
11 would bring people in, if we were fishing when we could fish
12 outside of the normal season, as we do right now. Like I said, I
13 would certainly like it, and it would benefit me more than anybody,
14 because it gives me the flexibility to fish when I want to fish.

15
16 **MS. BOGGS:** Then I know -- I think your smaller boat does some
17 king fishing, and what are you all seeing with the king mackerel
18 off the Texas coast?

19
20 **MR. WILLIAMS:** You know that I've been up here, for probably five
21 or six years, whining about the king mackerel situation, and I'm
22 very encouraged that finally we're getting something done, after
23 all this time, and I applaud you all for that.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right. Captain Williams, thank you.

26
27 **MR. WILLIAMS:** Thank you very much.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I'm sorry. We do have -- Captain Williams, I'm
30 sorry, and there are two others that I think would like to ask you
31 questions, and that would be Mr. Geeslin first, followed by Mr.
32 Strelcheck.

33
34 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you. Mr. Williams, you heard Ms. Paul talk
35 about -- I asked her about the Spanish mackerel limits, and I
36 believe another commenter talked about vessel limits for king
37 mackerel, and for Spanish mackerel, and what are your thoughts on
38 vessel limits particular to your business operations?

39
40 **MR. WILLIAMS:** Well, like I say, the Spanish mackerel don't make
41 up a big component of the catch on any of my boats, and so, you
42 know, the people that depend on the fish -- I would rather see
43 them be involved in the decision-making process than myself, in
44 that regard, but, as far as king mackerel, it's terrible off of
45 Galveston, and I've been up here complaining it for years and
46 years, asking you all to please do something, and, like I say, I
47 applaud you all for finally getting something done about it.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.
3

4 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Johnny, for being here, and we all know
5 that I'm a huge fan of the Headboat Collaborative, having helped
6 run that for a while, and so I certainly support the idea that you
7 can run your business better than the government.
8

9 Susan was trying to ask you, with regard to the red snapper season,
10 right, and I hear, obviously, your want for flexibility, but, given
11 that we open on June 1, and, right now, are closing in August,
12 and, you know, we haven't heard a lot from Texas captains about,
13 you know, the season structure and what would benefit you, given
14 weather conditions, under the current season conditions.
15

16 **MR. WILLIAMS:** Well, certainly, unless we're having a hurricane in
17 early August, or something like that, and the weather is generally
18 better in the summer months. However, I mean, we have really nice
19 days in January, February, March, usually after a cold front, or
20 a northern, comes through, and it will blow hard out of the north
21 for a couple of days, and then we'll have a few nice days of
22 weather, and stuff like that, and so, I mean, we could have good
23 or bad weather anytime of the year, but probably the better time
24 for the weather generally is in the summer, even though, usually,
25 the first two weeks of June are pretty tough off of Texas, but,
26 like I say, if we had the flexibility, you know, to fish when we
27 wanted to, we could basically choose our days.
28

29 The states do it for the recreational fishermen, and, I mean, the
30 precedent is there, with some of the states let you fish on Friday,
31 Saturday, Sunday, you know, instead of all during the week, and so
32 we've already got a precedent, and we would just like to be
33 afforded that same opportunity. Thank you very much for your time.
34

35 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. All right, and so that wraps up all
36 of public testimony. Thank you to everyone who wanted to speak
37 here in-person, as well as online, and we're scheduled to go until
38 5:00. I'm thinking maybe we can knock out a couple of the reports,
39 SEDAR and maybe closed session, this afternoon. Mr. Schieble, do
40 you have any preference in maybe doing Shrimp this afternoon, with
41 a half-hour, and is that going to be enough, or do you want to
42 just wait until tomorrow?
43

44 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I'm ready to go, but I don't know, and we left a
45 couple of things for Full Council out of the committee, because we
46 ran out of time, and so I can't gauge how long this is going to
47 take.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So, let's take a ten-minute break, and then we'll
3 try to knock out those shorter reports here. Thank you.

4
5 (Whereupon a brief recess was taken.)
6

7 **COMMITTEE REPORTS**
8 **GULF SEDAR COMMITTEE REPORT**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, folks, and so we've got a little less
11 than a half-hour for the rest of the day for our scheduled time,
12 and I would like to go ahead and use those minutes to work through
13 some of the remaining agenda. We are ahead of schedule, but what
14 I plan to do, for the remainder of the day, is to go through the
15 Gulf SEDAR Committee report, the closed session report, and then
16 I've asked Dave Donaldson to provide the Gulf States Marine
17 Fisheries Commission Liaison report, and I think that will wrap up
18 the rest of today, and so we'll start up again tomorrow, at 8:00
19 a.m., with the Shrimp Committee.

20
21 We'll go ahead with the Gulf SEDAR Committee report. The committee
22 adopted the agenda, Tab I, Number 1, and the committee approved
23 the minutes, Tab I, Number 2, of the June 2022 meeting as written.
24

25 SSC Initial Discussions about the Current SEDAR Process, Tab I,
26 Number 5, Dr. Nance discussed SSC recommendations for the SEDAR
27 process in response to its review of the SEDAR 74 research track
28 assessment of red snapper. The SSC thought that more flexibility
29 was needed in the SEDAR process, with key stocks assessed at
30 regular intervals. The SSC recommended against the continued use
31 of the research track assessment process, as it did not achieve
32 the intended gains in efficiency and other process improvements.
33

34 Further, the SSC thought the use of independent CIE peer-review,
35 and other working groups, could be evaluated on a case-by-case
36 basis. The SSC will continue to evaluate the SEDAR process, as
37 requested and provide any recommendations to the council.
38

39 March 2024 SEDAR Steering Committee Meeting Report, Tab I, Number
40 6, council staff summarized the proceedings from the March 2024
41 SEDAR Steering Committee meeting, including the SEDAR project
42 reports, schedule, and key stocks for SEDAR assessment.
43

44 Regarding process modifications, the SEDAR Steering Committee
45 reviewed a presentation from the Southeast Fisheries Science
46 Center (SEFSC), which proposed assessing key stocks regularly,
47 allowing capacity for addressing emergent concerns, improvements

1 to timeliness, and implications for the assessment schedule beyond
2 2026.

3
4 SEFSC recommendations also proposed eliminating the research track
5 concept and assessment nomenclature, for example operational,
6 benchmark, standard, and update, and employing more efficient
7 assessment methods for improved timeliness.

8
9 A council member noted the need for the councils to simplify the
10 assessment process to increase throughput and timeliness, thereby
11 allowing the councils to address management needs more nimbly.
12 They added that increasing degrees of complexity result in
13 additional costs in terms of time, which affects the difference
14 between the terminal year of the assessment advice and when a
15 management change using that advice might be implemented.

16
17 A committee member asked how a rotating schedule might improve
18 assessment capacity. The Southeast Regional Office replied that
19 some options, like management strategy evaluations (MSE), may play
20 a role in creating efficiency gains in some areas. They elaborated
21 that staffing is not likely to increase, and, thus, the efficiency
22 gains need to be explored wherever else possible. The SEFSC agreed
23 that better matching assessment needs with available resources
24 would help optimize the capability of the analytical agencies
25 (i.e., the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and the Florida Fish
26 and Wildlife Research Institute) to respond to management needs.

27
28 Further, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center recalled
29 discussions from the SEDAR Steering Committee which encouraged
30 exploring assessing stocks in simpler ways outside of the SEDAR
31 process.

32
33 A committee member asked if the MSE-type work would be handled
34 outside of the SEDAR process. The Southeast Fisheries Science
35 Center replied that it depends on the scope of work and resources
36 required. Council staff clarified that the Gulf Council has, in
37 the past, requested that MSEs occur outside the SEDAR process.
38 However, the SEDAR Steering Committee acknowledged the stresses on
39 human and other resources in the SEDAR process.

40
41 Other council members were encouraged by facets of the re-
42 envisioned assessment process. Council staff discussed which key
43 stocks would be considered for the Gulf. Key stocks would be those
44 which are important to management, but not necessarily the most
45 data-rich species managed by the Gulf. These preliminarily
46 included: red snapper, red grouper, gag, king mackerel, greater
47 amberjack, gray snapper, gray triggerfish, and vermilion snapper.

1
2 A council member asked why shrimp was not included as a key stock.
3 Council staff replied that the goal was to use the current
4 assessment of shrimp to assess those penaeid stocks. The council
5 member thought it was immaterial how the current shrimp benchmark
6 assessment evolves, as to whether shrimp is a key stock for future
7 assessments.

8
9 A committee member replied that there are dozens of species managed
10 by the council and that not all species can be labeled as key
11 stocks. However, just because a species is not labeled as a key
12 stock, it does not mean it will not be routinely assessed in some
13 way.

14
15 Another committee member requested consideration of yellowtail
16 snapper as a key stock and mentioned that he considered cobia as
17 much of a key stock as king mackerel. Council staff clarified
18 that the assessment of key stocks would be negotiated between the
19 SEDAR cooperators, like the Gulf Council, and the analytical
20 agencies. The proposal will be reviewed next by the SSC, after it
21 undergoes further development.

22
23 Review and Discussion of Gulf of Mexico SEDAR Schedule, Tab I,
24 Number 4, council staff reviewed the SEDAR schedule for Gulf stocks
25 through 2026 and clarified that the initiative to implement the
26 routine assessment of key stocks was expected to begin in 2026.

27
28 Other Business, a council member asked about a motion passed at a
29 previous council meeting regarding revisions to the SEDAR process,
30 including incorporation of state surveys for recreational data and
31 conducting assessments outside of SEDAR. The SEFSC replied that,
32 beyond the discussions and presentations at the SEDAR Steering
33 Committee in March 2024, they were exploring methods such as using
34 percent change in a representative index for adjusting catch
35 advice. The SEFSC thought that work on this motion was making
36 progress and would bring more details at a future council meeting.
37 This concludes my report. Mr. Gill.

38
39 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to make a couple
40 of comments, if I might. In selection of the key stocks, I think
41 it's going to be critical for this council to parse that down to
42 as small a number as they can. If they don't, then what you will
43 have is business as usual, and you will accomplish effectively
44 nothing, and we typically don't do that. You know, we always go
45 for the benchmark assessment, as opposed to an operational, and
46 cutting away a species that, particularly, one member might think
47 is important in their area, and so it's going to be a very difficult

1 thing, but, in order to make this new process work, which I think
2 is a good step, it's going to take some discipline amongst the
3 council, and so, if we don't do that, we won't be successful in
4 the new approach.

5
6 The other comment that I wanted to make was that, while I think
7 the SEDAR Steering Committee came to the right conclusions, in
8 terms of forging a new path on how to do assessments, what I didn't
9 hear is there was a sense of urgency, and my recommendation is
10 that this process needs one.

11
12 For example, for 2024 and 2025, according to the schedule, the
13 center is providing -- Well, to the council, by the time it gets
14 there, one assessment per year, and the rest are all coming out of
15 the FWC. That, obviously, indicates the SEDAR process isn't
16 working, in terms of helping the council do its job, but it also
17 indicates, to me, that we need a sense of urgency to get the new
18 plan on its path as soon as possible, and so one of the things
19 that was not done, at the Steering Committee, which frankly
20 surprised me, was there was no action plan, and it was, okay, we
21 maybe have a special meeting, et cetera, but I did not get the
22 sense that as soon as possible, to get this program on track.

23
24 For example, you might set a goal, which is probably unattainable,
25 but to have the new plan in place by 1 January 2025, but, if we
26 don't push it, it's going to take the normal speed of business,
27 and not be effective, because we won't start the new assessments
28 until later, and so I think that's the approach that we need to
29 take, as a council, relative to that process, and I would strongly
30 recommend it. Thank you.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So, to those comments, I know -- I agree with you
33 that the -- You know, we need to strike the iron while the iron is
34 hot, for sure, and, you know, there is some thoughts that need to
35 be sorted internally amongst those assessment staff, as to how
36 really, you know, this kind of vision would interplay with either
37 the council, relative to the key stocks issue, and then how that
38 would fit in with the remainder of the schedule going through and
39 starting up in 2026, and there are less than two years to the 2026,
40 and so, you know, what they had requested, from the councils, was
41 the list of these key stocks, so that it would help them in trying
42 to --

43
44 Again, we're not talking about time blocks, but, at the end of the
45 day, you're still talking about resources that will be needed,
46 whether it's, you know, the people on the ground doing the
47 assessments or all of the throughput to get the data prepared to

1 do the assessments, and so there's that schedule that's involved
2 behind the scenes.

3
4 My understanding is that we are going to have a phone call, and
5 there's a doodle poll that I completed the other day for a May
6 meeting, to try to talk about this one more time, to make sure
7 that we're still on the same page as we kind of -- As this process
8 is crystalized, and I think it was August potentially would be
9 another meeting that was mentioned at the SEDAR Steering Committee,
10 but I don't know if Dr. Walter would like to speak to a more
11 definitive timeline that maybe the agency is really circling on
12 the calendar to have something that's on paper, but, you know,
13 there is a desire, at least amongst the, you know, council
14 directors and chairs that were present at the meeting, that this
15 does need to be done as quickly as possible. Dr. Walter.

16
17 **MR. WALTER:** Mr. Chair, thank you, and, Bob, I think that --
18 Speaking from my staff, I don't think they could be any more
19 encouraged by this and motivated to make this happen. I think
20 this is something that they certainly are very interested in
21 working with the Steering Committee, and with the council staff,
22 to make this happen.

23
24 One thing that I think -- The running joke was what the over-under
25 is on the number of key stocks, and I think that we -- We brought
26 this to the council, and now the key stocks seem to keep growing
27 and growing, and I think that's not -- I think what we need to be
28 cognizant of is identifying something as a key stock is not saying
29 that that is a lower priority. It's in how we probably are going
30 to assess it.

31
32 I think maybe if I could try to clarify and help with this for the
33 council, and it's I think we're hearing, in a lot of cases, that
34 it's -- That we want more frequent advice, because things change
35 more often, which means that we're actually prioritizing the
36 frequency of advice to be current with what's going on in the
37 water, which would mean a less-complex assessment, and so it's not
38 less priority, and it's not like shrimp is a less priority, but
39 it's that we just want to be able to update it more rapidly, which
40 is actually what that assessment modeling approach that's being
41 developed is doing.

42
43 It probably doesn't need that full age-structured SEDAR-inclusive
44 process, and so maybe, rather than use of the word "key stocks",
45 because it kind of says that that's a priority, it's -- I don't
46 know the right language, in terms of what we would do to get them,
47 but at least put them in the right -- What would be the best tool

1 for the job.

2
3 For other ones, there's just a substantial degree of complexity,
4 and it's going to take the time that it takes, and red snapper is
5 sort of that keystone one that has so many different parts that it
6 really needs that full, inclusive thing, but others, that were
7 maybe Florida-only ones, that are a little bit easier to compile
8 the data, but have strong cohorts that move through, that we really
9 need to capture -- That might be one that we need to get more
10 frequency of update, because something comes in, and we see these
11 fish, but the assessment is five years stale, and we're missing
12 the boat, and I think that's where the council could say do we
13 want more rapid advice for these ones, because we're hearing, like
14 for gag, that the fish are there, but the assessment is lagging,
15 which means maybe dialing back on the complexity to get a more
16 rapid update.

17
18 Shrimp is pretty clear, and other ones may be -- So that would be
19 the prioritization, and so maybe that's what the Steering Committee
20 -- We're not going to get to that here, but I think, rather than
21 just piling on the key stocks, thinking about how to put them in
22 the right place. Thanks.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.

25
26 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I was going to make a similar point, and so John
27 kind of emphasized what I was going to say, right, and we did talk
28 about this some at the SEDAR Steering Committee, right, and do we
29 want to build an assessment that's a Honda Civic, or a Cadillac,
30 or a Maserati, and, obviously, the nicer you build it, the longer
31 it's likely to take, and so, you know, to me, we get hung up on
32 terminology a lot of times, right, and so "key stocks" -- People
33 think of that as key stocks that are important for me to go out
34 and catch, and, as John is pointing out, we're envisioning it more
35 as like the framework for the complexity of the stock assessment,
36 and then what are some things that maybe we can step back from
37 those really complex assessments and do some sort of simpler
38 methodology, or approach, and so we'll continue to work on this.

39
40 Your point is well taken, Bob, right, and so there is an urgency,
41 and that's why we're scheduling that meeting in May, and then
42 following-up in August, and we also have a lot of things that are
43 in the queue, right, to be worked on in 2024 and 2025, and so we've
44 already done the data preparation, to kind of get that underway,
45 and that's why the 2026 timeframe was started.

46
47 The other part of this is the perfect storm with MRIP-FES, right,

1 and so maybe less so in the Gulf, but a lot of stock assessments
2 in the South Atlantic were pushed back, simply because of that FES
3 issue, and so we're factoring that in, but we've talked with the
4 center about some work that could be done, and Kevin alluded to
5 it, right, that could help set us up for greater success, by doing
6 that data triage, and work, to kind of standardize processes, and
7 so I think we're building towards something that could be much
8 more timely, and successful, but we still have some work to do.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I will just add -- I will quickly add on to what
11 Dr. Walter and Mr. Strelcheck just said, relative to your comment,
12 Bob, about the -- You know, the complexity issue, and that, you
13 know, things kind of bog down, and, at the end of the year, we end
14 up with one or two assessments, and so, you know, trying to right-
15 size the assessment with the species, and the data, right, but
16 then there's also going to be some discipline on the council side
17 too, to, you know, say, well, you know, you can go for this
18 assessment, but it's much more complex, and it's much more time
19 consuming, and it's going to result in less assessments at the end
20 of the year, and so, when this process comes out, at least as it
21 was initially described at the meeting, you know, there is the
22 potential for the council to, you know, add some things, or
23 recommend, or want to do a more complex assessment, but, you know,
24 we have to realize that is going to impact the process, and the
25 throughput, and so, you know, it's going to take both sides,
26 basically, to try to get to the end goal. Yes, sir.

27
28 **MR. GILL:** I completely agree, but I do note that, historically,
29 the council does not have that discipline. We never have, in m
30 experience, in twenty-some-odd years, and so it's a new page, and
31 it will take some tough thinking, and compromising, to get to that,
32 and my final word is KISS, and it's all about KISS-ism, and that's
33 exactly where we're at, and I strongly support what the center is
34 doing in that regard.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes, and we'll see that shapes up going forward,
37 and, obviously, council membership changes over time, and the needs
38 change, but, you know, certainly with this membership, and what
39 we've gone through in the school of hard knocks for assessments,
40 and the SEDAR research track assessment, both sides are unhappy,
41 and so, you know, I would like to think that we can come to the
42 happy medium, where we can -- With an eye towards throughput, and
43 having assessments to help us with management, that we can kind of
44 restrain ourselves, if you will, at the end of the day, with trying
45 to go for the more complex assessments. Mr. Diaz.

46
47 **MR. DIAZ:** I am going to probably reiterate some of what's been

1 said, but the historical knowledge around this table only lasts so
2 long. I mean, you've got basically some state people that's been
3 around for a long time, and you're the longest-serving state person
4 right now, but the rest of the folks are only around for nine
5 years, and I don't think there's many people around the table from
6 when we were trying to ask for the very best red snapper
7 assessments that were possible, and there were some costs to that
8 in the past, and so that speaks to the council discipline side.

9
10 We didn't get much for asking for these Cadillac assessments. We
11 didn't get much, and, from my perspective right now, and it's what
12 I said the other day, is we need to keep it simple, and we need
13 more timely data, and we've got to have more throughput, and
14 everything we do has to look at those three things, and the council
15 just can't keep going. I mean, the people that's coming up here
16 and saying, look, gag has changed, and our assessment is stale.
17 We don't have a good way to do anything with it now.

18
19 Hopefully the staff, in the future, and what few state people is
20 around here, can remind people of historical times, when we tried
21 to ask for these Cadillac versions, and we didn't get much for it,
22 and so -- And I hope Dr. Walter -- I think he was asking what our
23 opinion is, and I'm trying to be loud and clear what mine is now,
24 simpler and more throughput. We've got to have it, more timely
25 data, and that's the focus, and so --

26
27 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes, and, again, the staff is working on that
28 plan of what their vision would be, and it was -- You know, as the
29 plan was kind of just laid out on the table at the meeting, and
30 there was discussion on, you know, making it very explicit in what
31 could be available, under certain data situations for a species,
32 what those costs would be to do this, and what it would cost to do
33 that, so that, when you go down the list, you basically say, okay,
34 it's going to be three months to do that, and it's going to be
35 three months to do that, and two months to do that, and whatever
36 to do that, and, at the end, this is what we're shooting for, to
37 try to get an assessment through, but you know, more on the
38 frontend, what that is, and so, as you add more things to that
39 list, it's going to add more time, and so it will very explicit
40 for the council to know, going in, that I'm going to give up, you
41 know, timeliness, in order to do this certain task related to this
42 species, is what the vision was at that time, and we'll have to
43 see what the final result is, when the process comes up. Mr.
44 Dugas.

45
46 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to add to Mr.
47 Gill and Dale's comments, I believe that we rely too much on the

1 SEDAR process, or the Science Center, and I could be incorrect
2 when I say that, but I think there's other options available that
3 we should look at to get data, and it could be state data, and it
4 could be asking universities to help out with some stock
5 assessments, and it could be groups like LGL, and I think they are
6 overloaded, and I think we have other avenues, and we're just not
7 exploring them.

8
9 I could be totally wrong, but that's my opinion, because, whenever
10 -- I know that we're given -- The Science Center is dealing with
11 three councils, and not just us, and so they have a lot on their
12 plate, and we hear 2026, the year 2028, and Dale just said it.
13 There are people back there waiting on data that's going to affect
14 their business, you know, and so I think waiting until 2028 is
15 somewhat unacceptable. We need to move in a quicker fashion, and
16 I don't have that answer, but I would like to entertain a different
17 route.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Froeschke.

20
21 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Following-up on Dr. Walter's comment, and it kind
22 of got me thinking a little bit differently. The way it seems to
23 me is you would want a few stocks, but refreshed -- So every three
24 years, and so, in year-four, you start year-one, and so, for
25 example, you know you want red snapper, and that's an age-
26 structured assessment, and that probably takes two slots, and
27 that's year-one. In year-two, say you do red grouper and gag,
28 because we have enough to do two stocks a year. In year-three,
29 you pick two other ones off the list. In year-four, you start
30 over again on red -- To me, that's it.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So what's unknown, unfortunately -- What's
33 unknown, unfortunately, in my mind, is that, you know, again,
34 they're not trying to set up our normal SEDAR schedule, where
35 there's a time block, and it goes through quarters, but, you know,
36 I think there's going to have to be a realization of how long
37 something will be, based on available resources and what it is
38 that's being requested, the type of model, the type of add-ons
39 that you do to that model, and so I think their intent was to try
40 to get kind of the lay of the land on what the base would be for
41 those key stocks.

42
43 You know, it might be wise to whittle down the list of eight to a
44 much smaller number, but I think they were really looking for the
45 intent, from the councils, to figure out and engage what it was
46 that the council had interest in, and they would kind of go back
47 to the drawing table with the list of all of the species, from the

1 other two councils, and not just our council, but the other two
2 councils, and then come back, as it fits into this potential, you
3 know, throughput of what the key stocks would look like and what
4 the potential would for recurring or having the follow-up
5 assessments done at a certain level of assessment, or type of
6 assessment, with maybe a minimum amount of add-ons.

7
8 That's what I intended, or what I got, from that, and so, to make
9 that process easier for them, and then be able to do those species,
10 or key stocks, more frequently, then, yes. If you reduce the
11 number of species, you will have more throughput, and more regular
12 throughput, but, in preparation for what the resources would be,
13 and if you want those done on a regular schedule -- You know, a
14 regular schedule could be every other year, or a regular schedule
15 could be every four years, and so -- Mr. Rindone.

16
17 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, to that point, I
18 think what's germane to this conversation is the species that we're
19 talking about -- Like do we expect there to be also a lot of new
20 information involved, because, obviously, like you were inferring,
21 it's going to affect how long these things can take, and so, for
22 some of the species that we had initially talked about at the SEDAR
23 Steering Committee, like king mackerel as an example, and, with
24 the example of Dr. Banks, and colleagues, recent publication, there
25 hasn't been much more to come out about king mackerel recently in
26 the Gulf, and so that's something that, you know, while it's
27 important to us, it's not something that we're going to expect
28 there to be a continual data evolution through time, compared to
29 something like say red snapper or one of the other groupers.

30
31 They were thinking about what needs that, you know, that additional
32 examination through -- You know, being as part of our key stocks,
33 that's something that you guys can think about, and so, you know,
34 red snapper, obviously, and gag, obviously, and red grouper,
35 obviously, and whatever other species, you know, might be of
36 interest, and, right now, you know, greater amberjack has got the
37 Great Amberjack Count going on, and there's a lot of renewed
38 interest. As tangents to that, what other funding has come through
39 for greater amberjack research, and gray triggerfish, on and off,
40 gets some --

41
42 You know, probably less attention than Dr. Simmons would hope that
43 it would, but just as like ideas of, you know, what sorts of --
44 What species do we think are going to be perennial research targets
45 that, again, have newly-evolving information on the regular,
46 versus things that -- Like vermilion, where there really isn't
47 functionally a new dataset, or a new analysis, to consider for it,

1 and so it's something the Science Center could just crank at, and
2 so --

3

4 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Walter.

5

6 **DR. WALTER:** The other thing I think, in the prioritization, or
7 what are key stocks, is there's a lot of things that we also try
8 to get out of our stock assessments, beyond just an annual catch
9 limit, or stock status, and so I think that's where -- If we're
10 really only wanting an annual catch limit to be updated more
11 rapidly, then we don't need the full assessment to give us things
12 like allocations, or even necessarily stock status.

13

14 If we just want to be current with what's going on in the water,
15 and be more flexible, so that fishermen don't say, hey, you guys
16 are missing out on this, then that says something that's simple,
17 that updates the catch limit a little more frequently, and then,
18 every, you know, eight years, maybe, we do the full thing, because,
19 really, we're not going to want to allocate that often anyway, nor
20 did we ever have the bandwidth to do the assessments on that higher
21 frequency, and so I think that's where matching the need to the -
22 - The tool to the need I think is helpful, and so, if this council
23 maybe could say, for those stocks, which ones do you want to be
24 able to update the catch advice every two years, or three years,
25 something -- Then the guidance would say, okay, we'll match that
26 need that you've identified with the tool, and I think that would
27 be helpful guidance to get.

28

29 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So that's a great point. Looking at the list of
30 species, the eight that were identified during the Steering
31 Committee, do we want to reduce those, or we should identify which
32 ones we want every two years, or every three years, and, I mean,
33 we should probably do that now, and it would be helpful for Dr.
34 Simmons, and staff, when they go to the SSC, to at least have them
35 review it before it goes back to the Science Center. Ms. Boggs.

36

37 **MS. BOGGS:** So, I don't have an internet connection, and can we
38 scroll -- Wasn't it listed in your report? While I have the mic,
39 I believe triggerfish was one of them, and we've been waiting on
40 triggerfish I think now for five years, and I would really like to
41 hear something on triggerfish. It may not be a priority after
42 that, but I think you need to start with triggerfish, because we've
43 looked at everything else.

44

45 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So, again, of all the species every two years, or
46 certain species every two, certain species every three, or -- I
47 mean, again, I'm just trying to help them, as they kind of look at

1 data availability, type of stock assessment, whether or not that's
2 possible, you know, other advice they might be able to bring back
3 on the first iteration of the draft process. Mr. Gill.

4
5 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so perhaps understanding
6 exactly what we're calling key stocks would be helpful here,
7 because my impression, and this could well be wrong, is a key stock
8 is the one that's got to go the full monte assessment process,
9 and, if that's wrong, then -- It's not? So, let's discuss exactly
10 what a key stock is, so that, as we go through this, we're all of
11 like mind on making those selections.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Well, in my mind, a key stock is a stock that has
14 interest to the council relative to changing abundance, and that
15 could be due to increased fishing pressure harvest, you know, due
16 to economic conditions, and, you know, the economy may get better,
17 and there is sort of lots more people on the water, or it could be
18 a stock that has, you know, impacts due to climate change, and so
19 it's showing up maybe in more abundance in other areas, as well as
20 its, quote unquote, home range, and it's starting to, you know,
21 populate higher numbers, and so it could maybe be worthwhile to
22 have an assessment, to show that there's availability to harvest
23 more fish, and so that would be a key stock at that point in time,
24 but it does not apply necessarily to it being data-rich or having
25 a certain amount of data to do a certain assessment.

26
27 Is it a stock of importance, and interest, to the council for
28 managing, and, yes, that could be fluid. Three years from now,
29 this list could be changed, you know, and it may not be the same
30 eight, but, for now, they just want to get their minds wrapped
31 around what is it that the council currently has interest with,
32 relative to frequent, or a, you know, regular assessment schedule,
33 in the near-term, to help them kind of align with the data that's
34 available with the assessment that could be provided, with the
35 output that could then be provided. Mr. Gill.

36
37 **MR. GILL:** To that point, and, okay, I understand that better from
38 your perception, and my concern with that is that's fundamentally
39 inclusive of all the stock that we normally talk about, and so,
40 you know, in terms of helping the process, it doesn't get us down
41 to a simpler system, and it just says, hey, we're interested in
42 everything that we talk about normally, and I'm not including
43 wenchman, but we're not getting any further down the road, and so
44 I'm -- I've got problems there.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Yes, and so, for this list of eight, there may be
47 two species on this list that would need to be assessed every two

1 years, and there may be four species that need to be assessed every
2 three or four, just so that we have something that's regular, that
3 doesn't get impacted by the fishery, or the environmental
4 conditions or what have you, that causes a lot of variation, but
5 they get just assessed less frequently, but they get on the list
6 as a regularly-assessed stock, because they need to kind of be
7 planning on -- You know, they need to have the data available,
8 when that's going to occur, and all that stuff needs to be going
9 on behind the scenes.

10
11 You know, you could ask -- We could ask for, you know, every other
12 year for all the eight species, and I'm afraid we might get a very
13 funny look from the folks, when they come back with the plan, but
14 at least it would be some information that they have to go forward
15 with.

16
17 **MR. GILL:** A quick back on that, and so, to help -- Since this
18 concept was initiated by the Science Center, can we ask Dr. Walter
19 to provide what the Science Center's concept of, quote unquote, a
20 key stock is? They're the ones that created the terminology, and
21 perhaps we can understand where they're coming from, and it would
22 help us get our arms around this. I'm having difficulty.

23
24 **DR. WALTER:** I think, actually, it was a John Carmichael concept,
25 and we borrowed it from the South Atlantic, and the idea was
26 essentially that these are the ones that we get the most -- Shall
27 we say public attention on, and so that's the primary reason why
28 they would be key stocks, and it kind of almost had little to do
29 with all of the other aspects of it, and these are the ones that
30 we hear the loudest about, and start from there, and what I was
31 trying to do was to get a little bit away from getting hung up on
32 definitions and say how often does this council think they need
33 current catch advice information.

34
35 Not what degree of assessment, and not degree of whether it get
36 the full monte or not, and, if you say you want catch advice
37 updated every two years for this stock, we'll come back and say,
38 okay, then you need this thing that's really rapid, and you're
39 going to need an index-based approach, because we can't do all the
40 ageing to do that every year, and you will say, okay, good, you're
41 meeting what I wanted, and so I think that's the really -- How
42 often do you feel you need to update these, so that people don't
43 say we're missing the boat on these.

44
45 I think taking it from there might be helpful, and I would say
46 just offering up something like red grouper and gag, where we tend
47 to see these waves of recruitment come in, and, for as long as

1 I've been here, we've either ridden a wave of recruitment in red
2 grouper, and have been on the positive side, and overestimated,
3 and, on the backside, we wind up overfishing, and so it's just
4 this cycle of, if we could be a little bit faster on that, I think
5 we would have done much better, and not had this boom-and-bust.
6 That's just an observation I've had, and I think that's -- How
7 often do you want catch advice, and then let's try to work from
8 that. Thanks.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I know I had a few folks over here. I had Dr.
11 Sweetman, and I had Dr. Frazer, and I had Ms. Boggs, but, Andy,
12 you had your hand up, and was that to this part of the conversation
13 or something else?

14
15 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'll wait.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** You'll wait? Okay. C.J.

18
19 **DR. SWEETMAN:** All right. At the risk of trying to throw something
20 out there to try and potentially prioritize some of this, based on
21 what I've heard around the table from the Science Center, and so
22 let me think about this.

23
24 I almost want to categorize these eight species that we have on
25 there a little bit differently, and so my thought process here --
26 You've already mentioned red grouper and gag grouper, and I think
27 those will probably fit in one category as well, and probably
28 similar with red snapper, in terms of stocks that we hear the most
29 about, things that are important there.

30
31 Part of me almost wants to throw gray snapper on there, that kind
32 of list of four, in terms of that, just because it's one of the
33 most commonly-caught-after and sought-after species here in the
34 Gulf, and then I feel like king mackerel and greater amberjack are
35 kind of a separate category in and amongst themselves, because
36 they're both kind of experiencing fishery issues along those lines,
37 things that we don't necessarily know what's driving some of those
38 declines, and then vermilion and triggerfish, and I almost put in
39 kind of another category altogether along those lines, because --
40 I'm not trying to say that none of these stocks are important, or
41 important to the entire assessment process, and we, obviously,
42 would like to know as much as we can, to better manage these
43 things, but trying to think of giving you guys what you need to
44 try and make progress at that SEDAR Steering Committee.

45
46 I don't know if that's helpful at all, from a timing perspective,
47 what you were asking for, John, there, and that's a little bit

1 challenging to do off-the-cuff right here, in terms of like the
2 cyclical aspect of it for each individual species here, but, in
3 terms of relative importance of the stocks, of what we hear about
4 landings and things along those lines, and trying to make progress,
5 and please feel free to disagree with me, anyone, and I'm just
6 trying to move this forward here a little bit.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Frazer.

9
10 **DR. FRAZER:** Just to reiterate what C.J. said, I think 85, or 90,
11 percent, of all the angler trips are devoted towards red snapper,
12 gag grouper, red grouper, and gray snapper. You know, so we can
13 only expect that there's going to be continued pressure, and so
14 continued updates -- Those are key species, or key stocks, in my
15 mind.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Since you just finished up the mic, I mean, every
18 two years, every three years, for those?

19
20 **DR. FRAZER:** I think every three years. I think I would be good
21 with that.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Boggs.

24
25 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I agree with Florida on everything except gray
26 snapper, because that's not an important fishery to the folks up
27 here.

28
29 **DR. FRAZER:** (Dr. Frazer's comment is not audible on the recording.)

30
31 **MS. BOGGS:** Okay, and well I don't have -- I can't see anything,
32 and I'm blind here, and so -- But I would -- I mean, to me, we
33 don't seem to hear a lot about gray snapper, and we don't hear a
34 lot about vermilion snapper. You're right, Kevin, that, two years
35 ago, we caught a ton of them, and I hadn't seen any in a year, and
36 so is that one of those cyclical species again? I don't know, but
37 you're right. Two years ago, we were catching a ton of them, but
38 we haven't been.

39
40 All that being said, I mean, to me, gray snapper and vermilion
41 snapper would be at the bottom of the list, and, of course, I'm
42 still going to champion old gray triggerfish there, because we
43 keep waiting on that one, but the species that are so critical,
44 and so controversial, the red snapper, the red grouper, gag, and
45 I don't know if you can group those together, since -- Being the
46 species that they are, and, of course, king mackerel, greater
47 amberjack, gray -- When I get a computer, I will have to look at

1 the data.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.

4

5 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I just wanted to emphasize a two versus three-
6 year cycle. I mean, I usually takes us a good year-plus to react
7 to the science, right, and so I think three years is probably going
8 to be reasonable, and we did talk to the SEDAR Steering Committee
9 about not only speeding up the science, but also speeding up the
10 management response to the science.

11

12 In terms of the key stocks, I guess I'm thinking about it a little
13 bit differently, but I like the thought process with regard to
14 gray snapper, and I was thinking the ones that potentially would
15 be more in that less-complex, less-time-consuming stock assessment
16 category would be gray snapper and vermilion snapper at this point,
17 and that the other six would kind of be our key stocks, but I think
18 amberjack is one of those that I also have a little pause with,
19 right, because it's been in that Tier 1 stock assessment category,
20 and maybe it's time to do something different, and an MSE, or
21 something like that, is a new approach, and so I could potentially
22 drop that out of the key stocks list as well, into a lower-tier
23 assessment that's still going to provide management advice, but
24 just in a different way.

25

26 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Simmons.

27

28 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I guess maybe just a question for Dr.
29 Walter. I thought one of the reasons we were kind of going through
30 this exercise is, once we identify these, with the understanding
31 that we need this advice, you know, within two to three years,
32 then we would work with the SSC, and you all, to figure out, you
33 know, the best process, the least complicated, you know, model
34 that we could use to get the advice we need, but the first step
35 was identifying the key stocks, and then the next step would be
36 decided what type of assessment was needed, how frequent does it
37 have to be, can it be a simpler approach, and does the simpler
38 approach have to happen after a more complex approach, and we would
39 still have to work through all those things, I think, based on the
40 data that's available, with the SSC, but I think, if the council
41 can hone-in on those very key stocks, that would be our next step,
42 but I guess that would be my question to you all.

43

44 **DR. WALTER:** Well, I was responding to the fact that we were having
45 an expanding list of key stocks, and so I wanted to try to say
46 that I think we could help narrow that, and do exactly the process
47 you said, but say how often we need that advice updated, and then

1 take that to the SSC and say, okay, for this, we need that advice
2 very rapidly, and we need high throughput, and that's going to be
3 a different process than maybe one where we say we could be fine
4 with every five years.

5
6 I was offering that up because I thought that might help, because
7 we were struggling in deprioritizing anything, because we don't
8 want to make that statement, and so that was where I was saying
9 that, if that would help us to then take it to the SSC, as to which
10 tool would do the best to meet the needs.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Ms. Levy.

13
14 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Just a question, because I'm hearing a lot about
15 these are things you might consider in determining what these
16 stocks are, but I haven't really heard any discussion about how
17 stock status plays into it, right, and so those stocks that are
18 overfished, or in rebuilding plans, and, you know, under the
19 Magnuson Act, the agency is required to review rebuilding progress
20 every couple of years, and so I'm not sure how that fits into this
21 whole scheme, and so I'm just bringing that up.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Captain Walker.

24
25 **MR. WALKER:** So that was going to be pretty similar to my comments.
26 I mean, if I just had to pick species that are monitored regularly
27 across the Gulf, I would say red snapper, gag, red grouper, and
28 amberjack, but amberjack has had all this trouble, and it needs
29 more monitoring, right, and so I don't know if -- As Andy
30 suggested, maybe it's time to move that one down the list a little
31 bit, but, as Mara said, it's still overfished, and it's not
32 recovering, and so we kind of have to keep a look at it, and so
33 I'm just not sure what the parameters are.

34
35 Then it doesn't seem like we're trying to -- With this work, we're
36 not picking the most urgent ones, and like, to me, king mackerel
37 needs to be looked at almost on an emergency status, but I don't
38 think we're looking at that here, and we're trying to pick the
39 regular every couple of years things, and so that's my comment.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Rindone.

42
43 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Directly to what Captain
44 Walker was talking about, one of the goals that was discussed at
45 the SEDAR Steering Committee, with respect to this entire approach,
46 was to allow for some additional bandwidth to accommodate those
47 sorts of emergency or otherwise unplanned sorts of issues that

1 need to be taken up, and so, when you guys are considering exactly
2 how many key stocks -- You know, that is another consideration to
3 pin up to the board in your mind, and like I don't want too many,
4 because, if there's too many, then there's no room. There's no
5 assessment capacity by the center, or FWC, to deal with an
6 emergency situation like that has been described for us for king
7 mackerel.

8
9 To a previous note about vermilion snapper and gray snapper, just
10 a reminder to you guys that those two species combine for a little
11 over ten-million pounds in landings in the Gulf a year, and a
12 little bit more vermilion than gray snapper, but suffice it to say
13 that, you know, they're popular target species, and we don't have
14 any pressing issues with them, and that's not to say that we never
15 will, or anything is expected, but, you know, ten-million pounds
16 of landings between the two of them is also considerable.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So that was a good point, Ryan, about the
19 throughput still on the number of stocks, and, the more stocks you
20 have, the less chance you have to add in those species that, you
21 know, aren't identified as the key stocks, and so almost -- You
22 know, you would defer mostly to the most simple assessment, in my
23 mind, that will provide you the status determination criteria,
24 when and if you need it for those species, and so, you know, that's
25 kind of, I think, the way I'm looking at it, so that you have some
26 capacity to add in species, because you will need to add in species
27 at some point, and so -- Either that, or you give up on the
28 frequency one year, and you drop out of the cycle, and it's one
29 cycle that's four years, instead of three, you know, something
30 like that, but I have Mr. Dugas.

31
32 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with Captain
33 Walker with the amberjack and mackerel. They need to stay up on
34 the list, but I had a question for Andy. You mentioned, you know,
35 separating or doing a different assessment for amberjack, and can
36 you give us a little more explanation of how that looks?

37
38 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Dr. Walter could go into a much more in-depth
39 explanation, but there's lots of different methodologies for
40 conducting stock assessments, right, and so you don't have to do
41 an age-based stock assessment, which is kind of the top tier, and
42 you could do a simpler approach, which is like a stock, you know,
43 production model that uses less rigorous data, and, you know, it
44 doesn't incorporate age information, and so it's really kind of a
45 spectrum of types of assessments that are used, and there is
46 limitations, and caveats, to some more than others, right, and so
47 the scientific community has certainly vetted these assessment

1 tools, and there's a -- The bottom line is there's a broader
2 toolbox than we tend to rely on, right, and so I think there's
3 opportunities there to kind of rethink that.

4
5 The council has to be accepting that that would mean change, and
6 simplification, of the assessment process, with the benefit of
7 increased throughput and timeliness, and then, as Mara has pointed
8 out, how does it affect some of the management benchmarks that
9 have some determination criteria and other things we use to manage
10 the fisheries, right, and all that would have to be incorporated,
11 but there is certainly, to me, opportunities to look at these
12 simpler approaches, and like the most simplistic, which you've
13 seen, is doing interim analyses, where you just rely on like an
14 abundance index as a trend in the stock's health and status, and,
15 as that goes up, or goes down, we adjust catch levels based on
16 that, right, and that can't be the sole basis for all our
17 management, but it certainly can be an interim basis that we use
18 in between major stock assessments.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** All right, and so, Dr. Simmons, you've put up
21 just kind of a summary, as you have guessed where we are right
22 now, just to have something for folks to look at, and comment on,
23 but, basically, reducing the list from eight to five, and
24 identifying a schedule of every three years, and, obviously, you
25 know, they wouldn't be able to do all five species, you know, each
26 three years, and they would have to spread those out, but is this,
27 you know, palatable to folks? Does anybody want to add some more
28 detail or changes to this? Ms. Boggs.

29
30 **MS. BOGGS:** I'm sorry, but gray triggerfish needs to be on this,
31 at least the first iteration, because, again, we had this gray
32 triggerfish stock assessment that we were going to get, and the
33 data was flawed, and then we were going to get it, and then it was
34 like, oh no, we've got to start all over again, and it's been five
35 years, and we're still, what, two or three years from triggerfish
36 data, and so, if there's any way we can at least move triggerfish
37 to the top of this list, through the first iteration, where at
38 least we can maybe a baseline, and then we may not have to look at
39 it for ten years.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Walter.

42
43 **DR. WALTER:** Maybe I could help sketch out -- After seeing this,
44 I'm seeing a path forward for how this -- Maybe I could just
45 illustrate that for a minute, and so, moving forward, if we were
46 to say, okay, every three -- We want this catch advice for these
47 ones updated every three years.

1
2 We would sketch out probably a program that would do a full stock
3 assessment maybe every eight years for these, and, in the interim
4 of those, we would probably do an interim assessment that would
5 update that catch advice every three years, punctuated by the full
6 assessment on a much wider timescale for those, and, if we sketch
7 that out, that would be something that I think people would
8 understand, and they would say we're going to get that rapid
9 advice, that is updated, and we'll get the stock status, but on a
10 more wider time scale, giving us time to integrate new information.

11
12 I think that would provide then the bandwidth, as Ryan said, for
13 those sort of immediate problems, like triggerfish and king
14 mackerel, so that they would get that assessment, that we actually
15 don't know what's going on, and we kind of need to do some science
16 to get in there, but maybe triggerfish wouldn't be one of those
17 where we need it every three years, and that one -- So, once we do
18 that initial one, it might not rise to that, and I think that's
19 where separating that -- Getting triggerfish done, and, yes,
20 agreed, if we can find the bandwidth and carve out the time, but
21 these would be the ones that would get that schedule. Then having
22 that schedule laid out I think would be very useful for us, and it
23 would provide clarity. Thanks.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** To that point, Ms. Boggs?

26
27 **MS. BOGGS:** So, I'm sorry, but I'm going to harp on triggerfish,
28 and so you were talking about carve out the time, and the
29 bandwidth, to do this, and five or six years is not enough time to
30 carve out the time and get it done?

31
32 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Rindone.

33
34 **MR. RINDONE:** I will give that to Dr. Walter, but, in 2025, we're
35 scheduled to start the benchmark assessment for gray triggerfish,
36 which predates the implementation of this plan to do this key
37 stocks approach, and so the triggerfish will have the full -- You
38 know, it will have everything that's available thrown at it to try
39 to set up what we might do, knowing that this is a plan that we're
40 trying to consider, and, you know, that will be part of the
41 planning process for that assessment, and trying to set up
42 something that can have some sort of index-based procedure based
43 off of it, using it as a foundation, using this benchmark
44 assessment as a foundation.

45
46 That is scheduled to happen before this even comes into play, and
47 so it might not be that -- When we're talking about putting this

1 in place in 2026, we'll be beyond that not having an assessment
2 for triggerfish.

3
4 The other thing that I wanted to mention, just with respect to
5 something that Mr. Strelcheck said about calling it an assessment
6 top tier, like an age-structured assessment as being top tier, is
7 that part of what we discussed at the SEDAR Steering Committee,
8 with respect to things like right-sizing the assessments, and
9 basically using the right tool for the data that are available, is
10 it might not necessarily be that a particular species can have an
11 age-structured assessment, and so it not getting one does not mean
12 that the best work is not being done on that species, and it's all
13 contingent upon the data, and so I just kind of --

14
15 Especially when we're communicating with the public, I kind of
16 caution you guys to think about like word use, and creating a
17 hierarchy of like the value, or ability, of a certain assessment
18 to answer a question, and it's all dependent on the data that we
19 have, and sometimes we have shockingly little, and sometimes we
20 have a lot, and so --

21
22 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Just to follow-up to your comment, based on what
23 Mr. Rindone just said, so we're still -- I think there's two issues
24 here that, again, and it's homework for the council, relative to
25 going forward with trying to set up the process and to inform, or
26 give, information to the assessment folks at the Science Center,
27 but key stocks and frequency.

28
29 Are these the key stocks? Has it gotten whittled down now from
30 eight to five, or you can add another section on here that says
31 gray triggerfish every five years, based on what Ryan said, and
32 we'll have an assessment in a couple of years, which is prior to
33 when this is going to roll out, this 2026 and beyond, but
34 triggerfish may not need an assessment every five years, just
35 because of the nature of the species and what have you, but it
36 will need to be on the list, so that the Science Center can use it
37 to evaluate how they're going to go lay out this initial process,
38 this initial workflow and product.

39
40 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I think so, because we've waited so long, and we
41 have bad information, and the science was bad, and we had to throw
42 it out, and we had to start all over again for 2025, which I did
43 know that, Ryan, but I just -- If there's any way -- But yes,
44 because we don't know, in 2026, I guess, when we get the final
45 stock assessment, what that's going to bring.

46
47 It may be that we -- I don't want to be then trying to come back

1 and add it to this schedule to reschedule, or to amend, update,
2 but, if it comes back, and I don't know what it could possibly
3 say, but, if it comes back, and it says something that we don't
4 need to look at it for ten years, then you could take it off, but,
5 if it's not done, I'm going to come haunt you.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So I will just offer it again, and this is Dr.
8 Simmons' interpretation of the conversation that's been held this
9 afternoon, relative to the request, and this is what she has, as
10 far as five species, frequency every three years, and I guess the
11 Science Center will take this, along with the other councils'
12 requests, and then they're going to be working on that, relative
13 to folding it into their plan.

14
15 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, no, and I would like to add gray triggerfish,
16 and that's what I said, but then you might see that you can take
17 it off.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** So, is it for five years then, initially, at this
20 point in time, based on your best available information?

21
22 **MS. BOGGS:** Which is none, and so I guess yes.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Okay, and so, Bernie, if you could add gray
25 triggerfish down there as the stocks needing catch advice every
26 five years. That brings us to six of the eight. Mr. Gill.

27
28 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have to disagree with Susan.
29 You know, if we're going to do this, then we need to consider
30 putting a longer list of more species, right, and we're trying to
31 encompass everything, and the intent that we're having this
32 discussion is, and it's not for the immediate assessments coming
33 up, and, as Ryan pointed out, trigger is right there, and it's
34 going to accommodate the needs of triggerfish in the near term,
35 but this is talking long-term, and, if we get into a longer list,
36 we need to have a much more thorough discussion, and it would be
37 a whole lot longer, and we're talking about longer time cycles.

38
39 For example, I could argue that vermilion don't need catch advice
40 except every eight years or something, because they breed like
41 rabbits, and they've never been in trouble, in twenty-some-odd
42 years, but I don't think we need to go to that specificity. I
43 think we need to specify the top end, delete that five-year thing,
44 and move it up to three, so we can get this process going, and on
45 track, and not get focused on every other species that we deal
46 with.

1 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** I will add to that. I talked about it a little
2 bit earlier, and maybe I wasn't so clear, but I think, for this
3 exercise, where we are relative to this new process that has not
4 been fleshed out, less is more at this point, and so, the more
5 species we add to this, the less opportunity we're going to have
6 to throw in that species that we would like to have assessed, at
7 whatever time schedule. Ms. Boggs.

8
9 **MS. BOGGS:** Under duress, I will remove gray triggerfish.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Dr. Simmons.

12
13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Mr. Chair, I think this is -- You
14 know, we've got a lot of work to still do on this, and I think
15 this is just our starting point, right, and so this is helpful, I
16 think, for our staff to take this, and work with the SSC, work
17 with the Science Center, and we can lay out the data we have
18 available and start thinking about what kinds of assessments we
19 need, and we can have the SSC weigh-in on that, and see where some
20 of these other species could fit in, and try to bring that back to
21 the council, once they get some of that process more fleshed out
22 internally, would be my suggestion.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** To that point, Mr. Gill?

25
26 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I think it would be very
27 helpful, for the council, if, when you're talking these other
28 assessments, what the output would be for the council. It won't
29 be the same as what they're used to, right, and, whatever that is,
30 so that the council knows what they're getting, but set the
31 expectation level correctly.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Mr. Strelcheck.

34
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So it's late, but I think one thing that might
36 help is I can send around Shannon Calay's presentation from the
37 SEDAR Steering Committee, which kind of maps out how this would
38 work, but one of the things that I wanted to emphasize is we're
39 saying these are kind of key stocks, however we're defining that,
40 and that means, every year, we're going to assess one to two of
41 these, right, and that doesn't mean those are the only stocks that
42 are going to get assessments at that point, and others are going
43 to just fall into a lower tier of complexity, in terms of stock
44 assessments, that maybe can actually be completed faster than these
45 key stocks, and gray triggerfish, vermilion snapper, other
46 species, are going to fall into that category, and so a visual aid
47 might help. I think it's too late in the day to bring that up

1 now, but I will try to pass that around before tomorrow.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Thank you. Any other discussion for SEDAR
4 Steering? I don't think we're going to do the liaison report,
5 Dave.

6
7 **MR. DONALDSON:** I'm not moving to primetime.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN ANSON:** Okay, and so we are past our scheduled time for
10 today, and, you know, paybacks aside, we're just going to kind of
11 close it up right here, and we're going to start with our first
12 scheduled report, which will be Shrimp, tomorrow morning at 8:00
13 a.m. Thank you, everyone.

14
15 (Whereupon the meeting recessed on April 10, 2024.)

16
17 - - -

18
19 April 11, 2024

20
21 THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

22
23 - - -

24
25 The Full Council of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
26 reconvened at The Lodge at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Alabama
27 on Thursday morning, April 11, 2024, and was called to order by
28 Vice Chairman J.D. Dugas.

29
30 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We're going to get started. Mr. Anson is
31 not present, and he's not feeling well today, but he will be
32 online. Before we get into the Shrimp Committee, we're going to
33 let Ms. McCawley give the South Atlantic report. She has to depart
34 early this morning.

35
36 **SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT**

37
38 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Thank you, Chair. I'm not going to read the whole
39 report to you guys, and I'm just going to hit some highlights and
40 let you all ask me some questions. I think you all have a copy of
41 this report.

42
43 This is from our March council meeting. The South Atlantic worked
44 on the SEFHIER program, and the council will be assembling an
45 advisory panel to explore improvements to this particular program,
46 and the council approved the structure of this AP and will begin
47 appointing members to this group in June.

1
2 The council is also discussing for-hire unlimited entry. Unlike
3 the Gulf, the South Atlantic doesn't have limited entry in the
4 for-hire sector, and so the council has looked at this in the past,
5 but it's talking about picking this back up again, and they looked
6 at data that went through 2020. There are some data issues at the
7 Southeast Regional Office, and so we can't see data that's newer
8 than 2020, and the council intends to wait to hold scoping hearings
9 on this amendment until they can get this updated data from 2021
10 forward, and so they are in the process of moving this forward,
11 but it is in the early stages.

12
13 Lots of items happened in the Snapper Grouper Committee at the
14 South Atlantic, and so the South Atlantic is continuing to work on
15 their private recreational permitting amendment, which is
16 Amendment 46, and this would require a permit for the private
17 component of the recreational sector that is fishing in federal
18 waters, and the intent is that it will go out to some APs, between
19 now and the council's June meeting, but the intent is to consider
20 approval for public hearings at the September council meeting.

21
22 For red snapper, the council received an overview on three projects
23 proposed by Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission that
24 would be exempted fishing permits to allow harvest of red snapper.
25 There were a total of five projects that were recommended for
26 funding, and this is looking at recreational discards, and the
27 council provided comments on the FWC proposal.

28
29 Also on red snapper, NOAA Fisheries notified the council that the
30 agency is considering interim measures to reduce overfishing of
31 red snapper during the 2024 fishing year, and then, continuing on
32 red snapper, the long-term item that the South Atlantic Council is
33 working on is the management strategy evaluation, and the
34 Management Strategy Evaluation Planning Team will compile a
35 prioritized list of management strategies for the council to review
36 at their June meeting.

37
38 Black sea bass, and so the council is working on black sea bass,
39 and they received a presentation from the Science Center on revised
40 projections of future catch used for setting ABC and a rebuilding
41 timeframe, and there was lots of questions, lots of discussion, on
42 black sea bass happening at the South Atlantic. There's a
43 framework amendment that is modifying gag and black grouper
44 recreational vessel limits, and this is based on the recent action
45 that the council took, that there was some confusion about the
46 codified text, and so we're going back in and fixing that, and,
47 also in that framework amendment is on-demand gear for black sea

1 bass pots.

2

3 This would expand the use of on-demand pots, and there's been an
4 exempted fishing permit right now to allow the use of this on-
5 demand gear, but there needs to be an action, we think, and that's
6 why we're going through this framework amendment, in order to allow
7 this for use in the fishery, and this is to help with interactions
8 with right whales.

9

10 The snapper grouper commercial fishery, the council is continuing
11 discussions of the commercial fishery, including the current
12 permit structure, what we call the two-for-one, and looking at
13 trends in the fishery, and the council intends to go back and look
14 at their vision blueprint and see what they originally intended
15 for the future of the commercial fishery, the commercial snapper
16 grouper fishery, in the South Atlantic, consider if they want to
17 maintain this path forward, get feedback from stakeholders in a
18 focused way, and then figure out next steps for the commercial
19 fishery.

20

21 Then the council also, like you guys, are working on coastal
22 migratory pelagics amendments, and, right now, what the council is
23 doing is they're working on these port meetings. The port meetings
24 actually began last week, in North Carolina, and this will help us
25 get a comprehensive understanding of these fisheries, in order to
26 improve our management efforts, and, if you're interested in more
27 about the port meetings, there is a webpage completely dedicated
28 to this on the council page, and so, with that, I will conclude my
29 report, Mr. Chair, and pass it back to you, and I will also take
30 any questions.

31

32 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. McCawley. Are there
33 questions for Ms. McCawley? Mr. Diaz and then Mr. Walker.

34

35 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, Ms. McCawley, for being here. I did have
36 the honor of being able to go to you all's meeting, you all's last
37 meeting, and I always learn a lot when I go to you all's meeting.
38 You all do a lot of good work. Can you talk a little bit --
39 Florida asked for an EFP, is requesting an EFP, and can you give
40 us just a short summary of that EFP, please?

41

42 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Yes, I sure can, and so what we're submitting --
43 There was a notice of funding opportunity that was out from NOAA
44 Fisheries, asking people to submit proposals to think about unique
45 ways to look at recreational discards, particularly in red snapper,
46 but really across the snapper grouper fishery as a whole.

47

1 FWC submitted three proposals, and I believe they're all intended
2 for funding, and now we're working on the exempted fishing permit
3 component for the proposals, and so two proposals would happen in
4 northeast Florida, which we call the hotspot area for Atlantic red
5 snapper, and so that would be from the Florida-Georgia line down
6 to Cape Canaveral, and then one of the proposals would be south of
7 the hotspot, and so from Canaveral down through the Keys.

8
9 In the hotspot area, one of the proposals would allow private
10 recreational anglers to take red snapper while they are fishing
11 for snapper grouper species, but, ultimately, they're going to
12 test out a fifteen-fish aggregate snapper grouper bag limit, and
13 so then we're trying to figure out how that works, as a management
14 tool, how it works for discards, because the intent would be, once
15 that angler reaches the fifteen-fish snapper grouper aggregate,
16 that they would stop bottom fishing.

17
18 One of the proposals in the hotspot fleet is private-angler based,
19 and so that angler could be on a private boat, and they could also
20 get on a for-hire vessel, and they would apply to our Go Outdoors
21 Florida licensing system and be selected via lottery to participate
22 in this program.

23
24 There would be quarterly draws, and people would also take an
25 educational course before they go out, and then they would be
26 reporting back on how their trip went, what they harvested on an
27 app, and so FWC is developing a specific app for this.

28
29 There will be an experimental group and a control group each
30 quarter, and there's also a study fleet in that hotspot area in
31 northeast Florida. The study fleet is vessel-based, instead of
32 angler-based, and so it would be private vessels as well as for-
33 hire vessels. Those folks also could take red snapper, and so
34 this would allow red snapper to be taken in all twelve months of
35 the year, as long as you are a participant in one of these fleets.

36
37 The study fleet is also testing out that fifteen-fish snapper
38 grouper aggregate, with the intent that, once each angler on the
39 vessel reaches their fifteen-fish aggregate, they stop bottom
40 fishing, and, once the boat has that limit, they would stop bottom
41 fishing. They could continue on and fish for something else, or
42 they could head back to the dock, et cetera, but, also, on that
43 vessel-based component, they would also do the education course,
44 hail-in and hail-out requirements, and they would also use that
45 app for reporting.

46
47 There's a lot of social science components to this as well, in

1 that we'll be doing angler satisfaction surveys before they start
2 testing out this fifteen-fish aggregate, and then at the end of
3 the trip, and then we'll also be asking people, not part of the
4 program, about how they like the current management system, which
5 has typically been a two-day red snapper season, and so there will
6 be data validation, and intercepts at the dock, and there will be
7 angler incentives used as part of the program to get people to
8 report on the app, following these trips.

9
10 Then one other component, or one other proposal, is south of this
11 hotspot area, to look at how things are happening kind of south of
12 the heart of the red snapper area, and so Canaveral down through
13 the Keys, and they also -- That's angler-based, and they'll also
14 be going through the My Outdoors Florida licensing system, in order
15 to apply and be selected to participate in the program.

16
17 The program is intended to run for one year, with the possibility
18 of extending it for a second year, and so we're really excited
19 about it, and C.J. can add as well, and he's one of the PIs on one
20 of these proposals as well.

21
22 **MR. DIAZ:** A follow-up on that, and discards is a very big deal in
23 the Gulf of Mexico, and, when I hear you all talk about this EFP,
24 I thought, you know, that might be something good -- At some point
25 in time, to have some version of that in the Gulf of Mexico, and
26 so, C.J., if you could keep us kind of plugged-in on how that's
27 going, and what the benefits are of it, and so it sounds like a
28 tremendous amount of work, if we wanted to try to take that on, I
29 mean, whatever state would do it, and, I mean, whether it be you
30 all or somebody else, and, I mean, it sounds like a tremendous
31 amount of work, but the benefits -- If we could get any small gains
32 in reducing our dead discards, it could be huge, and so I commend
33 you all for putting that forward, and I'm excited to see how it
34 turns out. Thank you.

35
36 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Thanks, Dale.

37
38 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Mr. Walker and then Ms. Boggs.

39
40 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have two -- Well, I have
41 several questions, but I have two that I think are most pertinent.
42 One is why the change in course on a charter permit moratorium? I
43 know, for a long time, they were steadfast that we will not put
44 our charter permits on a moratorium.

45
46 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Andy can help me remember all of these aspects,
47 but, you know, council members change, and so we have some new

1 council members that are on the council that want to discuss this,
2 but it really, I would say, came from our APs, and so multiple APs
3 have been talking about this.

4
5 They feel like it would professionalize the fishery more, and then,
6 also, in trying to get people to report -- You know, if you don't
7 have limited entry, what are you going to do to the person that
8 doesn't report if you don't have a limited-entry for-hire permit,
9 and that was a lot of the discussion that the council had. I think
10 the council intends to also have an AP to look at the limited
11 entry, but, right now, the AP that they put together is focused on
12 the reporting on SEFHIER.

13
14 **MR. WALKER:** All right, part two is can you explain what your
15 private recreational fishing permit might look like? Would it be
16 an individual, or would it be a vessel permit, and what has the
17 response been to that?

18
19 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Great questions, and so, right there, there is no
20 reporting requirement for that particular permit, and I believe
21 the council intends to consider that after they get this up and
22 running, but it's a tremendous effort to try to just get the permit
23 in place, and so there are options in there for it to be angler-
24 based or vessel-based. The preferred alternative right now is
25 angler-based.

26
27 There's also a way for the states to get like an equivalency, I
28 guess, or I don't want to say opt-out, but if a state -- Right
29 now, the way that the document is written is exactly the same,
30 their program is exactly the same, because Florida has the State
31 Reef Fish Survey, but the other states don't have programs like
32 that, but, if it exactly matches what is finalized in this
33 amendment, then I think that there would be a way for the state to
34 opt-out.

35
36 Also, right now, there are fifty-five species in the council's
37 snapper grouper complex, and the permit would cover all fifty-five
38 species, and so, for example, the Florida State Reef Fish Survey
39 only covers thirteen species, and so those two programs wouldn't
40 match up at this point.

41
42 I think that we've heard both positive and negative things about
43 this, and mostly people have a lot of questions about it, but the
44 positive things that we have heard is anglers -- A lot of them are
45 really excited to give us their information, and they feel like,
46 hey, we've been asking for this for years, or, you know, do you
47 want to come out on my boat, or how can I tell you this information,

1 and so I think that there are a number of people that are excited
2 about the opportunity to give their data in a more meaningful,
3 useful way, I guess.

4
5 **MR. WALKER:** I think the environment has changed quite a bit, as
6 far as that goes. Okay. Thank you.

7
8 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I think Andy had a comment to Ms. McCawley.

9
10 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just a couple of comments, and so Jessica did a
11 great job of explaining the rationale for the limited entry, and
12 so, in addition to kind of reporting requirements, we have a really
13 huge problem with snapper grouper overfishing and overfished
14 status, and I think there's eight stocks that are overfishing, and
15 six that are overfished, in the South Atlantic, red snapper being
16 one of them, and that's one of the few that is actually showing
17 upward trends, and so it's not just reporting requirements, but
18 it's also limiting entry, because of capacity, right, to go out
19 and harvest this resource that is limited.

20
21 In terms of the permit requirement, you know, we don't have, with
22 the exception of Florida, commensurate state reef fish surveys,
23 right, and so there's no sampling universe to draw from, and so
24 the idea, right, is to stand up a sampling frame for snapper
25 grouper permit holders that would then help to define that universe
26 of effort, like has been done in the Gulf of Mexico with all the
27 state reef fish surveys.

28
29 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Ms. Boggs.

30
31 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you for the report, Ms. McCawley. So how did
32 you all come up with the fifteen-fish aggregate? That seems like
33 a lot of fish.

34
35 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** I'm so glad you asked, and I can send you guys a
36 link to the presentation and the EFP, so that you can look at them.
37 In the EFPs, or the proposals, there is a detailed table in there,
38 and so we did an analysis on how many fish an individual angler
39 could take in certain months of the year, and that, at this point,
40 ranges from between around forty-two to forty-five fish per person
41 in the snapper grouper complex, depending on the month of the year,
42 because, you know, some species have closed seasons, and so we
43 were trying to get to what is a reasonable number per-person and
44 to think about -- You know, in testing this fifteen-fish management
45 option, how would this work, not just in Florida, but how would it
46 work in other states.

47

1 You might be in North Carolina, and your aggregate might be made
2 up partly of black sea bass, or vermilion, but then, if you're in
3 -- That would be in North Carolina. In Florida, your aggregate -
4 - Maybe, in the Keys, maybe part of those fifteen fish is made up
5 of grunts, you know, and so just trying to think about testing the
6 system, and what is a reasonable number of fish, and maybe our
7 proposal, our experiment here, determines that fifteen fish is too
8 many, but trying to think of something to test that could possibly
9 be used in all four states and to try to get away from this large
10 number that's available right now and find a way to get people a
11 reasonable number, and then also to stop fishing at some point, to
12 eliminate, or reduce, those discards.

13
14 **MS. BOGGS:** So, to follow-up to that, so you don't feel like, with
15 this EFP, that I can get on a boat now, and so I'm going to go
16 target those red snapper, and those fifteen that I catch are going
17 to be red snapper, and you don't have the fear of that, I guess?

18
19 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** That's confusing, and so I apologize. In two of
20 the EFPs, you can only take two red snapper, and so the red snapper
21 is actually separate from your -- One of the EFPs is three, and
22 one of them is two, and so that's the maximum you can take, and so
23 that's separate from your fifteen fish. In theory, if the council
24 were to implement this, maybe one of those fish could be -- One of
25 the fifteen could be a red snapper.

26
27 **MS. BOGGS:** That makes a lot more sense, because I was thinking
28 maybe that would create a targeted fishery, and I wanted to make
29 a comment to Dale. You know, we talk about discards all of the
30 time, and some were here, and some were not, but, you know, there
31 is one plan that this council did start working on that addressed
32 discards for one sector, and this council chose -- Not this
33 council, but the council body at the time chose not to move forward
34 with that, and I just want to remind this council that there is an
35 Amendment 42 out there that -- It would help a lot with your
36 headboats and part of your discard problem.

37
38 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. McCawley. We're going
39 to move on to the Shrimp Committee Report and Mr. Schieble.

40
41 **COMMITTEE REPORTS (CONTINUED)**
42 **SHRIMP COMMITTEE REPORT**

43
44 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, sir, Mr. Chair. The Shrimp Committee report
45 from April 8, 2024, the committee adopted the agenda, Tab D, Number
46 1, with the movement of Agenda Item VII before Agenda Item VI and
47 the addition of a discussion regarding certification noncompliance

1 under Other Business. The committee then approved the minutes,
2 Tab D, Number 2, of the October 2023 meeting as written.

3
4 Biological Review of the Texas Closure, Tab D, Number 4(a), Ms.
5 Bosarge, the AP chair, reviewed the Shrimp Advisory Panel summary
6 as it relates to the biological review of the Texas closure. She
7 noted that much of the AP's discussion revolved around the economic
8 benefits to the industry from the Texas closure, concluding with
9 a motion requesting the National Marine Fisheries Service
10 implement the Texas closure in 2024.

11
12 A committee member stated that the process of approving the Texas
13 closure is mostly rubber-stamping based on inadequate information,
14 instead of good economic information. He emphasized the inclusion
15 of economic data in future presentations. Another committee member
16 acknowledged that the AP members, and National Marine Fisheries
17 Service staff, discussed including catch-per-unit-effort data in
18 future presentations. He added that it was stated, during the
19 Shrimp AP meeting, that shrimpers in Texas were making business
20 decisions with an expectation of the Texas closure in 2024.

21
22 A committee member commented that the biological data is in
23 conjunction with the economic data, such as larger size bins being
24 landed, which in turn command higher prices. A committee member
25 questioned the effectiveness of the Texas closure in the future if
26 landings continue to decrease.

27
28 A council member inquired if there was information on the typical
29 size bins with which shrimp imports are associated. Ms. Bosarge
30 responded that she was not familiar with that data, but that
31 National Marine Fisheries Service may have such information. A
32 committee member added that a meeting in Baton Rouge will be hosted
33 by Sea Grant and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission at
34 the end of April 2024 on the future of the Gulf shrimp industry
35 and will address many of the issues faced.

36
37 **The committee recommends, and I so move, to request that National**
38 **Marine Fisheries Service continue with the Texas federal closure**
39 **in the coming year, in conjunction with the State of Texas closure**
40 **in 2024.** That motion carried unanimously. Mr. Chair, we have a
41 motion on the board.

42
43 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a motion on the board. Any
44 questions, or comments, regarding the motion on the board? Okay.
45 Seeing none --

46
47 **DR. SCHIEBLE:** Seeing none, we'll move on.

1
2 **MR. GILL:** Mr. Chairman, are we going to use our clickers during
3 this time for all votes, or how is that going to proceed?
4

5 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I would prefer to -- Let's see if we have
6 any no's first.
7

8 **MR. GILL:** Can you say that again? Sorry. I didn't catch that.
9

10 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Let's see if we have any opposition first.
11 I would like to try to make it short and quick, if possible. Okay.
12 **Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion**
13 **passes.**
14

15 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Draft Shrimp Framework Action: Modification of the
16 Vessel Position Data Collection Program for the Gulf of Mexico
17 Shrimp Fishery, Tab D, Number 5(a), **Dr.** Freeman presented the draft
18 shrimp framework action.
19

20 A committee member recommended modifying the purpose statement to
21 account for minimizing the economic burden on National Marine
22 Fisheries Service, not just on the industry. Dr. Walter, from the
23 Southeast Fisheries Science Center, stated that setting up a
24 duplicative process under Alternative 3 would add costs to the
25 agency and not achieve the purpose of minimizing costs.
26

27 He added that, in terms of hardware and software, the units
28 installed with the early adopter program had been type-approved
29 for other fisheries and could be programmed for the purposes of
30 data collection in the shrimp industry. Dr. Freeman requested a
31 committee response to the IPT's feedback to reference "only a trip"
32 in Alternatives 2 and 3, rather than "a shrimp fishing trip".
33

34 A committee member responded that, when shrimp vessels are rigged
35 for shrimping, the expense of switching gear would prohibit the
36 majority of shrimp vessels from going on other types of trips.
37 However, he would leave it to the IPT's discretion on that wording
38 of the alternatives. He added that he was opposed to a declaration
39 requirement for the shrimp industry.
40

41 Dr. Freeman then requested a committee response to the Shrimp AP's
42 motion for rewording Alternative 3. A committee member commented
43 that the intent of the Shrimp AP's motion is primarily on the data
44 transmission side. Another committee member noted that the
45 language referencing a --
46

47 **MR. DIAZ:** That cord is smoking.

1
2 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Now we have a fire?
3
4 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** If you're listening on the webinar, we're
5 having issues.
6
7 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Bernie, is the webinar still on? Can we keep going
8 or not? For those on the webinar, we had a little technical
9 problem here with some power, and so bear with us.
10
11 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We're still having difficulties with
12 electrical issues, and we're going to take a ten-minute break, and
13 we'll come back at 8:40.
14
15 (Whereupon a brief recess was taken.)
16
17 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I think the issue has been resolved.
18 Okay. Chris, take it away.
19
20 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can't remember exactly
21 where I left off, and so I'm going to start with a little bit above
22 where I think I left off.
23
24 A committee member commented that the Shrimp AP had discussed that
25 the Office of Law Enforcement could still access data from the
26 Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Another council member stated
27 that comparative costs to National Marine Fisheries Service from
28 the approaches in Alternatives 2 and 3 would come later, and the
29 wording is focused on the flexibility of which non-OLE server
30 receives transmitted data.
31
32 Dr. Walter stated that there are ongoing discussions about
33 transferring VMS data collection and administration to Science and
34 Technology, but that a potential transitional situation could have
35 the Southeast Fisheries Science Center receive the data for a few
36 years until such time as the handoff of VMS from OLE to Science
37 and Technology occurs. Then Science and Technology could become
38 the recipient and warehouse for this data, as well as VMS data,
39 from other fisheries, removing the long-term burden on data
40 curation from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and
41 potentially providing future cost-savings.
42
43 Ms. Bosarge stated that the AP thinks that the data are being
44 weaponized when it is transmitted to OLE, so data should only be
45 transmitted to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center as
46 scientific data, which is being done with the early adopter
47 program. Dr. Walter stated that there would be cost implications

1 noted in the analyses if the data transmission and storage is
2 restricted only to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. A
3 committee member stated that the council could consider Science
4 and Technology as an option, if that becomes viable in the future.

5
6 **The committee recommends, and I so move, in Alternative 3, to**
7 **replace "a non-OLE" with "the Southeast Fisheries Science Center**
8 **(SEFSC)".** The motion carried with one in opposition. Mr. Chair,
9 we have a motion on the board.

10
11 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a committee motion on the
12 board. Is there any discussion on the motion? Mr. Strelcheck.

13
14 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, J.D. **I have a substitute motion, if we**
15 **could bring it up. My substitute motion is, in Alternative 3, to**
16 **replace "a non-OLE server" with "the Southeast Fisheries Science**
17 **Center or Office of Science and Technology".** If I get a second,
18 I can explain my rationale.

19
20 **MR. GILL:** I will second.

21
22 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Gill seconds.

23
24 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, first, the data that goes to OLE is not on a
25 server that is theirs, and it is our Office of Chief Information
26 Officers, and so that's kind of misrepresenting, obviously, where
27 the data is going in the first place. I think the intent is,
28 right, that the shrimp industry is concerned about it going to the
29 Office of Law Enforcement, and so I wanted to clarify that.

30
31 Then the second component of this is it states the Southeast
32 Fisheries Science Center, and that was part of our original motion,
33 but, to give us broader flexibility, because we have talked about,
34 and it was mentioned in the minutes, the potential for the VMS
35 program being moved to the Office of Science and Technology. That
36 provides greater flexibility.

37
38 In all honesty, I think this is way overly prescriptive for the
39 council to be getting into, and I really disagree with this
40 approach, but I think that the intent here is that we're providing
41 the flexibility for NMFS to decide where this data can be
42 transmitted, with the intent that it is going to some component of
43 our science enterprise for transfer then to the Science Center,
44 ultimately.

45
46 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Do we have any comments, or questions,
47 for Mr. Strelcheck? **Is there any opposition to the substitute**

1 motion? The motion carries. Okay, Chris.

2
3 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Moving on, Dr. Walter stated
4 that the addition of "for the Gulf shrimp fishery" from the Shrimp
5 AP's motion on Alternative 3 could potentially preclude the units
6 in the early adopter program from being used, as the units are
7 type-approved for use in other fisheries.

8
9 A committee member stated that there is no real difference between
10 the cellular VMS in Alternative 2 and the cellular ELB in
11 Alternative 3, other than where the data goes and how the units
12 are type approved. Ms. Bosarge stated that type-approval for the
13 shrimp industry does not currently exist, which is why the Shrimp
14 AP agrees with the language in Alternative 3 that "National-Marine-
15 Fisheries-Service-approved ELBs would not be type-approved based
16 on regulations at 50 CFR 600.1501".

17
18 Dr. Walter added that type-approval under the existing VMS program
19 allows for reimbursement, and reimbursement would not exist for
20 units under Alternative 3. He added that units type-approved for
21 use in the early adopter program meet type-approval in other
22 fisheries and stated that costs based on devices in the early
23 adopter program would be used for analyses in the draft framework
24 action.

25
26 Dr. Walter commented that one area for future discussion should
27 focus on how a representative data collection process, which could
28 include a random sample, will happen. He added that the discussion
29 should consider what the data needs will be in the future, such as
30 spatially explicit, fine-scale data particularly for interactions
31 with species covered by the Endangered Species Act.

32
33 A committee member commented that the language "if selected by the
34 SRD" could mean that vessels may be selected and de-selected if a
35 randomized sample was drawn repeatedly over time. Another
36 committee member stated that the old cellular ELB system used the
37 same language "if selected by the SRD" and had been successful, so
38 no changes to the language are needed.

39
40 Dr. Freeman requested a committee response to the Shrimp AP's
41 motion on how to prioritize spending of the Fiscal Year 2024
42 \$850,000 congressional appropriation. Dr. Walter responded that
43 these funds could further prop up the early adopter program and
44 could likely double the coverage of units on shrimp vessels.

45
46 A committee member inquired if National Marine Fisheries Service
47 administrative funds would need to be drawn out from the funding.

1 Dr. Walter replied that a standard rate to administer the funds
2 would be deducted from the appropriation, but less funding would
3 be needed for programming support than was needed from the previous
4 \$850,000. He added that the prioritization in the Shrimp AP's
5 motion appears to meet the intent of the congressional language.
6

7 **The committee recommends, and I so move, that the council requests**
8 **National Marine Fisheries Service adopt the following priorities**
9 **for utilizing the Fiscal Year 2024 \$850,000 appropriation for ELB**
10 **development and implementation: 1) Sufficient funding to ensure**
11 **the Southeast Fisheries Science Center server has capacity to**
12 **receive and store shrimp fishery vessel position data; 2) Develop**
13 **a statistically-robust design for distributing units to a**
14 **representative portion of the fleet that would be comparable to**
15 **the last ten years; 3) Cover the cost of providing units and**
16 **cellular service to those shrimp vessels, pursuant to the early**
17 **adopter program. That motion carried with one abstention. Mr.**
18 **Chair, we have a motion on the board.**
19

20 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a committee motion on the
21 board. Is there any discussion on the motion? Okay. **Seeing none,**
22 **is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion**
23 **carries. Dr. Simmons.**
24

25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I just had
26 a question, I guess, perhaps for us to help develop this framework
27 action a little bit better, and try to get a better understanding
28 of the number of vessels that would be selected to participate in
29 the reporting, or monitoring, program, and I think it kind of
30 pertains to the Number 2 bullet.
31

32 I was just wondering if Dr. Walter could maybe comment on the time
33 that you guys might be able to do that, so that we could better
34 integrate it into the document, at least as a range, a minimum and
35 maximum, of the number of vessels that might be selected, because,
36 right now, there's not a real clear understanding of the number of
37 vessels that will be selected to participate in this program.
38 Thank you.
39

40 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Walter.
41

42 **DR. WALTER:** Mr. Chair, thanks. Yes, and that will be part of the
43 IPT process, and I think the range will be -- I mean, I think
44 that's what the recommendation was for there, is that further
45 consideration needs to be ranging from a sample that's about the
46 same percentage as what the CELBs had to a full census, and I think
47 that it's fairly straightforward to do the costing of that, and

1 it's just multiplying it, and I think one of the analyses that
2 we're going to have to do is evaluate looking at the current
3 sampling, and are we represented in those spatial and temporal
4 areas where we've got interactions that are relatively critical to
5 understanding the endangered species situations, and I think
6 that's where the final-scale effort might need to then mean that
7 -- That means, if we need that, then we need a higher sample size
8 than maybe the one-quarter of the fleet that we've got.

9
10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, and so just one follow-
11 up. I mean, the IPT doesn't have the capability of doing this
12 analysis, and we would be relying on the Science Center to tell us
13 what to put in the document, and so I just wanted to be clear that
14 we would be waiting on the center to provide that information, so
15 that we could put at least a range in the framework action.

16
17 **DR. WALTER:** We have staff on the IPT team, and, if that's an
18 analysis that -- That staff member can request, or someone, people
19 in our center, and, I mean, I think we're fully cognizant that
20 that's a need for the IPT to be able to integrate that, as well as
21 the costs of the two options, and I think that's something we've
22 always anticipated being able to provide to the IPT, and so I don't
23 see that as a problem.

24
25 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Sorry to belabor it, but just like to
26 help us really flesh-out the document, we would need to get that
27 as soon as possible, so at least we have a range, and so I do think
28 it should be something that should be escalated in priority, so we
29 can get that information to move the amendment along.

30
31 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Walter.

32
33 **DR. WALTER:** Loud and clear, and that's why I actually recommended
34 that it be put in the language here, that we should consider this,
35 because, up to this point, we hadn't been talking about what the
36 coverage would look like, and now I think it's one of the
37 additional tasks that we will certainly provide of the IPT, and
38 we're fully committed to be able to provide that to the IPT.
39 Thanks.

40
41 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you.

42
43 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

44
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'm asking my team, and we'll see what we can
46 find out, but there obviously has been a decline in permits, and
47 there's been erosion because of the 3G units, you know, going away,

1 or not working over time, but my recollection is we were in the
2 400 to 500 vessels that were originally selected to report, and so
3 it was about a third of the fleet, or maybe a little bit less than
4 that, but we'll get some more exact numbers, and I think that's
5 probably a really good starting point, because there was rationale
6 as to why we selected about that number of vessels previously.

7
8 Related to -- Before we leave this topic, I guess a couple of other
9 things that I just wanted to emphasize, and so the amendment is
10 not going to come back to us until August, and Carrie is pointing
11 out the importance of, obviously, filling in some details here.
12 We talked, during committee, and I think it's going to be really
13 important to look at a cost comparison between Alternatives 2 and
14 3, for both the industry and the agency.

15
16 Some gaps, obviously, that Carrie and I have talked about, right,
17 is what units would be approved, right, and so I think we're going
18 to have to look at the units that are part of the early adopter
19 program, and would we think that they would meet the type-approval
20 standards under Alternative 2, and Alternative 3 is kind of to-
21 be-determined approval standards, and that gives us at least a
22 cost basis for the units, as well as cellular costs, and then, you
23 know, I was prepared, this morning, to make a motion to modify the
24 type-approval requirements in Alternative 3.

25
26 I backed off of that, because I want some more information, but
27 I'm very concerned about creating a duplicative system that puts
28 the onus on the Science Center for type-approval. We want to go
29 back and, I think, talk to our VMS program, but I think, if we
30 could eliminate the requirement, that, you know, we're reinventing
31 the wheel with type-approval in Alternative 3, that does affect
32 some of the costs, and, obviously, differences that we would
33 calculate, and so I just wanted to mention that. That's going to
34 be something that we want to work with the IPT on for clarity.

35
36 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Gill.

37
38 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so, in this talk, Dr.
39 Walter, about the range of the size of the fleet that Dr. Simmons
40 brought up, I'm assuming that the consideration of a census
41 approach is strictly for comparative analysis, and there is no
42 serious consideration by the center of imposing a census
43 requirement on the fleet, and is that correct?

44
45 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, Dr. Walter.

46
47 **DR. WALTER:** Well, I think that's really what's going to be brought

1 before this council, in terms of what quality of information a
2 census would get, versus the burden that would be on the fishery,
3 but, if it turns out that the 25 percent of the fleet, or a third
4 of the fleet, doesn't get us the coverage that we would need to
5 have in the particular times and places, because either it's not
6 representative or because not all vessels are part of that initial
7 sample, and, ideally, what you would want is a refresh of that,
8 which is sort of getting to the fact that, if you do that math
9 that every vessel has a one-in-three chance of being selected in
10 any given year, they're all going to eventually have to have units.

11
12 They may only be selected to turn them on in certain years, but
13 eventually they've got to get them, and so costing that out would
14 say that we've got to buy that many units, and so I think, really,
15 it comes down to dollars and cents, in terms of that decision, and
16 not the center imposing this. The center would then say, if you
17 need this quality of information, then this is the approach that
18 we would recommend this council to implement, and, if we can back
19 away from that, and still get enough information, then, okay, we'll
20 try to minimize that cost to the fishery. Thanks.

21
22 **MR. GILL:** Thank you.

23
24 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Moving on, Mr. Schieble.

25
26 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. A council member stated this
27 motion relates to congressional funding and noted that the third
28 bullet point in the motion assumes the data is going to the
29 Southeast Fisheries Science Center. Dr. Freeman responded that
30 the congressional funding language refers to NMFS and not a
31 specific subset of the agency. Dr. Walter added that it would not
32 be timely to bring a proposed budget for the Fiscal Year 2024
33 \$850,000 to the Shrimp AP.

34
35 Dr. Freeman inquired if the committee would like an update from
36 National Marine Fisheries Service on how the \$850,000 in
37 congressional funding for updating the shrimp data collection
38 program was spent. The committee expressed interest in receiving
39 that update at its August 2024 meeting, when the draft framework
40 action is brought back to the committee.

41
42 Update on the Number of Valid and Renewable Gulf Shrimp Permits
43 and Discussion of Management Implications, Tab D, Number 7(a), Dr.
44 Travis, from SERO, presented on the number of valid and renewable
45 Gulf shrimp permits and management implications as it relates to
46 Shrimp Amendment 17B, as seen in Tab D, Number 7(a).

47

1 A committee member inquired if there is an expected target date
2 when the minimum threshold might be met. Dr. Travis responded
3 that it would be best for the council to receive an update at its
4 November 2024 meeting, as it would be difficult to provide an
5 expected target date at this time. Another committee member
6 inquired if the process in determining the minimum threshold of
7 permits in Shrimp Amendment 17B was similar to that used in
8 determining overcapitalization in the IFQ system. Dr. Freeman
9 responded that he would work with the committee member to relay
10 that question to Dr. Travis and potentially have an answer during
11 Full Council.

12

13 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Freeman.

14

15 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** Sure. I was just going to say that, if the
16 council is interested, Dr. Travis is on the line, and he is
17 prepared to respond to that.

18

19 **DR. SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Travis, can you hear us? We can't hear
20 you. You may be self-muted.

21

22 **DR. MIKE TRAVIS:** It doesn't show as self-muted.

23

24 **DR. SCHIEBLE:** Bear with us a minute. We can barely hear you
25 somewhere.

26

27 **DR. TRAVIS:** Can you hear me better now?

28

29 **MS. BERNADINE ROY:** Dr. Travis, stay tuned.

30

31 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Travis, we're calling you on the phone, please.

32

33 **DR. TRAVIS:** Okay. To Bob's question, the answer is I think no,
34 and the approach is that we've got -- At previous council meetings,
35 with regard to looking at capacity, and overcapacity, in the IFQ
36 program -- What we were trying to do was determine the number of
37 vessels needed to achieve -- If you look at -- You will see that
38 the models that we used were very simple models, and they were
39 generally -- They were generally linear regression models, and we
40 stuck with something simple because they fit very well to the data,
41 and there -- There really was no comparison between what was done
42 for the capacity and overcapacity analysis for reef fish versus
43 the analysis that was done in Shrimp Amendment 17B. Does that
44 answer the question?

45

46 **DR. FREEMAN:** Mr. Gill is nodding yes, and so I think we're good.
47 I'm looking to see if there's any follow-up questions. All right.

1 Thank you, Dr. Travis.

2
3 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Schieble, proceed, please.

4
5 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mike, for
6 coming in on the phone for us. Next was the 2022 Gulf Shrimp
7 Effort, Tab D, Number 4(a). Ms. Bosarge referenced the 2022 Gulf
8 Shrimp Effort presentation from National Marine Fisheries Service,
9 as seen in Tab D, Number 6. She noted that the Gulf shrimp industry
10 is still in compliance for 2022, with its effort monitored in
11 Statistical Zones 10 through 21, as it relates to red snapper
12 bycatch. The council may consider further discussion in Full
13 Council. At this point, Mr. Chair, I would like to pause and be
14 able to talk about this a little bit. We kind of got cut short
15 during the committee session regarding this topic.

16
17 During the Shrimp AP meeting, we received a full presentation,
18 which is Tab D, Number 6 here, showing the shrimp effort from 2020,
19 and I believe there was an 80 percent reduction in effort, and it
20 showed, in 2021, an 87 percent reduction in effort, and so I would
21 like to have a little conversation about the current status of the
22 shrimp fleet itself and the reduced effort across the Gulf, and
23 this has implications for, obviously, the red snapper ten to
24 thirty-fathom zone, with the bycatch level, but it also has
25 implications for the reinitiation of Section 7 Endangered Species
26 Act stuff that we just received a couple of meetings ago, with
27 regard to the amount of effort taking place, or lack of effort, in
28 the shrimp fleet.

29
30 I don't see that effort rebounding any time soon in the shrimp
31 fleet, and I would tend to guess that it's going to continue to
32 decline for some time, and not increase, with the rate of imported
33 shrimp coming into the country, and so, with that said, I would
34 like to make a motion.

35
36 Back in April of 2018, the council submitted a letter to the
37 Southeast Fisheries Science Center requesting that the Southeast
38 Science Center incorporate a minimum target reduction threshold in
39 the next red snapper assessment, with percentage reductions of 1
40 percent increments, so that the council may evaluate if another
41 modification to the target reduction is warranted for the shrimp
42 fishery.

43
44 In response to that letter, the Southeast Fisheries Science Center
45 sent the council a report, on July 11, 2018, that was the impact
46 of the reduction in shrimp effort thresholds on SEDAR 52, Gulf of
47 Mexico red snapper catch limit projections, and the report was

1 very detailed.

2
3 **Back then, it was Tab D, Number 4(b), for reference, in 2018, but**
4 **I would like to request that council staff submit a similar letter**
5 **to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to provide a similar**
6 **report, and I don't know how to phrase this exactly, but provide**
7 **a similar report back to the council with an analysis of those 1**
8 **percent threshold increments for the November 2024 council**
9 **meeting.** Is that a reasonable timeframe? I am looking over to
10 the Southeast Fisheries Science Center for that.

11
12 **DR. WALTER:** Our red snapper analysts are a little busy between
13 now and then, with a small assessment that's going on, and so I
14 would say that's an ambitious timeline, because it -- It also
15 relies on having a fully completed model to be able to do that,
16 and so if I could offer that probably -- I think it would be a
17 very incomplete analysis without the final assessment model, and,
18 since there's going to be revisions to the model that was reviewed,
19 I think it probably would be a little premature to be able to get
20 that analysis. Does the -- Would you have a decision point before
21 the council that would be needed at that timeframe, or could it
22 wait until after we finalize the SEDAR 74, and I think it's a
23 benchmark now?

24
25 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

26
27 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** To that point, I understand, and that makes sense,
28 and my thought process was that you're already knee-deep in the
29 process, and you could just simply cut-and-paste the information
30 that's already there into a report to supply, but, if it does
31 require a full assessment to be completed, to gather the rest of
32 that information, I understand that, and maybe we need to adjust
33 the deadline for that.

34
35 Regardless, I would like to have the council staff submit the
36 letter to you requesting this, and so, really, it's just a matter
37 of putting the target date in here, but I think the ultimate goal
38 of this would be to have a draft amendment in front of the council
39 by next year to consider modification of that threshold, from 60
40 percent to whatever is determined in that report, if it's a 1
41 percent or 2 percent or 3 or 4 or whatever percent reduction,
42 because I think, also, it would benefit the stock assessment for
43 snapper, if that threshold is able to be reduced and the fishing
44 mortality going into the assessment is lower than what it currently
45 is expected to be based on the 60 percent threshold, and maybe
46 that would be a positive thing.

1 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Boggs and then Andy.

2
3 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I guess I'm smarter than I thought I was, because
4 I was going to ask the same question. Would this not be somehow
5 incorporated into your red snapper research?

6
7 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

8
9 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Maybe I'm not taking of it the same way you are,
10 Chris, and so the threshold is, obviously, something we wouldn't
11 want the shrimp industry to exceed, right, and so they are well
12 below it, and so are you recommending that we would increase it
13 from 60 percent to some higher value, because the shrimp industry
14 isn't likely to achieve it?

15
16 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Maybe I had this backwards, but I thought that they
17 were above the threshold currently, and then they're maintaining
18 a status above the threshold when they fall below it, as in when
19 it's in violation, and is that not correct?

20
21 **MR. STRELCHECK:** We're thinking about it, I think, the same way,
22 right, and so the actual effort is what ultimately translates out
23 of the stock assessment and into how much bycatch there is, right,
24 and so, if the stock assessment is completed, and effort continues
25 well below 60 percent, then they're going to model effort going
26 forward at some sort of current, more recent levels, right?

27
28 If the shrimp industry rebounds, going forward, right, then they're
29 going to continue to model it with the presumption that they're
30 not going to hit that 60 percent threshold, and the only way that,
31 to me, this affects, or benefits, red snapper, or our other
32 projected resources, is if we raise that threshold from 60 percent
33 to 80, or 90, percent, or something closer, where the shrimp
34 industry is now, and they have the potential to bump-up against
35 it, which I don't think is your intent.

36
37 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** My intent is to be able to use the last two to three
38 years' worth of effort, which is significantly reduced, as we saw
39 in the presentation, and it's 87 percent lower than the 2001 to
40 2003 average that's utilized, right, and so, in the letter that
41 was sent before, it says, should the shrimp effort not be reduced
42 by the outlined percentage in the areas, closures would ensue, and
43 so I think that's the back-up.

44
45 If they don't meet the threshold requirement, then there is simply
46 closures of those areas, right, and so I don't see any negatives
47 to reducing the threshold for the benefit of either Section 7

1 reinitiation reductions or also the fact that the shrimp industry
2 is not in that area as much as they used to be historically.

3
4 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I'm looking at Mr. Strelcheck.

5
6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** The 60 percent threshold is essentially equivalent
7 to a reduction in red snapper fishing mortality for those age-
8 zeroes and ones, right, and so changing that through a management
9 action, when the fishery isn't close to that, has no effect. The
10 only effect that would occur is if we changed that threshold and
11 the industry is bumping up against it, and that would result in
12 closures, or result in them triggering that fishing mortality
13 threshold for red snapper, and so I'm questioning the need for it.

14
15 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So, to me, it's kind of twofold. If we reduce that
16 threshold, it gives the shrimp industry more access, time-wise, in
17 that depth zone, correct, and they need all the help they can get
18 right now, as far as the amount of access to the fishery, and,
19 second of all, I guess I don't understand then, based on what
20 you're saying, why we even reduced the threshold, back in 2018,
21 from 67 to 60 percent, if it's not a similar situation.

22
23 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I am going to go to Mr. Gill.

24
25 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. **First of all, we don't have**
26 **a second for the motion yet, and I'll willing to do that, but,**
27 **before I do that, I would like to suggest a friendly amendment, if**
28 **we put a period after "industry" and delete the time constraint,**
29 **and, given this discussion, that seems appropriate, to allow**
30 **sufficient time for the Science Center to respond, and,**
31 **consequently, the council to act on that information.**

32
33 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I agree. It probably needs at least that much help
34 in the motion.

35
36 **MR. GILL:** In that case, I second the motion.

37
38 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. The motion has been seconded. Dr.
39 Frazer.

40
41 **DR. FRAZER:** Chris, I'm just trying to wrap my head around this a
42 little bit. So, I mean, your ultimate intent, right, is to use
43 the most recent data to inform the assessment, right, and then it
44 also has implications, like you said, for some other things, but
45 the number-one priority is to get better numbers, right, or more
46 appropriate numbers, into the assessment, and I just want to make
47 sure that's the goal of this.

1
2 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so that report, or I guess the
3 presentation, showed us a reduction in effort for 2021 and 2022,
4 but we don't have 2023 in that report yet, and so my hope would be
5 that we would soon receive the effort update from last year, and
6 I would expect that it would be at least somewhere close to the
7 average of the last two years, and that's a significant drop in
8 shrimp effort. If we're looking at an 87 percent reduction in
9 effort in those areas, to me, that's orders of magnitude different
10 than when we sent this letter back in 2018.

11
12 **DR. FRAZER:** So, I guess a follow-up, right, is, is this letter
13 necessary to prompt the analysts to incorporate the information,
14 or, John, are they already incorporating the most recent
15 information?

16
17 **DR. WALTER:** We will incorporate the most recent information that
18 we have available in the assessment, and I think the assessment is
19 going to go up to 2023, and so presumably it will have effort, if
20 we can get to that, and so it will have the current effort in it
21 as data.

22
23 This analysis was a series of projections that changed that effort,
24 and it basically said could we allow more shrimping, with effort,
25 and change what was basically the limit on the amount of shrimping
26 to protect red snapper, and it said, actually, that we could allow
27 for more shrimping, and so that's when that analysis was done, and
28 it's a series of projections to say how much shrimping could you
29 allow, without harming red snapper, and we found that, actually,
30 we could allow more than the original threshold.

31
32 I think the intent here is can we allow further shrimping effort,
33 and raise that amount of allowable fishing days, and still not
34 negatively impact red snapper, and I think that's the intent, as
35 I'm trying to interpret it, and, in that case, it would require
36 having the final model completed, and then run projections with
37 hypothetical shrimp effort, to say how much more could we allow,
38 and then up to the limit that would maintain the SPR for the red
39 snapper, and we could allow that additional shrimp effort, to allow
40 additional opportunities, and I think, if that's how I'm
41 interpreting it, then, yes, that's straightforward, but it would
42 have to be after we finish the actual assessment to do that.
43 Thanks.

44
45 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

46
47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just briefly, the history behind this is, when we

1 adopted the rebuilding plan, back in the 2006 and 2007 timeframe,
2 right, we initially set a target reduction on 67 percent for shrimp
3 effort, and that was, I think, supposed to then get reduced down
4 to 60 percent, and we did that. We modified that.

5
6 I'm going to vote against the motion, and my preference would be
7 for it to be withdrawn, and that we handle this kind of offline,
8 through some discussions and how it's going to get integrated into
9 the stock assessment, because I think that's truly how it's going
10 to work anyway, and that a letter is not necessary.

11
12 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any more discussion on the motion?

13
14 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So it seems to me that the letter requesting an
15 analysis would be harmless, because, by the time the assessment
16 gets done, you would simply be taking that information and sending
17 it back to us, right, and so I'm not quite sure why you're
18 requesting the motion be withdrawn, and I don't follow that.

19
20 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

21
22 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I mean, I don't know how much work it is
23 for 1 percent threshold increments, but you're talking potentially
24 thirty or forty different iterations, right, and why not 5 percent,
25 or 10 percent, and, to me, the bigger issue is, unless we're going
26 to increase from 60 percent to something that is much closer, and
27 commensurate, with the effort levels of the shrimp industry, this
28 has no effect on red snapper.

29
30 When you narrow that gap between 60 percent and 87 percent, and
31 they start bumping up against it, that's when it's going to benefit
32 red snapper, and so I'm just not seeing a benefit to actually even
33 doing this analysis, given that the Science Center is going to
34 incorporate the most recent low-effort data, which informs fishing
35 mortality in the assessment, and then it allows us to project that
36 forward, given current effort levels.

37
38 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

39
40 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I guess my goal with this was not necessarily
41 regarding the red snapper assessment, even though it's
42 interrelated with it, obviously, but the goal was to increase the
43 available access for the shrimp industry to that depth zone, by
44 being able to reduce the threshold of time that they're excluded,
45 considering that the effort in the Gulf is an 87 percent reduction
46 in the last year, and that was my goal with this, but, if this
47 isn't going to work in this form, then I can withdraw the motion,

1 if that's what we would like to do, and come back with something
2 different for our next meeting, I guess.

3
4 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

5
6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Maybe I'm off-base, in terms of my understanding
7 of this, but I don't think we're excluding them at all at this
8 point, because they're well below that effort threshold, right,
9 and so, unless they bump up against it, we're not excluding them,
10 or limiting them, to their access at this stage.

11
12 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Gill.

13
14 **MR. GILL:** I am a tad confused, Mr. Chairman. Is the maker of the
15 motion going to withdraw it, or are we still discussing the motion?
16

17 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I don't think it's been withdrawn yet.

18
19 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I can withdraw it at this time, and bring it back
20 at our next meeting, if needed.

21
22 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Gill.

23
24 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As seconder, I agree with the
25 withdrawal, but I would like to comment that the analysis, and I
26 don't know if it was updated in 2018 or not, that determined age-
27 zero and one mortality on red snapper, due to the shrimp industry,
28 is now eighteen years old, and I understand there's been subsequent
29 research on that subject that have indicated that the mortality is
30 considerably less than that originally estimated, and so that, if
31 that's true, and incorporated in the assessment, then the threshold
32 requirement would not need to be at the level it's at now, and
33 there would be consideration, at that time, to reduce it.

34
35 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

36
37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** As you can tell, I know way too much about red
38 snapper and the stock assessment, and so I think what you're
39 referring to is already incorporated into the stock assessment,
40 Mr. Gill, and that's work that was done by LGL for looking at
41 density-dependent fishing -- Yes, density-dependent mortality.

42
43 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Schieble, proceed.

44
45 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** All right, and so, moving on to Remaining Items
46 from Summary of the March 19 through 20, 2024 Shrimp Advisory Panel
47 Meeting, Tab D, Number 4(a), Ms. Bosarge reviewed remaining items

1 from the March 2024 Shrimp AP meeting, as seen in Tab D, Number
2 4(a). A committee member concurred with the need for additional
3 educational and marketing efforts towards seafood consumers that
4 would further distinguish differences between Gulf shrimp and
5 imported shrimp. Then we moved to Other Business. Mr. Gill put
6 a request in of a discussion of the certification noncompliance.
7 Mr. Gill.

8
9 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, sir, and so I initiated that because the
10 council has received a letter from Laura Picariello, who is on our
11 Shrimp AP, and also a Texas Sea Grant agent, requesting the council
12 take action relative to this issue. She is on the line, and I
13 would ask your permission to have her address it, so that she can
14 do it directly.

15
16 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, that would be fine, Mr. Gill.

17
18 **MR. GILL:** Laura, are you on the line?

19
20 **MS. LAURA PICARIELLO:** Yes, I'm here. Can you hear me?

21
22 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Laura, hold on one second, please.

23
24 **MS. PICARIELLO:** Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to talk
25 with you all and discuss this request, and so the shrimp industry,
26 as we've discussed and has come up a couple of times here, you
27 know, has had a lot of economic difficulties, and challenges, and
28 one of the avenues that the industry is pursuing to try to address
29 that is sustainability certifications, which have largely been
30 pushed in the marketplace, and a lot of retailers, and food service
31 entities, now have sustainability policies requiring these in the
32 market, and so the request that has come up here is that, for the
33 Certified Seafood Collaborative Responsible Fisheries Management
34 Certification, which is one of the two certifications being pursued
35 by the industry, carried out an assessment this past year, and
36 there was a nonconformance raised, a noncompliance raised, with
37 one issue that relates to federal management for the fishery, which
38 is in relation to data associated with interactions with sawfish
39 and manta rays.

40
41 That's, you know, again, something that has been discussed, and is
42 coming up here pretty regularly in the council forum, and, you
43 know, as we're aware, NOAA is reinitiating the biological opinion,
44 and so, for these types of certifications, if there is something
45 that is management-related associated with a concern, or a
46 noncompliance -- Typically, if a fishery is largely considered
47 sustainable, and there is a positive review of the assessment, but

1 there's something that is a red flag, like, in this case, the
2 concern over some uncertainty right now related to sawfish or manta
3 ray, and they will raise a nonconformance and allow for a period
4 of time within the certification, or the life of the certification,
5 and so it would be a five-year period to address the concern over
6 data and better understanding of interactions with sawfish and
7 manta rays.

8
9 The request, from the industry, in this case, is that, obviously,
10 this is an issue that the industry can't resolve on its own, and
11 that is a management issue that needs to be discussed through NOAA,
12 and the council, and the council being the public forum for the
13 fishery, and industry members, to engage, and to have dialogue on
14 these topics, is requesting that the council acknowledge that there
15 is a noncompliance on this certification, and their willingness to
16 continue to talk to industry related to gathering and making
17 publicly available information associated with interactions with
18 manta rays and sawfish.

19
20 This is something that the council, and NOAA, are already doing
21 through the various forums, right, and, for the Shrimp AP, we
22 receive a protected species update at each of our March meetings,
23 and, right now, it's particularly focused on turtle interactions,
24 but, as the biological opinion goes forward, that is also being
25 updated now through this process.

26
27 The request is for the council to acknowledge and be willing to
28 work with the industry, over the course of the next five years of
29 the certification, to request that data through NOAA and to have
30 dialogue, and public conversation, on the data, so that it's
31 publicly available, and it's transparent, and there is dialogue on
32 that data.

33
34 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Do we have any questions for Ms.
35 Picariello? Mr. Gill.

36
37 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask staff to
38 weigh-in on this request and what, if any, action the council
39 should consider taking.

40
41 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.

42
43 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so Mr. Anson
44 and I did discuss this, a little bit, briefly, with Dr. Walter,
45 and I think the approach might be either to have two separate
46 letters, one from the council and one from perhaps SERO and the
47 Science Center, discussing this approach, and the council letter

1 would say something along the lines of, you know, we're moving
2 forward with a framework action to meet the biological opinion,
3 and the status of that, or trying to have a combined letter,
4 because the council can't be solely responsible for the effort
5 estimates in signing the letter, if that makes sense.

6
7 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Gill.

8
9 **MR. GILL:** Well, I'm not on terra firma here, but I would like to
10 move that the council prepare a letter to respond to the request
11 for noncertification input in the shrimp industry.

12
13 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Second.

14
15 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Walter.

16
17 **DR. WALTER:** Laura, thanks for bringing this to our attention.
18 The Science Center also has been requested to provide a letter,
19 and primarily stating what we can, and will, provide to help the
20 applicant meet that nonconformance, which is primarily, as you
21 noted, giving bycatch estimates, as well as effort estimates.

22
23 One of the challenges we face in being able to give reliable and
24 precise bycatch estimates for smalltooth sawfish, and giant manta,
25 is that we don't have a new effort data -- An electronic effort
26 collection program in place, and we're -- That is really one of
27 the things that has been longstanding, through this council, in
28 terms of we've been working on that I think since 2020, and I think
29 now we've got a plan in place, and it looks like a timeline for
30 final action being taken, in I think Tab -- It was one of the tabs,
31 where there is actually a timeline, and I think we're going to get
32 to the finish line there.

33
34 I think that's going to really be something that, if indeed we can
35 commit to that timeframe, and then then agency can execute the
36 rulemaking and then implementation of it, that I think we'll be
37 able to say, with fairly good confidence, that we can assist the
38 applicant in meeting those conditions.

39
40 If we can't get that in place, then I think we're going to only be
41 able to give estimates of bycatch, with probably a fairly low level
42 of confidence, and precision, because, right now, they're fairly
43 rare-event species, and so that means that there's a high
44 uncertainty, and we have to extrapolate to a larger spatial area
45 if we don't have good observer data, and coverage, and good effort
46 coverage.

1 Getting a new process in place is going to really allow us to move
2 forward, and I really couldn't -- Because, also, the biological
3 opinions are -- While it's ongoing, I couldn't envision a situation
4 where the biological opinion wouldn't say that finer-scale effort,
5 and observer coverage, is going to be a necessary condition of
6 meeting that, and I just don't see that not being the case, and
7 that would be supported by having electronic effort collection on
8 vessels with that finer spatial and temporal scale, and so I think
9 that's going to be necessary for the fishery to meet this
10 challenge, and to be able to mitigate these interactions, and so
11 I think having this path forward is going to assist in us writing
12 a letter to say, yes, indeed the council is planning to move
13 forward with this timeline that will meet -- There are certain
14 timelines, in the nonconformance letter, that have to be met by
15 the applicant, and I think we'll say that, if indeed that happens
16 at this council, then we can implement this, and we can then
17 support what they need to conform to then get certification.
18 Thanks.

19
20 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Walter. Mr. Gill has
21 a motion on the board. Do we have a second? Mr. Schieble seconded.
22 Thank you. Is there any further discussion on the motion? **Is**
23 **there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion**
24 **carries.**

25
26 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Chair, this concludes the Shrimp Management
27 Committee report.

28
29 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Schieble. We're going
30 to move right into Data Collection. Ms. Boggs, are you ready to
31 go?

32
33 **MS. BOGGS:** Mr. Chair, I wasn't here, and so I'm going to let Ed
34 do the --

35
36 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I'm sorry. I forgot. Mr. Walker.

37
38 **DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE REPORT**

39
40 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Data Collection Committee
41 report, the committee adopted the agenda and approved the minutes
42 of the January 2024 meeting.

43
44 Discussion on For-hire Data Collection Program, Tab F, Number 4(a)
45 and (b), Discussion of Fisheries Economic Data Collection, council
46 staff provided an overview of metrics typically used to assess
47 economic effects in fisheries management.

1
2 Economic effects to the commercial sector include changes in
3 individual fishing quota shares and annual allocation values, ex-
4 vessel revenues, producer surplus to commercial fishermen, and
5 consumer surplus to seafood-buying consumers. For the
6 recreational sector, metrics include changes in consumer surplus
7 to anglers, changes in for-hire target trips, and associated
8 changes in producer surplus to for-hire operators.

9
10 Staff noted that for-hire producer surplus is computed by
11 subtracting variable costs, mainly fuel and labor costs, from
12 revenues. Revenues are determined by trip fees and number of
13 trips.

14
15 The committee asked how private angler satisfaction can be
16 measured. Staff stated preference choice experiments are among
17 the approaches used to estimate anglers' satisfaction. Committee
18 members asked why fixed costs are not included in the determination
19 of for-hire producer surplus. Staff indicated that fixed costs,
20 which must be incurred even if trips are not taken, should not be
21 included in trip-level estimates, such as producer surplus.

22
23 Dr. Michael Travis, from SERO, discussed the importance of revenue
24 data in fisheries disasters determinations and allocations. Dr.
25 Travis noted that, in the past, disaster determinations were only
26 for commercial fisheries, and losses in other sectors were not
27 considered. However, changes to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, under
28 the Fisheries Resource Disaster Improvement Act, added for-hire
29 captains and fish processors in disaster determinations.

30
31 Dr. Travis compared the outcomes of a scenario based on the old
32 disaster determination approach to another which includes for-hire
33 revenue data. He noted that, for disaster determinations and the
34 allocation of disaster funds, the commercial and for-hire sectors
35 are both better off when the for-hire revenues are included.

36
37 Committee members asked whether disaster relief information came
38 from self-reported data or from tax returns. Dr. Travis replied
39 that the agency has never requested tax returns and relies on the
40 states for this information. Dr. Travis noted that an additional
41 administrative burden to NMFS could result if South Atlantic and
42 Gulf of Mexico for-hire economic data collection programs differ.

43
44 Dr. Liese, from the Southeast Fishery Science Center, gave a
45 presentation on economic data and results in the Southeast for-
46 hire fisheries. He discussed trip-level expenditure surveys,
47 including the MRIP For-Hire Telephone Survey and a 2002 and 2003

1 costs and earnings add-on to FHTS. He noted that the evaluation
2 of data from the costs and earnings survey concluded that charter
3 fees are vital data and should be collected regularly in a
4 standardized and statistically valid way on a per trip basis. He
5 discussed a 2009 economic survey of the for-hire fishing sector
6 and a 2012 charter price data collection.

7
8 Dr. Liese discussed the Southeast Fisheries Science Center's
9 efforts to collect website charter fee data advertised on websites.
10 Since 2002, a stratified sample of permitted commercial vessels
11 report economic data for all logbook trips during a year. In
12 addition, these vessels complete a supplemental annual cost survey
13 collecting fixed costs. Dr. Liese provided an example of the
14 standardized reports that are produced for each segment of interest
15 (SOI). For a given segment of interest, the report provides trip-
16 level and vessel-level information.

17
18 Dr. Liese also discussed preliminary results derived from the 2022
19 SEFHIER logbook data. He discussed pros and cons of data
20 collection options for the for-hire sector, including collecting
21 fees for all trips, a census, or a sample of trips, collecting
22 annual economic data by conducting annual economic surveys, and
23 administering ad-hoc voluntary economic surveys.

24
25 He noted that the economic data are not secondary to, or
26 independent of, biological or other fishery data and reemphasized
27 that the single most important economic variable is the charter
28 fee. He indicated that a logbook is the right place to collect
29 charter fee data. If data are collected only for a sample, then
30 it would be efficient to add gallons of fuel, fuel prices, and
31 crew size as a proxy for input prices and quantities.

32
33 Committee members stated that charter operators are looking for a
34 minimally burdensome data collection program. The committee noted
35 that a sample would be more desirable than a census. Committee
36 members asked what would constitute an appropriate sample size.
37 Dr. Liese replied that a greater sample size would correspond to
38 tighter confidence levels.

39
40 Committee members inquired about the modalities of random sampling
41 with electronic logbooks. Dr. Liese indicated that one option
42 could be the use of a random number generator, and he reiterated
43 that the most important elements to collect are charter trip fees,
44 gallons of fuel used, fuel price, and the number of crew members.

45
46 Amendment document: Draft Options, council staff presented a draft
47 document that considers modifications to for-hire vessel reporting

1 requirements in the Gulf of Mexico and reported that the IPT will
2 continue to develop the introduction section, while the council
3 discusses what elements will be included in the next iteration of
4 the for-hire data collection program.

5
6 The committee provided feedback on the background section, purpose
7 and need, and the range of alternatives within each action.
8 Specifically, the committee requested that the IPT work to include
9 considerations for economic data for the next version of the
10 document.

11
12 **The committee recommends and I so move, to have the IPT explore**
13 **how to incorporate economic data collection into the amendment.**
14 The motion carried with no opposition.

15
16 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, and so we have a committee motion on
17 the board. Is there any discussion on the motion? Okay. **Seeing**
18 **none, is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the**
19 **motion carries.** Okay, Mr. Walker.

20
21 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. For next steps, the IPT will
22 discuss the committee's recommendations on the document and
23 continue development of the background and management actions
24 sections of the document for committee review at a future council
25 meeting. Additionally, future discussions regarding approaches
26 for program validation measures will be required to finalize the
27 amendment. Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

28
29 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Walker. We have a question
30 from Ms. Boggs.

31
32 **MS. BOGGS:** So I just want to reiterate the last statement of that
33 report, is that we, the council, NMFS, are going to have to come
34 up with some way, that's a happy medium, for validation, and I
35 don't know how that gets incorporated, but we really need to work
36 on that, and I would like to request -- I don't know if it's
37 possible, but can we see this document again at the June council
38 meeting?

39
40 **DR. LISA HOLLENSHAD:** Yes, ma'am. We can bring back a revised
41 version in June.

42
43 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

44
45 **MR. WALKER:** Based on the discussions of the committee, the public
46 testimony, and my discussions with my fellow for-hire
47 participants, I have a motion that I have submitted to Bernie, I

1 think, if I could bring it up.

2

3 **My motion would be to request that the Southeast Regional Office**
4 **examine the possibility of randomly sampling economic data from**
5 **charter-for-hire reporting system participants and report back to**
6 **the council on the viability of this approach at the next council**
7 **meeting. If I have a second, I will explain.**

8

9 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a motion on the board, and we
10 have a second by Mr. Broussard, and let's give Mr. Walker --

11

12 **MR. WALKER:** So, essentially, this is just -- A lot of us have
13 been kicking around the idea, and it seems like we have found
14 common ground here, between the economic needs and what the charter
15 guys are willing to, you know, support, and it revolves around
16 this concept of can a random sampling factor be built into the
17 reporting system, and so this is all we're asking for, is to check
18 and see if that can actually be done, because, if it can't -- I
19 would imagine it would, but this is just to explore that, so we
20 can go further if it can indeed be randomly sampled on your tablet,
21 or whatever it may be.

22

23 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Walker. I do have
24 Andy in line. Andy, did you want to speak to this, or is it
25 something else, and then I know I have Ms. Boggs.

26

27 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, I mean, I want to speak to this, and so
28 **a friendly amendment request would be just to generalize it to**
29 **"NMFS", because it involves far more than my office, and then kind**
30 **of the intent of my motion, which we just passed, was really to**
31 **kind of get into this and try to figure out more of the details of**
32 **this, a little more specificity, which I'm fine with.**

33

34 What I do want to say, and I agree that I think we're probably
35 landing on where we want to head with the preferred, but I still
36 think a reasonable alternative is to consider the economic data be
37 fully collected through the logbook program, and that be an
38 alternative, and so I just wanted to emphasize that for IPT
39 consideration, that that should be part of the range.

40

41 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Mr. Walker, are
42 you good with this?

43

44 **MR. WALKER:** I'm perfectly fine with that, yes.

45

46 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Broussard? Thank you. Ms. Boggs.

47

1 **MS. BOGGS:** So, I mean, I don't understand why we need this motion,
2 when we just passed the motion to have the IPT explore how to
3 incorporate economic data collection into the amendment, and I
4 don't disagree, and we heard a lot testimony yesterday that this
5 sounds like this might be, as Andy indicated, a preferred, but I
6 don't want to not look at the other options that might be
7 available, or scenarios to the charter fleet, that might be
8 acceptable as well.

9
10 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Next, I have Dr. Banks.

11
12 **DR. BANKS:** I think my question goes to Andy. I'm kind of still
13 iffy on some of the mechanics for the economic data. I can tell
14 you, from some of the business models we have, the captain can't
15 answer all the economic questions that you're talking about, and
16 they're really just running the vessel, and so are we talking about
17 putting these economic questions at the trip or daily level, or
18 kind of having, even through the logbook, like a separate mechanism
19 to push out to the person that knows that information? For
20 example, we fill our boat up, but the captain doesn't know what we
21 paid for gas, and if maybe you can give me some clarification on
22 that.

23
24 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

25
26 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I've heard those similar concerns shared,
27 and so I don't want to speak for Captain Walker, but I guess my
28 interpretation would be trip-level, as part of the electronic
29 system, some sort of random selection of trips that would be
30 occurring.

31
32 **MR. WALKER:** To that?

33
34 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** To that.

35
36 **MR. WALKER:** So the price, we've been told by the economists, is
37 the most important factor here, and, in previous SEFHIER systems,
38 we did -- The captain of the boat, or whoever was entering the
39 tablet, was aware of those economic numbers, and, again, this is
40 just to examine if it's feasible to randomly sample whatever those
41 factors may be, whether it's just -- That will be -- I know they're
42 a negotiation, the way I see it, and, you know, this doesn't mean
43 that twenty questions is going to be okay, but this is just, before
44 we even get into the questions or anything, can this technically
45 be done, with the hardware available, is really all I'm looking
46 for exploration on here.

1 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Next, I have Dr. Sweetman and then
2 Ms. Boggs.

3
4 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to Susan's point, I
5 don't think this precludes investigation of other avenues to
6 incorporate economic data, and I think this is just looking at a
7 little bit of specificity for this particular issue, based on
8 Captain Walker's feedback, and others in the for-hire sector, and
9 I think the commercial -- I think we talked about, in committee,
10 that the commercial sector is 20 percent randomly sampled, along
11 those lines, and I feel like that's kind of the way that Ed is
12 trying to approach this here, in order to just to investigate this
13 at a broad scale, to see if it's feasible, but, again, to your
14 point, Susan, I don't think this precludes other options from being
15 investigated.

16
17 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Next, I have Ms. Boggs.

18
19 **MS. BOGGS:** I agree, and I just don't want to get honed-in on this
20 and that be all we do, but, to Dr. Banks' question, the way this
21 was set up initially, and I'm assuming -- This obligation comes
22 down to the permit holder, okay, and so, whether you're the owner
23 of the vessel, the captain of the vessel, but, if you own that
24 permit, this will be your obligation to report, and so an example,
25 for us, is it comes to me, and I do the reporting.

26
27 They send me a text that this is what we caught, and this is what
28 we did, and so it's my responsibility to have that price for fuel
29 and most things, and I've said this before, and I would greatly
30 think that Captain Walker would agree with me, but most captains
31 don't leave the port unless they know what their costs is, because
32 they need to know how far they can run, where they can go fish,
33 and they have to be efficient with that.

34
35 I don't want us to get hung up on that, because, like I said, it
36 ultimately is the permit holder's responsibility for this, and so
37 that permit holder is either going to have to provide that
38 information to that captain or they're going to have to fill out
39 the report themselves, and so I don't think that's a hang-up.

40
41 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Banks.

42
43 **DR. BANKS:** So just to follow-up with that, and I'm not suggesting
44 it's necessarily a hang-up, but what I'm asking is then, as the
45 permit holder, because I don't have a captain's license, and I'm
46 not running the vessel, and I do the same thing you do, and I fill
47 out those reports when they need to be, but I'm saying maybe this

1 doesn't need to be at the trip or daily level, and gas doesn't
2 change from morning to afternoon that often.

3
4 Maybe -- Well, how often are you filling your boat up, Susan? I'm
5 filling it up maybe every other day, but so my morning gas costs,
6 and my afternoon gas costs, didn't change. I filled the boat up,
7 and so I'm just saying maybe that needs to go to the permit holder,
8 but not be where the captain is reporting the catch, and streamline
9 the process of us having to reach out and say, okay, gas changed
10 five-cents, and here you go, and you've got to fill that out. Let
11 them do the catch and effort, which I think was the intended
12 purpose of SEFHIER, and the economic data got added on, and so I'm
13 saying maybe streamline the economic data, where it's not in the
14 actual report that's happening at the trip or day level, but put
15 it in the logbook somehow, as maybe, okay, this week, you need to
16 go through and summarize.

17
18 You're right that you do need to know what your gas costs, but, if
19 my customers aren't catching fish, I'm going to run further, and
20 so we're not looking at necessarily I saved fifty dollars here,
21 because I didn't go ten extra miles or whatever. Thanks.

22
23 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

24
25 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I certainly understand Captain Walker's intent
26 with this motion, and I think, to broaden this, and kind of to
27 what Susan is getting at, we would want to look at this in a number
28 of ways.

29
30 I am, of course, thinking of it from the standpoint of what's the
31 most efficient, and effective, way that we can collect this data,
32 what's going to create the most buy-in for the industry, what
33 presents administrative burdens, and so bringing information like
34 that back to the council, to me, will be helpful, and informative,
35 as we narrow the scope of actions and alternatives for this.

36
37 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Ms. Boggs.

38
39 **MS. BOGGS:** Dr. Banks, you are right. The intent of this process,
40 six or seven or eight years ago now, and I've lost count of how
41 long we've been working on SEFHIER, was catch and effort, and the
42 program did get derailed, or not derailed, but a lot of angst came
43 when it was changed after it left this council's hands, and it
44 added the economic data, and so, yes, if we go to -- If a random-
45 sampling-type data collection is what this council ultimately
46 decides, then, yes, it would be reported, but I would like to think
47 it would be reported not on a monthly basis, but maybe a weekly

1 basis, because the intent also of this is that information is
2 necessary for NMFS, and I don't see how, and maybe this is the
3 question, and I don't mean to get off-track, but, you know, Andy,
4 does that dataset really have anything to do with the catch and
5 effort, which is what ultimately the charter-for-hire fishermen
6 are looking to get to?

7
8 My point being is you can look at catch and effort on a daily
9 basis, because I do think you need daily reporting, so it's real-
10 time data collection, but how important, Andy, is that economic
11 data going to affect the catch and effort? Do you understand what
12 I'm asking? I mean, we've got two different parts here, the catch
13 and effort, which is important, and we need to see what we're
14 catching, how much effort is there.

15
16 I understand why the economic portion of it is important, but
17 getting that real-time catch and effort seems like the most
18 important, at least for the charter-for-hire fleet, in being able
19 to determine seasons, lengths of seasons, those types of things.

20
21 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

22
23 **MS. WALKER:** I agree with Ms. Boggs, but that's not what the motion
24 on the board is about. My intent, with the motion, is just to
25 examine if this is possible to do, if we can randomly sample
26 electronically, and nothing more. You know, it's not identifying
27 any of what percentage that would be, or what those questions or
28 would be or anything, and it's just to see if we can actually do
29 this, and so I'm trying to take a small step forward, rather than
30 wait another three months before we agree to even examine this,
31 and so nothing more than can it be done, and then we can talk about
32 it from there.

33
34 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, and so we're going to let Mr.
35 Strelcheck speak to this, and then we're going to vote.

36
37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Not specific to the motion, but, you know, this
38 all comes back to what are our goals and objectives for collecting
39 the logbook data, and, in my view, our goals, and our objectives,
40 are all over the map, depending on who we talk to around the table
41 right now, and the focus is really reducing the burden on industry,
42 and creating buy-in, and less so on some of the other things that
43 may be beneficial to the industry, like providing the adequate
44 data for disaster assistance or improvements in the economic and
45 social data that goes into our management plan actions and
46 amendments, but I think we need to navigate that, and discuss that
47 further, and I agree, and I think we should just vote this up or

1 down at this point, but I'm supportive of the motion.

2

3 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Okay. **Is**
4 **there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion**
5 **carries.** Ms. Boggs.

6

7 **MS. BOGGS:** Based on Andy's comments just then, can we briefly
8 look at the purpose and need statements again for this document?

9

10 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Bernie, could you pull up the purpose and
11 need for us, please? Okay. There is the purpose and need, as
12 requested by Ms. Boggs. Go ahead, Ms. Boggs.

13

14 **MS. BOGGS:** So, as it currently reads, we have basically two
15 purposes here, and I don't know if we can look at -- I am not
16 asking to split the document, but that kind of goes back to the
17 question that I just asked, Andy. You've got your first purpose,
18 which is to improve accuracy, precision, and timeliness of
19 landings, discards, and fishing effort, and then you have to
20 collect social and economic information related to the operation
21 of federally-permitted for-hire vessels, and so we've got two
22 things going on here, two moving parts, and so that's why I'm
23 asking the question of is the catch and effort --

24

25 I know they tie together, but do they have to run alongside,
26 meaning can you do catch and -- Obviously, that's something we're
27 going to explore, is you can do your catch and effort on a daily
28 basis, if you will, and I'm not saying that's how it's going to
29 end up, and you can do your random social and economic questions
30 monthly, 20 percent, however that lands, but can that not still
31 help us derive to season lengths, et cetera, for the species,
32 through the catch and effort? I don't know if I'm being clear,
33 but I know how, at the end, they've got to come together, for
34 disaster and things like that.

35

36 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

37

38 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So I think the simple answer is yes, and it's
39 really more of the mechanics of how it would work, and, if you're
40 going to do a subsample, you have to expand that out, or have, you
41 know, representation of the industry, and then it does kind of get
42 back to -- We're very generic with the second purpose, right, to
43 collect social and economic information, and, you know, why? Why
44 is that important, and, you know, what is our objectives for
45 collecting that information, and so I think we probably need to
46 think about, and not today, and maybe come back to that in June,
47 as we kind of continue to discuss the importance of this data, why

1 we're using it, and ultimately what our goals are in collecting
2 it.

3

4 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Banks.

5

6 **DR. BANKS:** I don't know if now is the time to also have this
7 conversation, or if maybe having some time in June might be better,
8 but, while we're fleshing out some of the details that we've
9 started discussing in this document, can we have a discussion about
10 the validation methods? I'm still kind of uncertain about what
11 we're going to be doing, and, since the VMS was a contingent in
12 the lawsuit, I would like to have a little more discussion.

13

14 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Boggs.

15

16 **MS. BOGGS:** So thank you, Dr. Banks, because I was going to make
17 a motion that staff bring back some validation options to the
18 council in June, and one may include VMS, but what are some other
19 alternatives that we would have for validation, and then we can
20 have that conversation with NMFS, start that conversation of what
21 would be acceptable and what would not, and so do I need to make
22 it in a more formal motion, Bernie?

23

24 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Banks.

25

26 **DR. BANKS:** I want to let her get her wordsmithing going, but I
27 will likely support that. I don't know which way I lean on
28 validation just yet, but I would like to have that discussion, and
29 I think that would be very important, and so thank you.

30

31 **MS. BOGGS:** **To request staff bring back options for validation at**
32 **the June council meeting.** I don't exactly know what it needs to
33 say, if staff wants to help me with that, or is that enough
34 information?

35

36 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, Dr. Froeschke.

37

38 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** I guess what would be helpful, to me, is what
39 are the bookends? What is the most complicated thing you would be
40 willing to entertain, and what's the most simplistic thing? I
41 mean --

42

43 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Boggs.

44

45 **MS. BOGGS:** For discussion, to request staff bring back options
46 ranging from VMS to geofencing for consideration of validation. I
47 don't know what falls in between there, and I don't want to limit,

1 but I think that's pretty broad, and it's to the most extreme to
2 maybe not as extreme.

3

4 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, John.

5

6 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, I guess, just in terms of bookends, the
7 simplest thing is you would do nothing, and then you would just -
8 - You know, you would be asked to fill out something, and, if you
9 get intercepted, that would be the means of validation. Then there
10 might be something where you hail-out, but there is no GPS tracking
11 component, and then you would still validate by the port samplers,
12 or whomever, and then there would be something perhaps with a hail-
13 out and a geofence, and then there would be something with a VMS
14 and the whole thing, and that's like something that I envisioned
15 in my head, and others may have different ideas.

16

17 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Banks.

18

19 **DR. BANKS:** If you will entertain a friendly -- I don't know that
20 it's a substitution, but wordsmithing, and, if we say to request
21 that staff bring back options to include the following, and then
22 we can list a few, but not exclude anything else that may come up,
23 and then we can include VMS, geofencing, boots-on-the-ground,
24 whatever else anybody -- But just set up a list.

25

26 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I think Mr. Walker was next.

27

28 **MR. WALKER:** So I don't disagree with the motion, and the "VMS"
29 just blinked on and off, and I was going to say the one part --
30 You know, the biggest reason we're talking about this is VMS, and
31 we lost in court, and the industry hates it, and we have feedback
32 from the advisory panel on this that we have adopted as a range of
33 options to look at, and, if I'm remembering it right, VMS is not
34 one of them, and I support that. VMS has left the list, in my
35 opinion, for numerous reasons.

36

37 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Walker. Dr. Hollensead.

38

39 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just going to -- To
40 what Captain Walker was talking about, the ad hoc AP, for
41 validation, in their motion that they passed, gave some suggestions
42 that they would be interested in exploring, and so they have
43 explore trip validation options, such as effort validation button,
44 and so that would be a button which would capture GPS coordinates
45 of the device, and this would be required to be hit by the captain
46 after your declaration. Then a before-trip report, and so, while
47 seaward of a demarcation line, or some sort of georeference option,

1 depending on what's available, and so those are some of the things
2 that they mentioned that they would be willing to sort of
3 entertain, and so that's a potential starting place, and so we do
4 have that information to go through.

5
6 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Froeschke, your hand was up? No? Dr.
7 Banks.

8
9 **DR. BANKS:** Well then can I make another friendly addition and say
10 we add that list to this motion, those options, to start with?

11
12 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Boggs.

13
14 **MS. BOGGS:** So, maybe to make it not so clunky, and I don't know
15 if we have to do that, Dr. Banks, but just to request staff review
16 -- What I'm trying to say is take the ad hoc AP's recommendations
17 as a starting point, and I think we have to include VMS, and I
18 know it was the contention of the lawsuit, and -- But it could be
19 that we look at it where it's not pinging every hour, and it's --
20 I don't know what some of the options would be, and that's the
21 whole point of this, is to get a suite of options, because I don't
22 know what all options are available out there, and so I don't want
23 to tie ourselves to something, but, if you want to just say to
24 bring back a suite of options to include those that were
25 recommended by the Ad Hoc Data Collection Advisory Panel, and is
26 that enough information?

27
28 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.

29
30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I guess
31 I was thinking the IPT would be working on this, and bringing some
32 of this information back to the council, and I was unsure if some
33 of this could be worked out by the June council meeting, and I
34 think some of the geofencing, and some of the other mechanisms
35 that were proposed, might take a bit more time to really think
36 through, and so what I've asked Dr. Hollensead to do is to see if
37 we have already passed this motion from the ad hoc AP for
38 consideration, and so she's confirming that we have not. Okay.
39 Thank you.

40
41 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Hollensead.

42
43 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** You heard from Dr. Simmons already, but one thing
44 I did want to just -- A little nuance to the conversation is, in
45 the previous motion passed, as far as the council meeting, there
46 was the motion to recommend the council not require the twenty-
47 four-hour tracking, and so that was also encapsulated in that

1 motion for the last time, and so I just wanted to bring that up
2 again.

3
4 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for that. I have Mr. Strelcheck
5 and then Ms. Boggs.

6
7 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I think we're getting to a better-written motion
8 here, and so I would agree with this, right, as long as it's not
9 limiting to the recommendations of the ad hoc AP. I was actually
10 going to raise similar questions, and so I'm glad we're talking
11 about this, and I hear Carrie loud and clear, in terms of what
12 maybe we can or can't bring back in June, but I think this is
13 really important for us to discuss, and so, even if we have just
14 preliminary information to some of the options, it would be worth
15 discussing those at the June council meeting.

16
17 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Ms. Boggs and then Ms. Levy.

18
19 **MS. BOGGS:** I'm good.

20
21 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Levy.

22
23 **MS. LEVY:** Just could we make clear that this is related to the
24 topic of validation, because now it's just -- Like it doesn't
25 indicate what you're actually looking at, in terms of the suite of
26 options.

27
28 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for that clarification. Ms. Boggs.

29
30 **MS. BOGGS:** I'm sorry, Mara, and I was reading it. Yes, and to
31 request -- Validation measures, suite of validation measures, or
32 just options, and is that good enough, Lisa? Dr. Hollensead?
33 Okay. I don't think charter-for-hire needs to be in there, and I
34 thought it was just the Ad Hoc Data Collection AP.

35
36 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** It's charter-for-hire.

37
38 **MS. BOGGS:** It is charter-for-hire? Okay, and so that's my motion,
39 if the seconder is okay with it.

40
41 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I believe it was Dr. Banks, and were you the
42 seconder? Are you good with this?

43
44 **DR. BANKS:** Yes, sir.

45
46 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Is there any more discussion on the
47 motion? **Not seeing any more discussion, is there any opposition**

1 to the motion? Seeing no opposition, the motion carries. That
2 concludes Data Collection. Let's take a break, a fifteen-minute
3 break, and come back at 10:20.

4
5 (Whereupon a brief recess was taken.)
6

7 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Welcome back. We're going to go
8 into Reef Fish, and Dr. Frazer is going to walk us through that.
9

10 **REEF FISH COMMITTEE REPORT**

11
12 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Reef Fish Committee
13 report, the committee adopted the agenda, Tab B, Number 1, after
14 adding an item under Other Business to discuss Reef Fish Amendment
15 53. The minutes, Tab B, Number 2, from the January 2024 meeting
16 were approved as written.
17

18 Review of Reef Fish and Individual Fishing Quota Program Landings,
19 Tab B, Number 4, Southeast Regional Office staff reviewed the
20 status of reef fish, for-hire red snapper, and individual fishing
21 quota program landings relative to catch limits, with preliminary
22 data through 2023.
23

24 SERO noted that recreational harvest of greater amberjack would
25 reopen on May 1, 2024, due to the recreational annual catch limit
26 not being landed in the fall 2023 season, and the Framework Action
27 that will modify the recreational fishing season to be open
28 September 1 through October is not yet effective.
29

30 A committee member asked whether the precision of quota monitoring
31 for the for-hire component merited revisiting the buffer between
32 the component's ACL and its annual catch target, or ACT. SERO
33 expressed confidence in its ability to predict the for-hire red
34 snapper season and suggested revisiting that buffer in conjunction
35 with revising catch advice for red snapper after the next planned
36 stock assessment.
37

38 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Diaz.
39

40 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you. Bernie, I sent a motion over to you for the
41 charter boat ACT, and could you pull that up, please? **At this**
42 **point, I would like to make a motion, and my motion would be to**
43 **request staff to develop a document to adjust the annual catch**
44 **target for the federal water charter-for-hire red snapper sector,**
45 **and, if I get a second, I will give some rationale.**
46

47 **MR. SCOTT BANNON:** Second.

1
2 **MR. DIAZ:** Okay, and so, looking at the information that was
3 presented to us on the landings, right now, the ACT for the
4 charter-for-hire sector is 9 percent, and so they can fish up to
5 91 percent of their ACL. This year, they fished up to 91 percent,
6 and we shut them down, and it was the right thing to do, but that
7 leaves about 287,000 pounds of fish uncaught for that sector, and,
8 from the conversations we had earlier, during committee, I think
9 SERO, and their staff, are doing a very good job at doing these
10 projections.

11
12 Since we've implemented Amendment 50, and we've got these sectors
13 separated, where the charter boats are fishing on their own sector,
14 they haven't even come close to going over, not even one time,
15 and, as a matter of a fact, most times, they've been towards the
16 lower end of their ACT.

17
18 I asked Ryan, on a break yesterday, if he could just look at the
19 ACT Control Rule and see if it would be possible to tighten up
20 their ACT a little bit, and Ryan can correct me if I'm wrong, but
21 he ran that through his calculations, and it looks like we could
22 adjust their ACT, according to our control rule, down to a 5
23 percent buffer, and so, anyway, I think we can try to get these
24 guys to where they can catch a few more of their fish, based on
25 the good job that SERO is doing with their projections and the way
26 this is being prosecuted so far, and so that is my rationale.

27
28 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Diaz. Do we have any
29 discussion? Ms. Boggs.

30
31 **MS. BOGGS:** So, I will certainly support this motion, and, when
32 this motion passes, I think I will make another motion, and then
33 they can maybe be combined, but I don't want to disrupt this
34 motion.

35
36 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

37
38 **MR. WALKER:** I support the motion as well. What we're talking
39 about is the buffer here, and, if it's too high, which it may be,
40 and they're staying within their ACL and ACT, then I think they
41 should be able to catch a little more, if they're not going to
42 overfish it.

43
44 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

45
46 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I support the motion, and Dale beat me to the
47 punch, because I had a motion teed-up that not only talks about

1 the charter-for-hire ACT buffer, but modifications potentially to
2 the season structure, as well as looking at the private sector
3 accountability measures, and so we can capture those maybe in a
4 subsequent motion, but the intent would be that those could all
5 fall under one document.

6
7 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Diaz, did you want to speak to that?

8
9 **MR. DIAZ:** No, but I did want to get in line and speak whenever my
10 turn comes back up.

11
12 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Gill.

13
14 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also support the motion,
15 but note that the 4 percent, just to set the expectation level,
16 for those that are here and listening, is probably not a heck of
17 a lot of fish, right, and it's not going to have a significant
18 influence, in terms of seasons and things like that, but, you know,
19 I support the intent of the motion, and thank you, Dale, for
20 offering it.

21
22 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Schieble.

23
24 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I can recall when we worked on this a while back,
25 and we had a buffer of 20 percent, and we dropped it down to 9
26 percent, the current buffer now, and I thought 20 percent was sort
27 of extreme at the time, and 9 I think is still probably excessive
28 as well, and so I would support this, also. Thank you.

29
30 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Mr. Diaz.

31
32 **MR. DIAZ:** I would ask staff, whenever they develop the document,
33 to also include, in the suite of motions, to have whatever the ACT
34 Control Rule indicates, which I think will be 5 percent, but I
35 would also like to see an option in there that we don't even have
36 an ACT on this sector.

37
38 It's my understanding that, if there was an overage in this sector,
39 there would be no payback, and I think that's a viable at least
40 alternative to consider, and anything else in between that you all
41 think is appropriate to have us consider would be things that I
42 would like to see, and so the last -- I do want to speak to the
43 timing of the document, but I don't want to do that until if the
44 motion passes. Thank you.

45
46 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Rindone, to that?

1 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Diaz, I think what we can
2 do, for the zero percent option, is we can have like a sub-option,
3 or the zero percent alternative, is we can have option under there
4 for something like, you know, if there is an overage, then to have
5 a payback in the following year, if that's something that you guys
6 ultimately think should be applied, and, if you don't, then you
7 would just flick that off, but we could at least have that
8 discussion about that.

9
10 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you. I have Ms. Boggs. Mr.
11 Bannon.

12
13 **MR. BANNON:** I'm going to be in support of the motion, and I think
14 Andy, and Susan, are kind of going to be on the same page with
15 looking at some kind of season adjustment, because, like Mr.
16 Schieble said, you know, the 20 percent was way too much, and 9
17 percent is obviously a little too high, and they should get the
18 opportunity to fish the fish that they've been allocated, and, you
19 know, Andy, and his folks, have done a good job of predicting that
20 season. The challenge is it gets to the part where the season
21 doesn't work for them, and so you may not catch those fish, and so
22 I'm going to be in support of this, and most likely in support of
23 the next motion.

24
25 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you. Ms. Boggs.

26
27 **MS. BOGGS:** So exactly, and I was going to go down the road that
28 Andy is going, because, as we reduce the buffers, and we get more
29 fish to catch, if you will, and then we run out of time to catch
30 the fish, and then it's like, well, you're not catching your fish.
31 Well, we're not given the opportunity to catch those fish, because
32 we're hamstrung to that June 1 opening date, and, Mr. Gill, I do
33 agree that it's not a lot of fish, but it's kind of like the same
34 thing with the IFQ system. You may start with a little, but, as
35 you get increases in quota, that fish grows, and so why not have
36 it there to start growing in the future? I will support this
37 motion, and I suspect I will support Andy's motion coming up behind
38 that. Thank you.

39
40 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Ms. Boggs. General Spraggins.

41
42 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I am definitely in support of this motion, and
43 one thing that Ms. Boggs just mentioned is I would love to see,
44 somewhere down the way, and I'm not ready to word it right now,
45 with this motion, but I would like to see something done to where
46 we can change that start date of 1 June, that it can maybe be
47 earlier than that, if we chose to or, you know, whatever, because

1 we aren't missing a lot.
2
3 I mean, if it's nothing but a week, and, you know, when a lot of
4 places open up on Memorial Day Weekend, and, if you had it to where
5 charter can go that Memorial Day Weekend, it would sure help a
6 whole lot, because it would be a situation to where a lot of our
7 fishermen can be able to get out, and there's a lot of people that
8 would like to fish during that time, and so that's something -- I
9 don't want to muddy this up, but that's something that I would
10 like to look at in the future.

11
12 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, General Spraggins. Is
13 there any more conversation on the motion? **Seeing none, is there**
14 **any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.**
15 Mr. Diaz.

16
17 **MR. DIAZ:** The second thing that I said I wanted to address was
18 timing, and our process takes a long time for things to happen,
19 and I think this could be a framework amendment, which we can
20 generally do pretty quick, and my druthers would be that we try to
21 attack this thing in a way where it could impact the 2025 season,
22 and so anything that the staff could do to try to get this to where
23 it can impact the 2025 season, and, in my mind, it doesn't have to
24 pass by January 1, and Andy could speak to this, but I would think,
25 if this thing passes before they finish their season in 2025, I
26 would think we could implement it, but Andy could speak to that,
27 and see if that's possible or not, but I'm not going to put that
28 in the form of a motion, and I'm just going to put that in the
29 form of a request. Thank you.

30
31 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you for those comments. Mr.
32 Strelcheck.

33
34 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I think you're correct, Dale, and so, with your
35 timing -- I mean, I might affect your timing, because I would like
36 to add a few actions to this document, but let me offer my motion,
37 and then we can have some discussion. This is going to be different
38 than the one that I sent you, Bernie, and so I'll just verbally
39 tell it.

40
41 **The motion is to request staff develop a document to adjust the**
42 **for-hire red snapper season and private red snapper accountability**
43 **measures.** If I get a second, I will explain my motion.

44
45 **MS. BOGGS:** Second.

46
47 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a second by Ms. Boggs.

1
2 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Originally, I was thinking about this as adjusting
3 the start date of the red snapper season, and I'm trying to be
4 intentionally a little bit more vague, because we heard some
5 testimony yesterday about the benefits of moving the season up,
6 and that would probably help the eastern Gulf, whereas a later
7 season helps the western Gulf, and so I think that gives us some
8 flexibility to decide what might be in the best interests Gulf-
9 wide for the for-hire community, and we could get some input on
10 that.

11
12 The second component, with regard to the private recreational red
13 snapper accountability measures, is we had set in place state-by-
14 state AMs, and overages that have to be paid back by each state,
15 and the suggestion has been made, and I think it's at least worth
16 considering, if the private ACL is not exceeded, right, whether or
17 not states would have to pay back their individual overages, right,
18 and so I think there's some benefits and risks to doing that
19 approach, but I think it's at least worth discussing, and
20 exploring, at the council level, if the overall ACL for private is
21 not being exceeded.

22
23 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Geeslin.

24
25 **MR. GEESLIN:** Andy, as we've kind of thought about this a little
26 more, I'm certainly supportive of that, with the caveat that the
27 fishery is not undergoing overfishing, and I think the states are
28 doing a great job keeping up with their catch through the season,
29 and the post-season adjustments, as necessary, and I think,
30 collectively, we can pull this off, and I certainly support the
31 motion.

32
33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Boggs.

34
35 **MS. BOGGS:** Andy is correct, and we heard some testimony,
36 yesterday, about how to adjust the for-hire season. I know the
37 Alabama Charter Fishing Association actually does not support
38 this, and the reason is their concern of overfishing, and they
39 don't want to do anything that could potentially jeopardize their
40 season, and I just wanted to make their hesitancy known, but I
41 think, as Dale pointed out, you know, if we go to the 5 percent
42 buffer, and the management that has been going on for the last
43 four or five years has seemed to work, and I think we're not at
44 great risk of doing that, but you're right, Andy, there's people
45 here there and everywhere, and so, how the council gets to this,
46 I don't know, but I think it's a good start that we start having
47 a discussion, and I appreciate the motion.

1
2 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Banks.

3
4 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you. I just wanted to echo what Ms. Boggs just
5 said. I appreciate the motion, Andy, and the flexibility and
6 consideration to the differences between the eastern and the
7 western Gulf, and so thank you.

8
9 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Diaz.

10
11 **MR. DIAZ:** I speak in favor of the motion that Mr. Strelcheck has
12 put forward. I believe Mr. Strelcheck's intention is for all of
13 this to be in one document, and that would be my only concern. If
14 it slows down enough where we can't help the charter fishermen for
15 the next year, it might be better to do two documents, but I will
16 the council staff and everybody figure that stuff out, but, as far
17 as the private recreational red snapper accountability measures,
18 I think we need to realize the world has changed.

19
20 We implemented Amendment 50, and the snapper stock was in a
21 different condition than it is today, based on the last assessment,
22 and there is not paybacks for other sectors at this point, and so
23 I think it's a good thing for us to have that discussion, and I
24 look forward to discussing that, whenever we bring this document
25 forward, if it passes. Thank you.

26
27 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Frazer.

28
29 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I'm not sure -- If
30 the intention is to put these actions in the same document, I think
31 it might in fact slow it down, but, like Dale, I will just leave
32 it to staff to kind of figure that out.

33
34 I do think that Andy's motion is well intended, but I think there's
35 a lot of complexity in there, as Susan pointed out, with regard to
36 the for-hire season, and I'm happy to look at a document that, you
37 know, contemplates the accountability measures, but I'm pretty
38 principled, you know, in my approach here, and there's a reason
39 that we did Amendment 50 the way that we did, and delegated that
40 authority to the states, with those payback provisions, to make
41 sure, right, that they are encouraged with compliance, and, to me,
42 that's super important, given some of the issues that we have in
43 the rec fishery right now, and so I'll -- You know, I would like
44 to see what comes out of there, but I will be pretty skeptical if
45 I would support that in the long run.

46
47 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Rindone.

1
2 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I have a comment and
3 then a question. The comment would be that, given the desire for
4 the previous motion, for that to move along as quickly as is
5 reasonably possible, and the seeming less-contentious nature of
6 trying to address the for-hire season, would it be something you
7 guys would want to consider to like perhaps do those two things as
8 a framework and then separately address the accountability
9 measures?

10
11 Would that be something that you would want to consider, because,
12 from a timing standpoint, it seems like -- Just from the
13 discussions, it seems like there's some disagreement about what to
14 do with the accountability measures, but, for the other two things,
15 it seems like you guys are all pretty well aligned on, you know,
16 what you ultimately would like to do, and so I'm confident that
17 the first two things could move along quickly. Then I have a
18 question about the seasons, once you guys have some discussion.
19

20 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck, to that point?
21

22 **MR. STRELCHECK:** To that point, I agree with you, Ryan, and I think
23 this is where we would need some staff input. My concern, right,
24 is, if we're going to reduce the buffer, and we've gotten to the
25 point where we're estimating the season really well, we're just
26 continuing to push from June 1 deeper into the fall, right, and so
27 that will even be further extended if we adjust the buffer, and so
28 it would ideally be good if we could make some changes, at the
29 same time, to the season structure, so that both of those get
30 implemented at once.
31

32 **MR. RINDONE:** So, Mr. Chair, my question, to that, would be like
33 what kinds of options would you be wanting us to look at? Like is
34 there -- For instance, is there like a certain point in the year
35 where you really don't need the for-hire season to go beyond that
36 point, and so, when we're looking at season projections, we could
37 basically do it in reverse.
38

39 Like we don't want to go beyond this point, and so how much further
40 towards the start of the year can things go, and so, you know,
41 maybe that pushes until like May 15, May 1, you know, whatever it
42 might be, but we could use some sort of fixed end date, like,
43 arbitrarily, like August 1, and I don't know if that's what you
44 guys would want or not, but let's say that it was August 1, and
45 then we -- You know, the season starts forward from that. Is there
46 like a start date more than you want an end date? Like these are
47 the kinds of the things that we would really need to be able to

1 move this along quickly.

2

3 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I have a list. Mr. Bannon.

4

5 **MR. BANNON:** I just wanted to address Tom's comment, and I agree
6 with be very, very careful about how the states manage their
7 current amount that they're allotted, and that we -- I'm speaking
8 as Alabama's state regulator, that we're still going to push to
9 that target. We're going to try and be very accurate, and that's
10 very important, because, again, we have to show people that we're
11 being accountable, and everyone wants that, and so I want to give
12 you the assurance, from Alabama, that that's going to be our goal.

13

14 When you look at overages, they're usually single-digit, you know,
15 like 1 percent, or half-a-percent, over, and so that's the
16 consideration. I'm going to pick on my friends here in Louisiana,
17 and, you know, they've had a really long season, and they ended up
18 closing, and they had some residual left over, and so, when you
19 look at across the Gulf, you're not going into -- You're not
20 exceeding the ACL for that recreational sector, and so should
21 another state be penalized, and, again, it's a few thousand pounds,
22 but, for Mississippi, a few thousand pounds is a lot for them, and
23 it's a lot for us, and so I think -- I just wanted to give you the
24 assurance, from Alabama, that we are going to always push that
25 target, and our goal will not be to exceed that, but it just gives
26 us a little bit of comfort, and the same thing with the concern
27 that someone mentioned for the charter fleet of overfishing, but,
28 if you've already said that you can fish this much, and the stock
29 is fine, then they should get the opportunity to fish that.

30

31 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Bannon. Next, I have
32 Mr. Walker.

33

34 **MR. WALKER:** I agree exactly with those statements, and those are
35 in line with what I said, or had planned to say, and I don't
36 usually try and speak for those charter guys in my region entirely,
37 but I think I could say that, in our part of our Florida anyway,
38 our charter guys would like as many days as NMFS says they can
39 fish without overfishing.

40

41 I have heard some folks from other regions say they're concerned
42 their season is getting too long, but I think I could comfortably
43 say that the guys in west Florida would like to be able to catch
44 as many fish as NMFS says they can without overfishing.

45

46 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Walker. Mr. Diaz and
47 then Ms. Boggs.

1
2 **MR. DIAZ:** This kind of speaks to what Ryan was asking about, and
3 what doesn't work well is, by the time we get the wave information
4 off of the charter boat season, we're usually into late August,
5 during that roundabout time, and, if we try to set an -- If we've
6 got some leftover fish, and we try to set a season later in the
7 year, with all the time constraints of getting that done, that is
8 something that I think has not worked really well.

9
10 I'm not going to give input on the date, but, to me, the further
11 we could get up into Wave 3, I think the better off we are to not
12 have that problem of getting the information late in August, but
13 anything you all can do to try alleviate that situation is where
14 I think we should be trying to go, and I'm not going to speculate
15 on what date that should start. Other folks can do that. Thank
16 you.

17
18 **MR. RINDONE:** Okay, and we'll just -- When we're doing it, we'll
19 come up with some start date ideas, and we'll see how deep they
20 run into August, and, if something is pushing into September, then
21 we'll use that as -- You know, we don't want to go with September
22 as our absolute, and so we'll look at start dates for like, you
23 know, May 15, May 1, April 15, and see how those -- We'll use those
24 as starting points for the analysis, as to how that forecasts.

25
26 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Moving on, Ms. Boggs, or Andy next.

27
28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, for the sake of complicating things, because
29 we're good at that, and I think part of my frustration is we need
30 to more thoughtful, and innovative, in terms of flexibility, right,
31 and so just moving the start date up was not my intent, right, and
32 I agree that there is certainly reasons why we don't want it to go
33 too far in the fall, because of weather and things like that, but
34 what about spring break, and what about the, you know, Thanksgiving
35 and Christmas holidays, and should we thinking about that for the
36 for-hire sector? Are those times of year that they want to
37 potentially be fishing? I just encourage us not to limit our
38 thinking, and the easiest is to start the season at a date certain,
39 and run it until it closes, but it doesn't have to be that way.

40
41 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Ms. Boggs.

42
43 **MS. BOGGS:** There's this thing out there called Amendment 42, and
44 did I say that already? Okay, and so remember, back in the day,
45 anybody here at the table, when it opened on April 21 and went to
46 October 31? You know, you could explore that. I would certainly
47 consider looking maybe into the April dates, April 21, like we

1 used to do, and I don't know that if helps Texas or not, because
2 you all need it more in the fall, and so, you know -- I'm not
3 trying to exclude Texas, and this is just kind of what came off
4 the top of my head, was like April 21, like we used to do, and we
5 could look at May 15, the Friday before Memorial Day, and then
6 close it by August 15, because that's typically when the schools
7 go back, and no one is there fishing, but I do agree with what
8 Andy just said, and I am sensitive to other parts of the Gulf, and
9 not necessarily just Texas, but, you know, south Florida and
10 different areas.

11
12 As Andy says, we've got to get creative, and I don't know how we
13 do that. You know, I just -- I just wanted to throw some ideas
14 out there, because you all asked, but we do need to be cognizant,
15 and, it sounds like, really, Texas would be the most affected by
16 something, if you constrain it to the May, June, July timeframe,
17 and maybe they need August, September, October.

18
19 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, Ms. Boggs. Thank you for those
20 comments. I have General Spraggins next. Then Dr. Banks.

21
22 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** You know, God forbid that we open our eyes and
23 look outside the box, but, you know, is there some law that I just
24 don't understand that we couldn't set more than -- You know, that,
25 if Texas wanted to open theirs later, and then close later, just
26 like we do with our states, and, you know, each one of states does
27 that, and is there any reason why we cannot do that for the federal
28 too, and then that would work better for every state, to be able
29 to figure out when it's working, and, Andy, is that possible?

30
31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Right now, we have a federal for-hire ACL that is
32 specified Gulf-wide, right, and so, if you set up different season
33 structures, you have the potential to hit that ACL before maybe a
34 fishery gets a chance to fish, or maybe it's in-season, and so you
35 could affect one relative to the other, and so what, conceptually,
36 I think you're discussing would have to require separation of the
37 for-hire catch limit, by state or by region, in order to allow
38 them to fish on portions of the quota.

39
40 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Dr. Banks.

41
42 **DR. BANKS:** You can take my name off the list. That was going to
43 be my question, General Spraggins.

44
45 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Any other conversation? Mr. Rindone.

46
47 **MR. RINDONE:** Just a note that, you know, the additional layers of

1 complexity that you guys add to how to address the season may also
2 increase the amount of time it takes to develop the document, just
3 by a function of you guys having to debate ultimately what it is
4 that you want to prefer, and so if we're combining the changing
5 the buffer and the season, ultimately.

6

7 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Ms. Boggs.

8

9 **MS. BOGGS:** Sorry, J.D., and I realize that I already raised my
10 hand, but so -- I think we've talked about this before, or I've
11 mentioned it before, and this is just a scenario, and I don't know
12 what staff could do with it, or if the council would even entertain
13 it, but, like I said before, if you opened a week in January, a
14 week in February, and a week in March, we would get -- Then you
15 opened maybe June and July, and you closed it for August and
16 September, and then you reopened in October.

17

18 That way, each section that -- You're still fishing the ACL,
19 different areas of the Gulf, or you just pick June, July, and
20 October, and, I mean, I don't know, because I understand it's
21 complicated, Andy, and we can't -- I don't want to see us start
22 divvying up quotas, because that's where the states got kind of
23 tied up, is who gets what, and how much, and they ultimately got
24 to where everybody was somewhat happy, and so can we look at ideas
25 like that?

26

27 Like I said, maybe you look at a June and July opening, and then
28 I don't know what the answer is, but are those some of the kinds
29 of things that could be explored, in your mind, Andy, that would
30 be manageable?

31

32 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

33

34 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I'm just saying let's think outside the
35 box here, and not just have kind of a fixed season that runs from
36 a date certain to whenever we project it to be closed, and those
37 options might not float to the top of the list as preferred, but
38 we've at least explored them.

39

40 The hard part, obviously, is, when you start opening up times of
41 year when fishing hasn't been occurring for quite some time, it's
42 harder to project, and determine, what might be caught during those
43 times, but that shouldn't be a limitation for us.

44

45 The other thing that I will quickly mention, because, obviously,
46 the complexity of this action is growing as we speak, is, if we
47 want the ACT buffer, as Dale mentioned, to move quickly, we might

1 want to consider a shorter-term, more simple approach, in terms of
2 adjusting the season for 2025, you know, until we can come up with
3 a longer-term approach that might look at some more iterations,
4 and complexities, of the season structure, and so I just throw
5 that out there.

6
7 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Ms. Boggs,
8 to that?

9
10 **MS. BOGGS:** Right, and so one of the things that I would suggest
11 is, when you consider the opening dates, because we do it for other
12 species, is if you could just bring it back to a January 1 start
13 date, or a -- Well, I guess the fishing year, right now, Andy, is
14 January 1 through December 31, but we have a hard start date of
15 June 1, and so, if we could just eliminate that, and then that
16 would give some flexibility, because, if you go, in this document,
17 and you move it to May 15, as the seasons continue to get longer,
18 it just gives flexibility, and it doesn't mean that you open on
19 January 1, but it would give this council the flexibility, as these
20 seasons get longer, and as we have to adjust for different areas
21 of the Gulf, and you're not coming back to this process and having
22 to change that start date again, and that's just a suggestion.

23
24 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, and so I have Mr. Schieble and Mr.
25 Walker, and then we're going to wrap this up and vote this up or
26 down.

27
28 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wasn't really going to
29 make a comment on this, because I think talking about hashing out
30 details at this point -- This doesn't seem like a good discussion
31 until we have a document in front of us. I understand that we're
32 trying to line certain things up, to make sure they're in the
33 document, and my only suggestion is that we hear, from our federal
34 for-hire fleet, a lot of times, that the state charters are able
35 to get out there and access the fishery before them, and they don't
36 like that sometimes, because they get the first opportunity, I
37 guess, is the way they look at it, but, also, I would like to say
38 that we consider access concurrently with other fisheries that are
39 open.

40
41 If amberjack season, for example, is open in September and October,
42 we don't want to preclude the ability for the federal for-hire
43 fleet to be able to catch snapper and amberjack on the same trips
44 for their customers, right, and so just things like that need to
45 be put in consideration. Finally, for the second part of this, I
46 will say that I'm having déjà vu of the state management
47 discussions we had back in 2018, with incorporating the federal

1 for-hire fleet within state management or not.

2
3 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you for those comments. Mr. Walker.

4
5 **MR. WALKER:** So there's -- We could go round-and-round on all of
6 these things that might be in this document, and I could talk to
7 half-a-dozen right now, but the motion that's on the board I
8 support, and I think we would talk about that after we approve the
9 motion to talk about these things, and what they might be, and so
10 I speak in favor of the motion and nothing else at this time.

11
12 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Walker, and it reminds me of
13 some of the things that Chris touched on too, is, in my mind, my
14 opinion is some of these charter boats would probably prefer to be
15 under some sort of state management. That way, the state can
16 regulate their seasons, as the weather changes across the Gulf,
17 but, anyway, moving on, we're going to vote this up or down. We're
18 going to use our clickers for this one.

19
20 Before we vote, we will read the motion into the record. **The**
21 **motion is request staff develop a document to adjust the for-hire**
22 **red snapper season and private recreational red snapper**
23 **accountability measures.**

24

B4. To request staff develop a document to adjust the for-hire red snapper season and private red snapper AMs.				
First Name	Last Name			
Scott	Bannon	Yes		
Susan	Boggs		No	
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas			Abstain
Anthony	Overton	Yes		
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker	Yes		
Results - Passed	Subtotals	Yes (15)	No (1)	Abs (1)

25
26

1 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. It looks like we have fifteen yea,
2 one no, and one abstention. The motion carries. Dr. Frazer, I
3 think we're moving on.
4

5 **DR. FRAZER:** Okay, and so we're going to get into projections a
6 little bit later, but I'm just noting that we're about one-third
7 of the way through page 1, and I project that, if we continue at
8 this pace, we'll finish at 6:00 tomorrow morning. Anyway, with
9 that said, I will start.

10
11 Representatives of the five Gulf states briefed the committee on
12 their respective 2023 fishing seasons for the private recreational
13 component of the red snapper fishery. A committee member from
14 Alabama replied that the combination of reef deployments within
15 state waters, and fishing practices by state for-hire guides, may
16 explain the disparity between the length compositions from the
17 state for-hire landings from Florida and Alabama.

18
19 Committee members discussed the patterning of Mississippi's
20 fishing season and the implementation of calibrations and revised
21 catch limits. In discussing the payback provisions under Reef
22 Fish Amendment 50, a committee member commented that a payback
23 provision should not apply to a state if the stock as a whole did
24 not experience overfishing in a fishing year.

25
26 NOAA General Counsel clarified that the state-specific payback
27 provisions were developed to encourage each state to constrain its
28 landings to its respective ACL.

29
30 Another committee member asked how long the Louisiana fishing
31 season could be sustained at seven days per week. A committee
32 member from Louisiana noted that effort in that state drops off
33 following Labor Day weekend in September, and the state can pause
34 fishing mid-season depending on the pace of landings observed.
35 Like Florida, Louisiana measures effort at the angler level.

36
37 The committee member from Louisiana added that the transitions for
38 Mississippi and Alabama to a LA-Creel-style survey are going well,
39 to which committee members from Mississippi and Alabama concurred.
40 A committee member from Texas said the models and supporting data
41 used for projecting Texas' fishing seasons could be provided to
42 interested parties. Presentation: 2024 Gag and Red Grouper
43 Recreational Season Projections, Tab B, Number 5, SERO staff
44 reviewed --

45
46 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Hold on, Dr. Frazer. General, you had a
47 question?

1
2 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** If we could, before we get into gag grouper,
3 I would like to bring up something about the states, if that's a
4 possibility. Could I do that?

5
6 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, sir.

7
8 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Okay. All right. You know, first off, I
9 understand what happened last year, and, looking at what we had,
10 and, you know, if you look at like Texas had like 18,642 pounds
11 below what they had as an ACL, and Louisiana was 56,123 pounds
12 below, and Mississippi was 17,813 above, and Alabama was 4,898
13 above, and Florida was 16,548 below, the total being 68,602 pounds
14 under the ACL, is where we were at.

15
16 The Gulf quota was 4,062,804 pounds, and the landings were
17 3,994,202. I would like to ask, first, if it's possible, before
18 I make a motion, Andy, and would it be possible for NMFS to give
19 a state that went over last year, in 2023 -- Would it be possible
20 for a one-time forgiveness of Alabama and Mississippi, because we
21 did not, as a Gulf-wide, reach the ACL, and is that something that
22 is possible to even entertain?

23
24 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

25
26 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I am not familiar with the forgiveness provision
27 in our accountability measures, but I am not prepared to really
28 respond to that at this point, General Spraggins. You and I have
29 talked, and certainly we will review the landings data, and the
30 information, but we do have to look back at our regulations and
31 accountability measures that are in place at this point.

32
33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** General Spraggins.

34
35 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I guess what -- You know, I think Scott had
36 his hand up, and I will hold until after him.

37
38 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Bannon.

39
40 **MR. BANNON:** Also, I just want to remind everybody that this
41 season's numbers were in the calibrated number, and so the number
42 is -- So we're all using the same currency across the Gulf, or
43 whatever, and so it's not like the Alabama overage would be -- Or
44 the Mississippi overage would be increased by some factor, and the
45 4,000 is the 4,000, because it's been calibrated.

46
47 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you for that. General.

1
2 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I guess the question is, is it appropriate to
3 make a motion to have NMFS to look at it, to be able to see if we
4 can basically -- You know, my motion, that I was looking at, was
5 to request NMFS to not impose paybacks for Alabama and Mississippi
6 for overages in 2023, and that would be due to the fact that the
7 Gulf quota was not met.

8
9 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

10
11 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So the problem with that -- I mean, it's a request,
12 but the regulations state otherwise, right, and so there's nothing
13 in the regulations that tell me that I can do that, and just simply
14 asking me to do that is outside the scope of the regulations, and
15 so that's why I floated, in the motion passed previously, that we
16 would then go and look at the accountability measures, going
17 forward, and see if we can come up with a mechanism that
18 potentially accomplishes that in the future.

19
20 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Well, once again, you know, we don't have to
21 stay in the sandbox, and, you know, we can always look outside of
22 it, and I don't know, and I guess is it -- I guess I'm putting the
23 situation -- You know, Mississippi, we know we went over, all
24 right, and we took a gamble last year.

25
26 We gambled that they would pass the new best available science,
27 and which we thought would happen, and it did not happen, and we
28 understand that, and we're not trying to bow out of anything, and
29 that's not what we're after, and I don't think that Alabama is
30 either. I don't want to speak for Scott and them, but I don't
31 think they're doing it either way, but the fact is that I don't
32 see why there should be a payback if the ACL is not met.

33
34 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I have Mr. Diaz and then Dr. Frazer.

35
36 **MR. DIAZ:** Anyway, I understand why the General is making the
37 request, and, you know, last year, I did have hopes that that
38 regulation would go into effect before December 31, and it does
39 take a long time for things to work their way through the NMFS
40 process, and I understand that, until they're approved, they're
41 not approved, and I'm glad we passed the motion that we passed
42 earlier today, because I made the comment earlier that the world
43 has changed.

44
45 This is -- You know, Amendment 50 went into place, I think in 2018,
46 and the situation with the stock, that we know it today, is
47 different than it was in 2018, and so, anyway, I appreciate you

1 making the request, General, and we'll just see where it goes.
2 Thank you.

3
4 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Frazer.

5
6 **DR. FRAZER:** So I guess the analogy I would use is this, in my
7 opinion, right, and so we have rules and regulations for a purpose,
8 and we have stop signs, you know, and, when there's a red light,
9 you stop, and it's not just a suggestion, right, but, if you
10 gambled, and you thought you could speed through the red light,
11 and you didn't hit anybody, we're all good, but, if you hit
12 somebody, we're not all good, right, and so what you didn't know,
13 when you make that gamble, is where the other states were going to
14 be, and, as a consequence, you jeopardized everybody's ability to
15 fish, moving forward, and I don't think that's a responsible way
16 to act.

17
18 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Bannon, or, General, to his point?
19

20 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** You know, I understand that, and, you know,
21 your thoughts, and I appreciate your thoughts, but I can also tell
22 you that there's a lot of times, when you go under that red light,
23 that you don't get charged for it, and so, you know, if you want
24 to say that's responsible or not, but, when you take the hit that
25 Mississippi took last year, in trying to be able to do it, and
26 when you're sitting here, and you're a state, and you're the
27 smallest one, and it's kind of like being one of the smallest
28 schools in the basketball tournament, and you're a number-sixteen
29 seed trying to figure out if you can get up anywhere in the world.

30
31 Well, we'll sitting here with the smallest amount, yet we take the
32 biggest hit in the world, and we take a double-hit compared to
33 anybody else, and then we're sitting here looking at it, and our
34 anglers are saying why, because we know that it's not right, and
35 we know that it's not correct, and so the point I'm getting at is
36 I'm not saying that what we did was right.

37
38 I'm saying that we took a gamble, and we said that, and we're not
39 denying that one bit, but, if Florida, or Texas, or Louisiana, or
40 Alabama, or anybody else, had been put in the situation that
41 Mississippi was, I would love to have seen what their state would
42 have allowed them to have done, because, if I had taken Florida
43 down to half of what they had last year, what would have happened
44 to them?

45
46 The point I'm getting at is I realize that -- I worked, a long
47 time, as a general in the Air Force, and I built myself up, and I

1 learned that there's times that you take a gamble. There are times
2 that you gamble and decide whether or not this is the best thing
3 to do. If we ever went to war, and didn't take a gamble, we would
4 never win. You have to take a gamble every now and then. You
5 have to be able to step up, and you have to be able to say, hey,
6 this is what I think is going to have to work, and this is the
7 only way that I can see it.

8
9 Now, it may come out that we have to pay the 17,000 back, right,
10 and, if that's the case, then what will happen is it will come out
11 of the 2024 season, right, and we'll look at that, but we
12 understand that, but, with LA Creel happening also, and we've got
13 MS Creel to go with it, and there's a lot of things that's going
14 to prove this thing, that Mississippi should have never taken the
15 cut to start with.

16
17 You know, in a court of law, we might not win, but I guarantee you
18 that we would get a lot of people's attention, and we could take
19 it up to a higher court, and the point I'm getting at is if we --
20 We're not sitting here saying that we want to do this forever, and
21 we're not sitting here saying that -- If we had never seen a best
22 available science voted on this by committee as the best available
23 science, and brought to us, then we would have never taken that
24 gamble, but that gamble was there, and so I appreciate your
25 opinion, but I don't agree with it.

26
27 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I have a list. Mr. Bannon.

28
29 **MR. BANNON:** I think everybody knows that I'm super supportive of
30 Mississippi and the situation that they're in. We are not excited
31 about it, and Alabama wasn't excited about where we ended up, and
32 I'm maybe going to reach out to the General and ask him maybe not
33 to consider a motion, but to consider a conversation with Andy and
34 Mara, and, you know, Andy said he would look into it, and he's
35 been a good friend to us here lately, and I trust his word on that,
36 that, if the legal folks in the office were able to find a way to
37 allow some forgiveness, then we would be excited about it, and
38 there is nobody that would cheer more for Mississippi than me, I
39 promise, and we're working on trying to make those adjustments for
40 Mississippi, but the -- I would have to say that I would struggle,
41 unfortunately, General, to support a motion, based on the
42 legalities of it, without further comment from the legal section
43 there.

44
45 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. General, to that point, and then
46 Andy to that point.

47

1 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I am fine with that, and, I mean, I think that,
2 if I had wanted to make a motion, that would have been the first
3 thing out of my mouth, and so I think the idea was to ask, and
4 that's the reason that I asked the question the way I did, and is
5 it something that we should even entertain making the motion to,
6 and that's why I asked Andy that, and I think I got that answer.

7
8 You know, the question is I would, and I would love to, and I think
9 I agree with what Scott said, that we have had some real good
10 conversations with Andy and NMFS, and I don't have a problem with
11 that. I don't have a problem with that, but I just wanted, I
12 guess, more to get it on the record than anything, if that's the
13 way it would be put. Okay.

14
15 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

16
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I appreciate the conversation, and I'm certainly
18 happy to talk to you further, General, about this. I guess a
19 couple of things. You know, one is my disappointment here is I
20 feel like now NMFS is on the hotseat, and we're in a lose-lose
21 situation, right, whether we resolve this in your favor or we have
22 to pay it back, based on the regulatory requirements.

23
24 You mentioned you took a gamble, right, and that's all fair, and
25 I was calling you out on that when you were giving your
26 presentation earlier this week, but you mentioned that, like, well,
27 we thought that NMFS might implement by the end of the year, and
28 I never received a phone call from you, or any of your staff,
29 asking us where we were at with that amendment, or action, and so
30 that's the trust, and I think conversations, we need to have when
31 things like this arise, right, because I could have quickly given
32 you an update of we didn't get the amendment until August 8th, or
33 10th, from the council, and we had to redo some of the economic
34 analysis, and it got resubmitted to us in December, and so I could
35 have told you, at some point in the fall, that this was not going
36 to be implemented. I know you're making decisions about your
37 season at that time, but having those conversations upfront I think
38 would have avoided circumstances like this in the first place.

39
40 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Geeslin and then Ms. Boggs.

41
42 **MR. GEESLIN:** I will go quick, and Dr. Frazer made an analogy for
43 a traffic law, and I will make one for school lunches. You know,
44 back home, when our school lunch kids go through the school line,
45 some aren't able to pay, to pay for their school lunch, and they
46 run up a debt. They run up a tab at the school. At the end of
47 the school year, several businesses, and other folks, pool in, and

1 they pay off that tab.

2
3 If this was authorized, Texas -- Texas was under by 18,642 pounds,
4 and I would gladly pay off your tab and give that to you, General,
5 to get us square, and I don't know if that's authorized, but I
6 certainly am sympathetic to the position, the tough position, that
7 NMFS is in here, but we manage this all together, and the fish
8 don't know the difference, and I think other states would pay your
9 tab too, General.

10
11 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Geeslin, thank you for those
12 comments. General, to that point, and then Ms. Boggs.

13
14 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Thank you very much, and, Andy, we were trying
15 to keep up with what was going on with it, and I guess the question
16 was -- You know that we didn't make a call and try to put you on
17 the spot and say, hey, what is your answer to this, as to whether
18 or not it was going to get passed, but we did keep up with it, and
19 we had staff looking into it, and they were looking into where it
20 was sitting, and where it was going, and, once again, we knew that
21 when we opened back up in September.

22
23 We knew that it was a shot, but we were taking a gamble, and, once
24 again, we understand that, and we took the gamble, because we
25 didn't have a chance to wait until November to decide whether or
26 not we could do this, but I do appreciate your point, and were
27 just looking at the situation, and I think more in hope than
28 anything in the world. Thank you.

29
30 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Ms. Boggs.

31
32 **MS. BOGGS:** Dakus, I really appreciate your analogy, because
33 pooling together everybody's resources, and paying off that tab,
34 and part of that tab could have been the charter-for-hire fleet,
35 because remember, if the five states go over, then it comes off
36 that side of the fishery, and so I hope the states will be
37 considerate, in the future, not to have to have us pay your tab.
38 Thank you.

39
40 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Banks.

41
42 **DR. BANKS:** So, if I remember right, the Atlantic States have some
43 kind of provision where you can do the payback, like Dakus just
44 mentioned, and so maybe -- I don't know about this situation, at
45 the moment, and I'm going to leave that to the legal, to NMFS,
46 but, in the document that Andy has now proposed, maybe that's an
47 action, or an alternative, that we should explore in the future,

1 and I won't speak to this situation, because I am not a lawyer,
2 but I think we should explore that in the document.

3
4 I will rephrase, and so the Atlantic States have a provision that,
5 if one state goes over, you can accept quota, to have someone else
6 pay your tab, and so that might be something that we could put in
7 the private rec document that Andy had suggested.

8
9 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.

10
11 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so that was
12 my understanding of the motion that was just previously passed,
13 that we were going to work on that, because, right now, it's state-
14 specific paybacks. Thanks.

15
16 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Schieble, and then we're moving
17 on.

18
19 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** All right. This is quick, and so maybe it will
20 make Andy feel better, but, back in 2021, we had a similar
21 situation to this in Louisiana, where we were fishing to what we
22 thought was the new allocation, because there was an ACL that was
23 run through, and coming, but it did not process until the next
24 year, and so we got notified that, in our legal updates, in the
25 table, that we had the new ACL as our model that we were fishing
26 to for the entire year. Going through, towards the end of the
27 year, we had to adjust that back to the prior allocation that we
28 had the year before, because it did not pass through, and so we
29 ended up with a 6,918-pound overage from 2021 that carried into
30 the 2022 season that we had to deduct off the top, for a similar
31 situation, and so I'm just pointing out that this has happened
32 before.

33
34 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Schieble, for those
35 comments, and we'll go to Dr. Frazer.

36
37 **DR. FRAZER:** All right, and so, again, I actually enjoyed this
38 conversation, and I appreciate everybody trying to find a path
39 forward, right, and I don't want to penalize anybody unnecessarily,
40 right, and I just understand that, you know, we have to live within
41 the structure that we have currently, and that's all I'm saying,
42 and I think you have to adhere to the rules that are on the books.
43 If you want to change the rules, that's okay, right, and so that's
44 it.

45
46 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Dr. Frazer, we want to proceed.
47

1 **DR. FRAZER:** All right, and so I will start again at Presentation:
2 2024 Gag and Red Grouper Recreational Season Projections, Tab B,
3 Number 5, SERO staff reviewed updated red grouper and gag
4 recreational fishing season projections for 2024. The 2023 fishing
5 year landings for both species were estimated using the federal
6 Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey
7 (MRIP-FES) for private recreational vessels and resulted in
8 significantly higher landings estimates compared to previous
9 fishing years.

10
11 SERO collaborated with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation
12 Commission and NOAA's Office of Science and Technology to review
13 these landings and determine whether any intercepts or other data
14 required further analysis.

15
16 For red grouper, SERO used recent landings from 2020 to 2023,
17 including only MRIP Waves 1 through 4 (January 1 to August 31),
18 because the ACT is projected to be met during this time. Given
19 the high Wave 4 (July and August) landing estimate in 2023 during
20 the twenty-day open period (July 1-20), SERO conducted sensitivity
21 runs with and without 2023 Wave 4 data.

22
23 Using a three-year average, which includes Wave 4 from 2023 results
24 in a fishing season of January 1 to July 14, and then using a
25 three-year average, which uses the 2020 to 2022 average for Wave
26 4 in place of the same for the 2023, it would result in a fishing
27 season of January 1 through August 2.

28
29 Given that the red grouper recreational ACL and ACT have been
30 exceeded in each of the last three years, NMFS plans to set the
31 recreational season from January 1 to June 30, 2024. If the ACT
32 is not met, NMFS may reopen the fishing season later in the year.

33
34 Allowing the fishing season to continue beyond June 30 requires
35 additional analysis of Wave 4 landings, which are not available
36 until at least October 15. Thus, by constraining the initial
37 fishing season to Waves 1 through 3 for 2024, NMFS can more
38 confidently constrain harvest to the ACL and will have the time
39 needed to reopen the fishery later in the year, if possible.

40
41 A committee member asked about the data units used for red grouper
42 at present. SERO replied that MRIP-FES is still in use, consistent
43 with the last stock assessment and subsequent catch limit
44 modification. The next red grouper stock assessment (SEDAR 88) is
45 exploring the use of FWC's State Reef Fish Survey, or SRFS, and
46 will be reviewed by the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC)
47 this fall.

1
2 For gag, the 2023 season ran from September 1 through October 18,
3 and accountability measures require a payback of the amount of any
4 ACL overage, unless the best scientific information available
5 determines lesser, greater, or no overage adjustment is necessary.
6

7 Shore landings were not used to calculate the 2023 ACL overage,
8 given the highly uncertain shore mode catch estimates and few
9 intercepts for gag caught from shore. To transition from MRIP-
10 FES in 2023 to SRFS in 2024, a way to account for the 2023 overage
11 in SRFS units is needed. A multistep conversion was discussed,
12 which results in an estimated overage of 124,624 pounds gutted
13 weight, in SRFS units. The 2024 unadjusted ACL, in SRFS units, is
14 288,000 pounds gutted weight, which is then adjusted down to
15 163,376 pounds gutted weight to account for the payback. SERO
16 will work with FWC to project the fall 2024 recreational fishing
17 season, based on this information.
18

19 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We have a few questions, Dr. Frazer. Mr.
20 Walker.
21

22 **MR. WALKER:** I have a couple of comments, and then I have a motion
23 on red grouper, but I would like to just point out that, to me,
24 and we took the MRIP numbers out of the gag, which I'm very thankful
25 for, and I appreciate Andy, and NMFS, you know, recognizing that
26 something wasn't right in the data, and really putting a lot of
27 effort into trying to do the right thing, and doing the right
28 thing, and, when it comes to gag, I still -- To me, averaging three
29 years of MRIP estimates on red grouper still gives you an MRIP
30 estimate.
31

32 To the extent possible, I certainly would have preferred more SRFS
33 in there, and, you know, maybe I don't know all the moving parts
34 there, but, like I said, I think three MRIP numbers averaged
35 together is still an MRIP number, which I don't love, but the
36 motion I would like to make, and I apologize if this is a curveball
37 out of the blue, but a lot of our fishermen, where we live, that
38 fish for red grouper, and you can go ahead and put that motion on
39 the board, if you have it.
40

41 **It would be to direct staff to start a document exploring the**
42 **removal of the twenty-fathom closure for shallow-water grouper for**
43 **the recreational fishery in the months of February and March in**
44 **the Gulf.** If I get a second, I will give you, my rationale.
45

46 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a motion on the board. Do we
47 have a second?

1
2 **MR. WALKER:** Do you need me to repeat it? She's got it.
3

4 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** There's a lot of things about this that
5 people currently have questions about, at least, and it's a pretty
6 old rule. Looking back on it, it seems to be uncertain whether it
7 was actually started to protect spawning gags, which are now closed
8 anyway at that time, and this rule was eliminated in 2013, but
9 then it was reinstated again in 2015, and now the red grouper --
10 At the time, red grouper was open all year, and red grouper is
11 only open for six months now, and, out of those six months, the
12 red grouper fishermen are now constrained inside 120 feet, for two
13 of those six months.
14

15 What's going on here is a lot of guys are -- Probably more than
16 half the guys, and I can't really put a number on it, but a lot of
17 people are cheating this, and there's no enforcement on it. You
18 can still go out there and fish for other things that are open,
19 and so I don't know that it's serving any great purpose.
20 Commercial fishing is still open, and red grouper longlining is
21 still open on the other side of this 120-foot line, and so I would
22 just like to see maybe if we explore whether this rule is still
23 needed, based on the changes that have happened in the limits on
24 these other species.
25

26 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, Mr. Walker, and so Ms. Boggs.
27

28 **MS. BOGGS:** I was going to ask the question if staff or someone,
29 the Science Center, can give us a reason for this twenty-fathom
30 closure, before making a motion, but I will just now ask for
31 discussion, and can -- Is there a history behind this?
32

33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Rindone.
34

35 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There have been a lot of
36 oscillating closures, for the last twenty years or so, for the
37 original shallow-water grouper species, which included, you know,
38 gag, red grouper, black grouper, scamp, yellowmouth, and yellowfin
39 groupers.
40

41 Gag closures have been a little bit different, for the most part,
42 from that directly tied to this twenty-fathom closure, per the gag
43 management history, and this particular one was left in place in
44 a framework action that looked at other red grouper management
45 measures, because the combination of having red grouper closed in
46 February and March beyond twenty fathoms, along with the other
47 measures, allowed for the preservation of the two-fish red grouper

1 bag limit, and it would -- At the time, based on the ACLs at the
2 time, it wasn't going to result in a fishery closure, as a result
3 of that combination of management alternatives that were in the
4 framework action. This primarily has to do with red grouper, and
5 not so much gag, and so gag's closures are different.

6
7 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

8
9 **MR. WALKER:** My purpose here is just to explore if this rule is
10 still necessarily needed, and it's not a motion to remove it, and
11 it's just to see if it's still valid and serving the purpose that
12 it was originally set up for, which I haven't totally identified,
13 and it seems to kind of flip-flop back and forth, or I'm not that
14 well aware of it, but I'm just asking to look into it and see if
15 we still need this or not.

16
17 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

18
19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, based on what you're saying, Captain Walker,
20 would you be amenable then to requesting staff to explore, rather
21 than starting a document at this point, and bringing back the
22 results of that exploration for discussion at a future council
23 meeting?

24
25 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, that's a good point, and I think that would be
26 easier than -- One step at a time, but, yes, I would be amenable
27 to that, if you wanted to repeat that, and we could adjust the
28 motion.

29
30 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I think just take out "start a document", and so
31 to direct staff to explore.

32
33 **MR. WALKER:** To direct staff to remove "start a document" --

34
35 **MR. GILL:** No, to explore the removal.

36
37 **MR. WALKER:** Right. **Explore the removal.** Yes. Very good.

38
39 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. McDermott. Good? Any more discussion
40 on the motion? No? Okay. I will read the motion. **The motion is**
41 **to direct staff to explore the removal of the twenty-fathom closure**
42 **for shallow-water grouper for the recreational fishery in the**
43 **months of February and March in the Gulf of Mexico.** I'm not seeing
44 any opposition. I am going to ask. **Is there any opposition to**
45 **this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Dr. Simmons.

46
47 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I had two kinds

1 of things to go back to regarding gag. The first question, I
2 guess, is my understanding is the Secretary has approved the
3 rebuilding plan, but it has not become effective yet, and is there
4 any updates on that?
5

6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and we're working on the final rule to
7 implement it, and so we're getting close, and it's going through
8 final review and clearance for publication.
9

10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Thank you, and so then my
11 second question would be -- We've heard a lot of public feedback,
12 and definitely from our Facebook page, about the greater amberjack
13 season opening in May, and not having a lot of notice, and so I
14 guess I would just volunteer that, as the Regional Office works
15 with FWC staff on this gag recreational season, that, if we can
16 help in any way, regarding press releases or information -- You
17 know, the earlier we can get that, the better we can serve
18 stakeholders, and so I would just volunteer that effort at your
19 disposal.
20

21 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I appreciate that, Carrie, and certainly we know
22 how controversial gag is, and we want to announce something sooner
23 rather than later. Just to be clear, with amberjack, I realize
24 there was happiness, in terms of we're opening it, but frustration
25 in terms of the timing, right, and, yes, the season opened and
26 closed last August, but data, and landings, are preliminary, and
27 they continue to kind of be updated, and adjusted, and so we want
28 to have as kind of final landings estimates as we possibly can
29 before we make that decision to reopen. That's why that timing is
30 kind of when we made that decision, and certainly, in the future,
31 if there's ways to move that up, we certainly will consider that
32 for amberjack or other species.
33

34 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Dr. Frazer.
35

36 **DR. FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The committee
37 discussed the MRIP-FES landings estimates and the improvements
38 being conducted therein by NOAA Office of Science and Technology,
39 per Dr. Richard Cody. He clarified committee questions about data
40 estimation and management and when to make the revised estimation
41 methodologies publicly available, once they are finalized.
42

43 Dr. Cody reiterated that NOAA Office of Science and Technology
44 does not support the use of landings estimates with a proportional
45 standard error greater than 50 percent. A committee member asked
46 about the progress made so far on the council's January 2024
47 request for NOAA OST to escalate the review and evaluation of the

1 recreational effort extrapolation methodologies between MRIP-FES
2 and state effort programs, starting with comparisons between SRFS
3 and MRIP-FES for gag and red grouper. Dr. Cody replied that this
4 request was being explored by the MRIP Transition Team.

5
6 A committee member stated that a regional perspective was missing
7 from the quality control and quality assurance process. They
8 offered the example of catching 100,000 pounds of gag from shore
9 as being impossible, and that a Gulf fisherman would know that.
10 The committee member thought that additional regional experts
11 available for review would benefit the landings estimation
12 process.

13
14 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Sweetman.

15
16 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Mr. Chair, and so I would perhaps like --
17 In thinking about this, and kind of commenting to Dr. Cody's
18 response when I asked about where this process was, in terms of
19 looking at the effort extrapolation procedures, and I think he
20 highlighted that a letter was being worked on, and this highlights
21 that as being explored by the MRIP Transition Team, but I don't
22 think that was necessarily the intent of what we were looking for
23 in that motion that was unanimously passed by the council.

24
25 It was kind of at a more expedient timeline, and the MRIP
26 Transition Team is already occurring, obviously, and so I was
27 thinking of a little bit of a separate process to start looking
28 at, and we had highlighted red and gag grouper, because of the
29 ongoing issues that we have here, and so, if it's appropriate, I'm
30 wondering if maybe Dr. Cody could clarify some of those efforts
31 along those lines, outside of the MRIP Transition Team, Mr. Chair.

32
33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Sure thing. Dr. Cody.

34
35 **DR. RICHARD CODY:** Thanks, C.J. There is a planned workshop, as
36 I mentioned earlier, that's set up for May 14 through 16 in New
37 Orleans, and so we have sent out -- Gregg Bray has been working
38 with the states, and with the Office of Science and Technology, on
39 an invite list, and, you know, as I said, that review workshop
40 will look at -- It will mainly focus on the federal estimates, but
41 there will be some discussion of how to integrate better with SRFS,
42 since there is an integration component there that's important.

43
44 On the other side, I mentioned that we were developing a response
45 to the council request, or letter, and, in that response, we
46 basically are outlining what is already done, and possibly what
47 enhancements we'll be looking at for -- To address the issues that

1 were mentioned in the previous session, and so I think that's where
2 we are right now.

3
4 I think that there is -- There are some things that we can certainly
5 work on, in terms of articulating the way the review process is
6 supposed to work, relative to how weights, sample weights, can
7 change, and then to show that, you know, we have a routine process
8 that's in place that works on what I call mechanical flags versus,
9 you know, visual evaluation of the data as well, and so that's
10 where we are right now with that process, and I don't know if that
11 addresses what you're looking for, C.J.

12
13 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, to a certain extent, yes, and I think, if my
14 understanding -- Now that I've learned more information, it's that,
15 you know, you are going to be having some meetings with specific
16 individual staffers on the FWC side of things, you know, Bev Sauls
17 and some of her staff, to look at some of these things, and so
18 that was kind of the information that I was hoping for, when I put
19 forward that motion, and so I appreciate the clarification, Dr.
20 Cody.

21
22 **DR. CODY:** Just to follow-up on that, C.J., there are some
23 interactions that Bev Sauls, and others, have been having with
24 John Foster, in Science and Technology, related to potential pilot
25 studies, things like that, and so there may be some other work
26 that they are involved in that I'm not fully aware of at this
27 point, but I will get that information.

28
29 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Dr. Cody, I think Mr. Diaz has a
30 question.

31
32 **MR. DIAZ:** Dr. Cody, when you were speaking yesterday, I got
33 distracted, and I didn't hear everything that you said, and it
34 might have been the day before yesterday now, but is this
35 particular workshop going to work on outliers? You know, I've
36 been asking you, for years, about developing something to deal
37 with outliers, and this is the workshop that's doing that, or is
38 that a separate effort?

39
40 **DR. CODY:** That's a separate effort. Right now, we have a working
41 group with the Southeast Science Center that works on that element
42 of it, and that's not to say that that won't be one of the topics
43 that's considered in the workshop that we're having with the
44 states.

45
46 The state workshop is more focused on quality control methods, at
47 the field level as well as at the data review stages, and data

1 management level, and so there are some elements there that focus
2 on just quality steps for reviewing the data, and the work that
3 we're doing with the Science Center focuses on methods that we can
4 use to get more out of the data that we have already, and so it
5 would be beyond the estimation process that would be looked at in
6 the workshop, but that's not to say that there won't be some input
7 from participants.

8
9 **MR. DIAZ:** So thank you for that, Dr. Cody, and I don't know how
10 many times I've brought up these outliers at this meeting, and I
11 have great dissatisfaction that it's not a high priority, and I
12 don't blame you for that, or any one person, but, I mean, I've
13 mentioned it over and over again, that we have outliers, and I
14 don't know who it can't be a high priority.

15
16 In my mind, they're imaginary fish. You can't eat it, and you
17 can't sell it, and a charter boat can't sell a trip on it, and, if
18 the outliers get plugged into the system, it takes days away from
19 people. It takes fishing opportunities away from people, and it
20 penalizes states, and I don't know what else to do. I'm begging
21 you. I'm begging NOAA, and I'm begging S&T, to make this a high
22 priority, and why do we have to -- I've been on this council for
23 years, and I'm fixing to roll off, and almost nothing has been
24 done, and it's like I'm talking to deaf ears, and I know you're
25 going to respond, but I just can't tell you how frustrated I am
26 with this.

27
28 I'm begging you, and I'm begging somebody, to help us, and it has
29 crushed the State of Mississippi, and it's still crushing us, and
30 now people better listen, because it's hurting the whole Gulf.
31 Like I told you, if one amberjack hits the dock in the State of
32 Mississippi, it might go up to 300,000 pounds, and those are not
33 real fish.

34
35 We catch amberjack in Mississippi, and I don't know the number,
36 and I doubt it's a tenth of that, but, if they take 300,000 pounds
37 off of that amberjack quota, that's coming from everybody, and so
38 we've got to do something about this, and we've got to do it now,
39 and we can't keep pushing it. It's got to make a higher priority,
40 and I know workloads are tough, and I understand that, but I just
41 can't understand how I can't convince you all that it's a higher
42 priority.

43
44 **DR. CODY:** Let me respond to that, and there are two approaches
45 that we've used to address exactly what you're talking about. The
46 first is to provide some funding for an additional sample to be
47 collected, and that has been provided for the Gulf states.

1
2 I will have to say that the states -- Not all the states have been
3 able to take advantage of that funding, for logistics reasons, in
4 terms of their ability to conduct additional sampling, and so there
5 is a question there, related to sample size, that we can't address
6 at my level, other than to provide funds to get additional samples.

7
8 That said, we do -- We have gone to great lengths to come up with
9 standards for the presentation of our data online. We tell you
10 that we do not support estimates above a precision level of 50
11 percent, and that is telling you that, if there is an outlier,
12 with a precision level that doesn't meet that threshold, then it's
13 not supported.

14
15 Beyond that, I don't know what we can do, except to do what we're
16 doing with the Southeast Science Center, which is to evaluate
17 different methods that get us more from the data that we have, and
18 that includes multiyear averaging, which doesn't sit well with a
19 lot of people, and other methods that resample data. Those are
20 not easy to come by, and they're not easy to develop. There is
21 disagreement over how you might approach the different
22 methodologies, and what we've tried to do is come up with a
23 decision framework, with the help of the Science Centers, to
24 provide some methodologies that can be used beyond the estimation
25 that we do at S&T.

26
27 I think we have been working on those exact issues that you talk
28 about, and outliers are there, because you have characteristics,
29 or you have behaviors, which are associated with sampling in
30 general, and so, when you reach low sample sizes, you get that.
31 When you infrequently encounter species in the survey, you get
32 outliers.

33
34 We try to weight for the representation of different samples in
35 our sample frame, and that's the way that probability surveys work,
36 but I think there is an education component here, and there's also,
37 you know, the fact that it is a general survey. The state surveys
38 were brought onboard to address that very issue of precision, and
39 so there are things that I think have been done, and they may not
40 be as well advertised as they could be, and I understand your
41 frustration, and it's a frustration of mine, too.

42
43 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you for that answer, Dr. Cody. I appreciate it.

44
45 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I had Mr. Strelcheck, and I see Dr.
46 Walter.

47

1 **MR. STRELCHECK:** A couple of comments. The spending on
2 recreational fisheries data collection is pennies on the dollar,
3 which is unfortunate, right, and that's state and federal combined,
4 right, and the value of these fisheries is enormous, and I think
5 that's part of our challenge, and it's why we run into these
6 problems with outliers and low sample sizes and a lot of other
7 factors.

8
9 Dale, I hear your frustration, and I appreciate your frustration,
10 and I do want to say that I feel like it's a little disingenuous
11 to say that nothing has been done, and so I just wanted to emphasize
12 that. I think there has been a tremendous amount of effort that's
13 gone into trying to improve recreational statistics, and I think
14 the reaction has been just the opposite over that time period, in
15 that people feel like they've gotten worse over time, despite all
16 the effort and energy and time that's being put into it, and now
17 we're embarking, obviously, on this effort with the Inflation
18 Reduction Act, in partnership with the states, to address two of
19 the greatest sources of uncertainty in our recreational fisheries,
20 which is discard estimation and effort estimation, and so the
21 agency is not standing still.

22
23 We are definitely moving forward, and we are not satisfied with
24 where we're at with recreational data collection, just like the
25 states aren't satisfied, and I think there's a lot of work to be
26 done here.

27
28 Also, keep in mind, with my recreational fisheries initiative that
29 we passed a year ago, one of those components was looking at
30 outliers in statistics, and we're just now getting that off the
31 ground, and so it takes a long time for some of our work to happen
32 here around this council table, but there's a lot of, I think,
33 things in motion right now that ultimately will benefit our
34 fisheries, going forward.

35
36 **MR. DIAZ:** To that point, Andy, if I used the words "nothing has
37 been", that was a poor choice of words on my part, and I think my
38 frustration is how long it takes to get this issue resolved, and
39 that's my frustration, and I appreciate your comments, and I
40 appreciate Dr. Cody's comments and you all's efforts, and so I
41 don't want you to think that I don't appreciate that. Thank you.

42
43 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Walter.

44
45 **DR. WALTER:** I really appreciate Andy saying the things that I
46 would have said about a lot of the efforts that have been done and
47 then the ones that are pending, and also on validating some of

1 these effort estimates, through some of the IRA funding that's
2 going to use some advanced tech to validate where those effort
3 estimates do pass muster.

4
5 One of the things that I think -- If there's frustration, I would
6 absolutely express that there's frustration on our end, and our
7 staff's end, when the numbers are challenging to incorporate, or
8 unreliable, or not supported, and how we deal with that in the
9 stock assessment continually plagues us, and I think one of the
10 real frustrations is to get surprises, because no one likes
11 surprises, and that is -- I kind of wish we could have not had all
12 of the January meeting public comment, if the numbers come back
13 much different, which they did, and so they were preliminary, and
14 we looked into them, and they came back different, and I think
15 that there's a lot of initiative, and energy, for people looking
16 at things after the fact, because people are scrutinizing them,
17 and I wonder if there's a way to harness that, by looking at those
18 numbers before they go out.

19
20 That's where I think we had talked about some sort of -- Trying to
21 harness that energy to review those, to check for things, and if
22 there is a way to get some other eyes, people who know the
23 fisheries, who know -- You heard what Captain Walker said, and
24 there's no way that 100,000 pounds are landed from shore of gag,
25 and, okay, and how do you know that? It's probably some, you know,
26 on-the-water knowledge.

27
28 Can we set something like that up, like a sort of trusted panel,
29 who gets maybe to look at them, and just say, hey, I think these
30 might be something to look into before they go out, and they kind
31 of keep close hold on that, because they're getting privileged
32 information early on, but that at least allows us to kind of get
33 that gut-check, and everyone is going to have the gut-check, once
34 they're sent out, and let's just get it before it has to go out,
35 and I would like to maybe think about that. Thanks.

36
37 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I have General Spraggins next.

38
39 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Well, first off, Dr. Cody, I do appreciate
40 everything you've done, and I know you're trying to work hard, and
41 I understand Dale's frustrations, and I have the same thing, okay,
42 and I have the frustrations of not -- You know, it's been four
43 years, I know, that we've been fighting this battle, and it's
44 probably a little bit longer than that, and I know that we talked
45 about a lot of these things, and these outliers, and the outliers
46 happen, and they're there, but I think that we talked about it
47 too, back when we -- I don't know if it was January when we made

1 that, but we were talking about that nothing takes priority over
2 the other, when we were talking about the gag and the situation
3 there, that it doesn't take priority over the other outliers that
4 are sitting out there.

5
6 If there's outliers there, one shouldn't take priority over the
7 other one, until one has been solved, and that's what I would like
8 for you to look at. I don't know what it takes for you to do that,
9 and, you know, to say that 100,000 pounds couldn't be caught, and,
10 if you're looking at that as being an outlier, and going quicker,
11 I don't understand why, because we know that, to Mississippi, in
12 general, that, whenever we did the MRIP, that it would -- It was
13 so far skewed out that it was unreal, and everybody agreed with
14 that, but it was an outlier that you had to live with, because it
15 was something that we were doing at the time.

16
17 It was a program that we were under at the time, and I understand
18 that, and this is also the program we're under with gag at the
19 time, and so I just ask you all to look at it, and, you know, Dr.
20 Walter, all of you just look at it.

21
22 We appreciate you, and you all have worked more with us, and I
23 tell you that we appreciate all of you all and what you're working
24 with us on, and we know you're trying, and we know your
25 frustration, but it's -- Once again, it looks like the little man
26 is getting beat up, and the big guy is getting what he wants, and,
27 you know, that's the way it looks, whether it's right or wrong,
28 whether it's true or not, and I don't know that answer, and I'm
29 not throwing an accusation out there, but I'm just saying that it
30 seems like that poor little old Mississippi gets beat up every
31 day, but yet the others are being able to walk on and move forward
32 and do what they need to do, and so I just wanted to tell you that
33 I appreciate all of you. I do appreciate you, and I know that
34 you're trying to do -- I ask you to, if there's any way, to give
35 us more consideration.

36
37 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, General, and so we're going to go to
38 Dr. Sweetman and Dr. Walter and wrap this up.

39
40 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I will be really quick. Yes,
41 please, to everything that John said, in terms of having some sort
42 of experts, subject matter experts in these fisheries, look at
43 these things before they're released. I think that's a fantastic
44 idea, and it would have probably negated a lot of the issues that
45 we were dealing with with gag and red grouper in this past
46 iteration there, and do I don't know what that exactly looks like,
47 but certainly I don't think -- I mean, S&T, those are the MRIP

1 experts, and they're not necessarily the experts in these
2 particular fisheries that we're talking about here, and so I think
3 some commonsense checks and balances along those lines, and do
4 these numbers actually make sense, with people that are experts in
5 the field of these particular fisheries' biology, ecology,
6 landings, everything along those lines, and so I fully support
7 everything you were talking about there, John.

8
9 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

10
11 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Along with what C.J. said, I
12 like that working panel group idea of regionally-informed
13 individuals to provide essentially a layman's general overview of
14 things we would see that a scientist might miss, you know, or not
15 necessarily a scientist, but maybe somebody that's looking at data
16 that's not from here, that doesn't understand the particular factor
17 of that particular species, and that it's unlikely in what they've
18 predicted, and so I think that's a great idea.

19
20 I would be happy to assist in the design of such a panel, with the
21 understanding that it would be viewing classified, essentially, or
22 preliminary data that they don't want to get out, because it's
23 preliminary data, and so I would love to be a part of -- I like
24 the idea, and I would love to help you get started with it.

25
26 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Walker, for those comments.
27 Dr. Frazer, you can continue.

28
29 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Discussion of Conservation and
30 Management of Wenchman in the Midwater Snapper Complex, Tab B,
31 Number 6, council staff discussed recent developments in the
32 butterfish fishery, which has seen the fishermen, who were
33 experiencing the issues that brought about Reef Fish Amendment 61,
34 leave the Gulf. Thus, the stakeholders who brought the issue
35 before the council are no longer concerned with wenchman as bycatch
36 in the butterfish fishery. **The committee recommends, and I so**
37 **move, to discontinue work on Reef Fish Amendment 61.** That motion
38 carried without opposition. Mr. Chair.

39
40 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a committee motion on the
41 board. Is there any discussion on the motion? **Seeing none, is**
42 **there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion**
43 **carries.**

44
45 We're running up on lunch. It's 12:00, and I'm looking around the
46 table to see how everyone feels. I know we're scheduled for an
47 hour-and-a-half, until 1:30, and would you all like to try one

1 hour? Is everyone okay with that? Mr. Walker.

2
3 **MR. WALKER:** I think I'm okay with that, and I was just going to
4 ask how much do we have left here?

5
6 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** A lot. There's a good amount.

7
8 **MR. WALKER:** A good amount?

9
10 **DR. FRAZER:** The most recent in-season projection says 12:00
11 tonight.

12
13 **MR. WALKER:** I'm fine with going to an hour for lunch, personally.

14
15 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I'm not seeing any opposition, and everyone
16 is fine with that, with 1:00? Let's do 1:00. Thank you.

17
18 (Whereupon the meeting recessed for lunch on April 11, 2024.)

19
20 - - -

21
22 April 11, 2024

23
24 THURSDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

25
26 - - -

27
28 The Full Council of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council
29 reconvened at The Lodge at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Alabama
30 on Thursday afternoon, April 11, 2024, and was called to order by
31 Vice Chairman J.D. Dugas.

32
33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. We're going to proceed with where
34 we left off with Dr. Frazer and the Reef Fish Committee.

35
36 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Draft Options: Reef Fish
37 Amendment 58: Modifications to Shallow-Water Grouper Complex Catch
38 Limits and Management Measures, Tab B, Number 7, a committee member
39 asked that the council consider whether to proceed with Reef Fish
40 Amendment 58.

41
42 They recalled a council motion to not undertake any allocation
43 discussions until the SSC has reviewed the updated MRIP-FES pilot
44 study results and effects on landings estimates are evaluated and
45 deemed consistent with the best scientific information available.

46
47 NOAA General Counsel clarified that, because the SSC recommended

1 lower ABCs for two shallow-water grouper stocks considered in the
2 amendment, and one deepwater grouper stock is undergoing
3 overfishing, the council has a statutory mandate to act.

4
5 Dr. Jim Nance, the SSC Chair, informed the committee about the
6 SSC's discussions on black grouper and yellowfin grouper and the
7 SSC's catch limit recommendations for those species. Staff noted
8 that, because black grouper is a regional stock managed with the
9 South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, the SSC's catch limit
10 recommendations for these two species cannot be used, and the
11 current catch limits for black grouper and yellowfin grouper will
12 need to be maintained. Until the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils
13 reevaluate the black grouper stock collectively, that species'
14 catch limit and allocations must remain the same.

15
16 At the March 2023 SSC meeting, the SSC made OFL and ABC
17 recommendations for scamp and yellowmouth grouper, separate from
18 black grouper and yellowfin grouper. The four shallow-water
19 grouper complex species are currently managed under a single ACL,
20 with a commercial ACL and ACT specified to allow for the
21 functioning of the shallow-water grouper component of the
22 commercial grouper-tilefish IFQ program.

23
24 Because OFL and ABC were specified explicitly for scamp and
25 yellowmouth grouper, these species can no longer be managed under
26 a single complex with one quota, because of the possibility of
27 overfishing occurring on scamp and yellowmouth grouper. Council
28 staff presented revised options for the committee to consider
29 regarding specifying status determination criteria, shallow-water
30 grouper complex structure, catch limits, accountability measures,
31 and IFQ share allocation.

32
33 A committee member asked which of the shallow-water grouper species
34 is undergoing overfishing. None of the stocks within the shallow-
35 water grouper complex are currently undergoing overfishing.
36 However, the proposed catch limits are less than half of the recent
37 average landings. Thus, not reducing the scamp and yellowmouth
38 grouper catch limits is likely to result in overfishing of those
39 species.

40
41 Another committee member asked for clarification about whether the
42 council could select either 30 percent or 40 percent SPR as the
43 proxy for the fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield (FMSY)
44 for scamp and yellowmouth grouper. Staff asserted that the council
45 determines the FMSY proxy. However, the SSC supported a more
46 conservative approach of F 40 percent SPR, versus F 30 percent
47 SPR, based on life history characteristics and contemporary

1 research. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center added that the
2 council would have to make a case if it selected an FMSY proxy
3 that did not align with its own SSC's recommendation.
4

5 A committee member inquired what the sector allocation percentages
6 would be if using the MRIP-FES conversion factor. Another
7 committee member stated that there is not a common data unit for
8 the species in the complex. Scamp and yellowmouth grouper are in
9 MRIP-FES, whereas black grouper and yellowfin grouper are in Marine
10 Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey, or MRFFS, data units.
11 Because the complex is being divided, comparisons of data unit
12 differences is problematic.
13

14 Ms. Jessica McCawley, the South Atlantic Council liaison, asked
15 about the jurisdictional apportionment of the black grouper ACL
16 between the councils and was told it is 47 percent to the South
17 Atlantic and 53 percent to the Gulf.
18

19 Ms. McCawley then asked if addressing black grouper would need to
20 be a joint amendment with the South Atlantic Council. Staff
21 replied that, ideally, the Gulf Council would stay within its
22 jurisdictional appointment, and in MRFSS data units, negating a
23 need to involve the South Atlantic Council. A committee member
24 stated that one approach to allocation could be for the Gulf
25 Council to select the time series to inform the sector allocation,
26 while NOAA OST works on the MRIP-FES pilot study, and NMFS could
27 implement the sector percentages based on the years preselected by
28 the Gulf Council. They added that work on this amendment was
29 expected to last into 2025, given the complexity of the actions.
30

31 A committee member asked, and Dr. Jessica Stephen, from SERO,
32 affirmed, that a fisherman could land speckled hind or warsaw
33 grouper under their shallow-water grouper quota, so long as their
34 deepwater grouper quota was exhausted. Another committee member
35 stated that catch limit reductions should be shared across sectors,
36 while not penalizing sectors that have been good stewards. Council
37 staff replied that proportional reductions could be examined along
38 with the discussion about sector allocation.
39

40 A committee member asked if SERO could provide additional
41 quantitative information regarding flexibility considerations that
42 involve shallow-water grouper and deepwater grouper, which Dr.
43 Stephen said could be provided by Full Council. Council staff
44 said that public testimony on the flexibility considerations would
45 be helpful in knowing whether shallow-water grouper and deepwater
46 grouper could be approached in two separate amendments. Lastly,
47 another committee member stated that there may be recreational

1 accountability measures that the council might want to consider.

2
3 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Dr. Stephen, I believe, is online,
4 and I don't know if she has some additional information to share
5 or not.

6
7 **DR. FRAZER:** I mean, I think she was going to provide some
8 additional information. Is that right, Dr. Stephen?

9
10 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** Okay, and so I did find some additional
11 information in regard to the shallow-water and deepwater
12 flexibility measures, and we have -- The species that is mainly
13 affected by this would be speckled hind, which is primarily landed
14 under shallow-water grouper, instead of being landed under
15 deepwater grouper, which is its primary category, and so 67 percent
16 of all speckled hind are landed under shallow-water grouper.

17
18 When it comes to scamp and warsaw grouper, scamp is almost entirely
19 harvested under shallow-water grouper, and less than 1 percent has
20 been landed under deepwater, and, for warsaw grouper, 86 percent
21 of the warsaw grouper are landed under their primary category of
22 deepwater grouper, and 14 percent under the shallow-water grouper,
23 and so my kind of takeaway from this is the species of really
24 strong concern would be speckled hind, because it does seem to be
25 that fishermen are landing it under its alternative share category,
26 rather than its primary share category.

27
28 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen. I'm just curious on -- I
29 mean, it's a large, relatively large, percentage of speckled hind
30 that are landed in the shallow-water, but can you speak to the
31 actual pounds that we're talking about?

32
33 **DR. STEPHEN:** Just give me one second to pull that up. In 2022,
34 which are the numbers that I was looking at, for speckled hind, we
35 had around 18,000 pounds landed under shallow-water grouper, and
36 only 9,000 pounds landed under deepwater grouper.

37
38 **DR. FRAZER:** All right. Well, my original thought on this was to
39 explore whether or not we needed to have those flexibility measures
40 between the deepwater and shallow-water complexes, because, if we
41 didn't have those, it might make our ability to manage the two
42 complexes more simple, and so I was trying to hear some public
43 testimony yesterday, and what I heard is -- I'm not sure there was
44 a strong voice against doing that, but there wasn't a lot of people
45 that spoke about it either, and maybe next time. Go ahead, Andy.

46
47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Tom. I think it's worth including the

1 amendment for consideration, and evaluating it, and, you know, one
2 of the challenges, and Jessica can speak to this better than I
3 can, is, yes, these species are being used in these different
4 categories, but, within the system, people are moving allocation,
5 or quota, around, in order to kind of make this work for them,
6 right, and so I don't know --

7
8 They're kind of incentivized to eliminate one category of
9 allocation, in order to harvest it with another category of
10 allocation, if they have multiple accounts in the system, right,
11 and so I don't know, by eliminating this, that we're really going
12 to affect discards, you know, or retention of fish, or if they
13 might just change the way in which they manage their allocation
14 within the IFQ program as a whole, and so I just wanted to mention
15 that, because I think that's another layer of complexity, in terms
16 of how the fishermen actually operate within the system.

17
18 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Frazer, did you want to respond to that?

19
20 **DR. FRAZER:** I'm just going to listen to the discussion for right
21 now, I think.

22
23 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have Ms. Boggs and then Captain
24 Walker.

25
26 **MS. BOGGS:** I wonder if it would be interesting to find out what
27 percentage of the fishermen -- Is it one fisherman that's doing
28 this, or is it across-the-board, and everybody is kind of using
29 this to manage their allocation, and that might be interesting to
30 see, and we may not be able to do that, for privacy reasons, if
31 it's just one or something, but it might be a way to look at it.

32
33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Andy, to that point?

34
35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I would say it's probably complicated to track,
36 but it really pertains to those entities that have multiple
37 accounts within the system and are able to move allocation in and
38 out of accounts.

39
40 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

41
42 **MR. WALKER:** So we didn't end up overfishing them, which would be
43 the main concern, and like we did do that on gag a little bit,
44 with the shuffling around of multiuse, and I wonder, Dr. Stephen,
45 do you have any information, or could you get any information, on
46 how many accounts get emptied of one species, so they can use
47 multiuse, and then are filled back up after that? It seems, to

1 me, like the original intent of the rule was to help a guy out
2 when he's out, and not necessarily to just hide it in your buddy's
3 account for the day, use the multiuse the way you want, and then,
4 after that's -- Or sell it, and then put your stuff back in your
5 account, and I wonder if you could show that pattern in the
6 statistics.

7

8 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Stephen.

9

10 **DR. STEPHEN:** We definitely will get how many people use the
11 multiuse, and it might be more of a manual process to then look at
12 kind of the trend and time, if they're putting other allocation
13 back within it, and we do know that that kind of process happens
14 a lot with red grouper and gag grouper over time, and we've
15 actually heard from fishermen that they do that, and I would have
16 to look into how often that's also done with shallow-water and
17 deepwater.

18

19 One of the things to keep in mind is some people might be really
20 short in allocation in one of those categories, and that's why
21 they're landing the other species under that. We can take a dive
22 into the data and look at the difference.

23

24 The other point that I wanted to bring up is that the price of
25 allocation, for shallow-water and deepwater, are fairly different.
26 Shallow-water averages around sixty-eight cents a pound, and
27 deepwater averages around \$1.20 a pound, and so, kind of going
28 with that, you could see why they might want to use the cheaper
29 shallow-water grouper allocation price in order to land speckled
30 hind under shallow-water, instead of under deepwater.

31

32 **MR. WALKER:** Right, and somebody that I talked to told me that
33 yesterday, that it was essentially cheaper to use your shallow-
34 water grouper, since you could use it for the other one, because
35 shallow-water, by not being caught, is really cheap quota nowadays.

36

37 **DR. FRAZER:** I was originally -- I'm going to look to Andy again,
38 and I was originally going to make a motion to -- You know, again,
39 I was trying to simplify -- I know this is going to be a very
40 complex amendment, and I was trying to get the shallow-water and
41 the deepwater grouper kind of separated a little bit, and you could
42 accomplish that by kind of eliminating not all of the multiuse
43 thing, but one -- Just the exchange between the deepwater and the
44 shallow-water.

45

46 Maybe, rather than start a document, or something like that, maybe
47 I can just request that staff, and Jessica, give us a little bit

1 of an update on what might be involved in that and what the data
2 look like.

3

4 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

5

6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I think, you know, if staff are fine with some
7 direction, right, to explore this, putting in an action and
8 alternative, you know, to consider this going forward in the
9 amendment, and that would be useful. Then we can make the decision
10 based on some analyses and informed data.

11

12 **DR. FRAZER:** I'm okay with that, and so do you have enough direction
13 for that?

14

15 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, thank you, and I think we have
16 plenty of direction. I would note that I think there was a bit of
17 confusion, from my interpretation, during the public comment,
18 regarding the different types of multiuse. I think folks were
19 asking or, you know, talking about their multiuse between gag and
20 red, and not really understanding some of the questions between
21 the shallow and deep, was my interpretation of what was stated.

22

23 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Dr. Frazer.

24

25 **DR. FRAZER:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The next topic
26 here is Review: February 2023 Gulf SSC Meeting Summary, Tab B,
27 Number 8, SEDAR 85, Gulf Yellowedge Grouper, Dr. Nance reviewed
28 the SEDAR 85 stock assessment of yellowedge grouper, which is a
29 component of the deepwater grouper complex with snowy grouper,
30 warsaw grouper, and speckled hind.

31

32 The model has a terminal year of 2021 and models the stock in two
33 components bisected by the Mississippi River. Half of female
34 yellowedge grouper reach sexual maturity by nine years old, a year
35 after they start being selected by the fishery, can live to eighty-
36 five years of age, and begin transitioning to male at about forty
37 years old. Recreational landings account for less than 2 percent
38 of total removals.

39

40 The SSC discussed challenges in recruitment modeling, which has
41 been low since 2005. With no good fishery-independent index,
42 recruitment is uncertain. Any strong recruitment after 2012 is
43 not included in modeled landings.

44

45 The SSC recommended revising the FMSY proxy to F 40 percent SPR,
46 provided advice to the data analysts about which recruitment years
47 to inform the projection analysis, and set the OFL at 487,000

1 pounds gutted weight, and also reviewed and revised the OFL at
2 244,035 pounds gutted weight and the ABC at 183,026 pounds gutted
3 weight for the three remaining deepwater grouper species, separate
4 from the yellowedge grouper catch limits, using Tier 3b of the ABC
5 Control Rule and in MRIP-FES data units.

6
7 The SSC further stated that the four deepwater grouper species
8 could continue to be managed together under a combined catch limit.
9 The OFL is 731,035 pounds gutted weight, and the ABC is 555,026
10 pounds gutted weight.

11
12 A committee member asked whether yellowedge grouper needed to be
13 managed separately to prevent overfishing. Council staff replied
14 that it may be necessary, but the SSC did not specifically address
15 that. The committee thought staff should explore this possibility,
16 considerate of the difference between the OFL and ABC, and noted
17 the recent decline in deepwater grouper landings.

18
19 **The committee recommends, and I so move, that the council**
20 **recognizes the results of the SEDAR 85 stock assessment and the**
21 **SSC's recommendations for catch limits for the deepwater grouper**
22 **complex and requests staff to begin development of a document to**
23 **modify the deepwater grouper catch limits accordingly.** That motion
24 carried without opposition.

25
26 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Frazer. We have a committee
27 motion on the board. Is there any discussion on the motion?
28 **Seeing none, is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none,**
29 **the motion carries.** Dr. Frazer.

30
31 **DR. FRAZER:** Okay. SEDAR 74, Gulf Red Snapper Research Track, the
32 SSC evaluated the peer review of the SEDAR 74 research track for
33 Gulf red snapper and provided recommendations for consideration
34 for the next benchmark assessment, which is to start at the end of
35 2024.

36
37 The independent peer review did not recommend the SEDAR 74 model
38 for further development and recommended another peer review of the
39 next planned assessment for red snapper (SEDAR 97). For stock
40 structure, the SSC disagreed with the peer review, and supported
41 continued exploration of the three-region model, which was a
42 consensus decision from the SEDAR 74 stock identification effort.
43 Despite data limitations in the eastern Gulf and noting that
44 several indices require mirroring, which is averaging the
45 selectivity across the eastern and central regions and then using
46 the subsequent value for both regions, the SSC thought the three-
47 region model was still a better representation of the Gulf red

1 snapper population.

2

3 A committee member acknowledged that there was mirroring even under
4 the two-region model. Thus, under the three-region model, the
5 committee member thought the uncertainty resulting from the
6 additional mirroring therein would be greater than under the two-
7 region model.

8

9 Dr. Nance thought that there was utility in using the three-region
10 approach, because it helps to demonstrate differences between the
11 regions more explicitly. Essentially, the selectivity ultimately
12 used is applied to the resident age and length composition in that
13 region, and the resulting predicted harvest and biomass values are
14 estimated. Regardless, the committee acknowledged that both the
15 two-region and three-region models are combined to a Gulf-wide
16 estimate, which can then be used for management. Presently, the
17 granularity of multi-region modeling does not play into other
18 management decisions, like sector allocations.

19

20 The SSC thought the next assessment's terms of reference need to
21 balance prescription with flexibility, and that topical working
22 groups should include recreational data and how to address
23 extraneous survey data, like that from the Great Red Snapper Count.
24 Direct participation from regional Great Red Snapper Count
25 principal investigators is critical to considering those data.

26

27 A committee member recounted the original disagreement amongst the
28 stock identification panel for SEDAR 74 around whether to use a
29 two-region or three-region approach. They thought it would be
30 challenging to say that anyone could be more confident in an
31 approach requiring more estimation (i.e., the three-region model
32 versus the 2-region model).

33

34 Another committee member asked with whom the decision rests to
35 decide whether to use the two or three-region model. Council staff
36 clarified that the council's standard operating procedures related
37 to SEDAR approvals state that the Council Chair and Executive
38 Director, on behalf of the council, and based on its intent,
39 approve the terms of reference and other SEDAR materials. So, if
40 the council requested that red snapper be assessed using a two-
41 region model approach, that request would be put into the final
42 terms of reference for the next stock assessment. Council staff
43 added that an SSC review of the proposed terms of reference for
44 that next red snapper assessment would be held in May 2024. The
45 committee was mixed on whether to use a two or three-region
46 approach.

47

1 Economic Performance of Gulf and South Atlantic Fisheries, the SSC
2 received a presentation from the Southeast Fisheries Science
3 Center comparing the economic performances of the Gulf reef fish
4 and South Atlantic snapper grouper fisheries and provided a
5 financial overview of those fisheries since 2014.

6
7 The overview compared measurables between the regions and found
8 that catch share management in the Gulf resulted in higher economic
9 output, compared to the South Atlantic, after factoring in
10 differences such as catch magnitude. For the IFQ program, quota
11 was identified as the limiting factor in revenue generation, as
12 opposed to the number of vessels. Economic indicators from the
13 IFQ program could potentially be used as a stock health indicator.

14
15 2024 Red Grouper Interim Analysis, the SSC received a presentation
16 on the 2024 Gulf red grouper interim analysis, without catch
17 advice. Generally, the NMFS Bottom Longline Survey, which selects
18 for spawning stock biomass, is stable, and the SEAMAP Summer
19 Groundfish Trawl, which tracks age-one and age-two fish, has shown
20 an increase, which aligns with the recent pulse in the fishery
21 observed by the fleets.

22
23 Presentation on Reef Fish Amendment 60: Individual Fishing Quota
24 Programmatic Distributional Issues, Tab B, Number 9, Dr. Stephen
25 gave a presentation on Reef Fish Amendment 60, which considers
26 alternative approaches to equitably distributing shares and annual
27 allocations in the IFQ programs.

28
29 Dr. Stephen defined equity and discussed its distributional,
30 procedural, recognition, and contextual dimensions. She
31 discussed the Gini coefficient, which is a metric used to evaluate
32 economic inequality in a population and income or wealth
33 distribution. Gulf commercial fisheries were highly unequal prior
34 to the IFQ programs. The red snapper and grouper-tilefish IFQ
35 programs have had little influence on reducing Gini coefficients
36 over time.

37
38 IFQ shares and allocation to be distributed could include shares
39 currently held by NMFS, shares associated with inactive accounts,
40 shares and allocation recovered from divestment by shareholders
41 who do not meet requirements that may be set in Reef Fish Amendment
42 59, and annual allocation from future quota increases. Recurring
43 redistribution could occur for shares from inactive accounts and
44 from accounts not meeting requirements to be set in Amendment 59.

45
46 Dr. Stephen indicated that NMFS must be informed of the death of
47 a shareholder, but the agency is often not informed until annual

1 permit renewal or biannual citizenship renewal is due. Management
2 actions addressing shares previously held by deceased shareholders
3 must consider the type of entity holding the shares, for example
4 the shareholder is the sole account holder, member of partnership,
5 shareholder in a business, or the shares are held by a trust.

6
7 Dr. Stephen provided a set of questions to support committee
8 deliberations. What is the council trying to achieve with the
9 motion to initiate Reef Fish Amendment 60? What sources of
10 privileges are appropriate for distribution? Who is the council
11 trying to assist with equitable distribution? Which methods of
12 distribution will best suit the intended stakeholders?

13
14 She discussed potential options for each question and noted that
15 the council should consider interactions between management
16 actions in Amendment 60 and other IFQ amendments, for example
17 Amendment 59.

18
19 Dr. Stephen clarified, for the committee, that different accounts
20 become inactive over time. The committee asked about changes in
21 the pounds of quota in inactive accounts, which Dr. Stephen said
22 will fluctuate when quotas change. Dr. Stephen will provide
23 information about accounts without any shares later. Committee
24 members noted that the council should describe its vision for the
25 IFQ programs and will need to discuss and define terms such as
26 "replacement fishermen". The committee suggested that time could
27 be set aside to further discuss the amendment during the June 2024
28 council meeting.

29
30 A committee member noted the committee's intent is not to take
31 away shares from active participants in the IFQ programs, but
32 rather to determine distribution methods for reclaimed shares,
33 shares held by NMFS, and annual allocation from future quota
34 increases. The committee will need to identify the universe of
35 beneficiaries.

36
37 SERO indicated that the South Atlantic Council used a subcommittee
38 to address issues relative to the wreckfish IFQ program and
39 suggested that the Gulf Council could consider a similar approach.
40 Further discussion of Amendment 60 during Full Council could
41 consider distribution options.

42
43 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We have a couple of hands, Dr. Frazer. Mr.
44 Williamson.

45
46 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, in listening
47 to the presentation, and the bullet points set out here, I think

1 we all recall that the initial shareholders were given their shares
2 on the basis of historical catch, and there is not an ownership of
3 that privilege.

4
5 Reviewing what the deceased shareholder has done with his shares,
6 transferring it to a partnership or a trust or whatever, I think
7 is the wrong approach. Whoever is the recipient of those shares,
8 be it a partnership or a trust or an LLC, they do not earn those
9 shares, by virtue of a historical catch, and so I'm at a loss to
10 determine why we're entertaining those shares being held by an
11 entity that was not in -- Was not fishing those shares, and
12 acquired them through a historical catch method. Any comments
13 about that?

14
15 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Gill.

16
17 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks, Troy, for those
18 comments. As was mentioned in the Reef Fish Committee, my view is
19 that this topic has been around since, what, 2011, and we've
20 wrestled with it, and not the same members at the table
21 necessarily, and we've not gotten anywhere, and part of the reason
22 for that is we haven't had a well-defined idea of where we're
23 going.

24
25 In the June meeting last year, the council adopted the goals and
26 objectives, but, for purposes of Amendments 59 and 60, one, there
27 isn't a vision associated with that, which we don't customarily do
28 at the council, and I think, before we get into the nits of what
29 ought to be, or ought not to be, included in Amendment 60, that we
30 consider a purpose and need, and, aligned with that, I would like
31 to initiate a discussion on the vision side of that, because, if
32 we're able to achieve that, then that helps set where we're trying
33 to go.

34
35 I recognize that this is not what we've done historically in the
36 past, and I'm not even sure that the council has ever done it, to
37 be honest, but it would help set the path, going forward, and, as
38 a measure of are we maintaining the vision that we set, that we're
39 trying to achieve, for this program, and, if we're not, then we
40 need to come back in line with that vision.

41
42 I have, in concert with several folks, tried to cobble together a
43 strawman for this, if you will, and it's a work in progress, and
44 it needs a lot of wordsmithing, and I was originally going to
45 propose it as a motion, but I think -- I don't know if we're
46 willing to spend the time this afternoon to wordsmith it and get
47 to a conclusion on that motion, but I would like to proffer it as

1 a strawman on the discussion table, for which we can consider and
2 see how the council takes that, and so, Bernie, if you would draw
3 up the Amendment 59 and 60 verbiage that I just sent you.

4
5 Thank you for that, Bernie, and so I will read it, for the benefit
6 of those that are not in the room. The fishery vision is a
7 differentiated commercial fishery, including a diverse range of
8 profitable small, medium, and large businesses and
9 quota/allocation banks that maximizes access to and use of
10 available IFQ shares. The process vision is a simple, automated,
11 and transparent process that ensures IFQ shares, and allocation
12 are equitably distributed by NMFS-defined user groups, the impacts
13 of which are measurable and evaluated over time.

14
15 There are a number of issues that I have with this version, and we
16 need to define some of that, for example the "equitable", and what
17 is that, and how do we do that, but I think this gives us a starting
18 point, you know, if you will, and it's mud on the wall, and we'll
19 see what stays, and what doesn't, and I would encourage that we
20 discuss the definitions of these visions, so that we can use them,
21 and I think they would be applicable, both 59 and 60, and whether
22 we want to use that as helping us to get to where we want to go,
23 and that would, in turn, help us define the purpose and need for
24 the current document, Amendment 60. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25
26 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Williamson.

27
28 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also have visited with
29 some folks around the table, Bob, and, as you recall, I proposed
30 a fairly -- Well, I proposed a motion that we reclaim all the
31 deceased shareholders' shares, and, in talking to various folks
32 around the table, that was a methodology that they didn't agree
33 with, because they didn't feel like it was fair to the
34 shareholders, whether they were initial or had come in later.

35
36 What they were proposing, or what we came up with, was a transfer
37 -- Doing away with the IFQ share program and going to an allocation
38 -- A public auction, if you will, of the commercial allocation
39 each year, and giving the shareholders a transfer credit, based on
40 the current market value of those shares, be it an average of the
41 best available price during the previous year, or whatever it is,
42 but they could use that credit in the auction, but that would give
43 -- Rather than folks holding shares, you have an opportunity for
44 people to come in and buy at a public auction that would be
45 administered by an independent third-party.

46
47 It would not only be fairer, I think, than the current shareholder

1 methodology, but it would also generate income for uses in the
2 fishery, and it may all go to the general fund, but, eventually,
3 it would come back, and the public would benefit from the revenue,
4 and so that would be an alternative to what you're proposing here,
5 Bob, which seems, to me, to be just kind of a continuation of where
6 we are now.

7

8 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I have Mr. Strelcheck.

9

10 **MR. STRELCHECK:** First, thanks, Bob, for putting forth the vision
11 statement, and I agree that I think we could spend quite a bit of
12 the afternoon wordsmithing it, and all of us around the table have
13 different ideas, but I did want to comment about the first portion,
14 the fishery vision, because I think this emerged last year, when
15 we were talking about the goals and objectives for the program,
16 right, and the idea of this overcapitalization, and that, you know,
17 catch shares are intended to reduce, or eliminate,
18 overcapitalization, but we also were putting value in the diversity
19 that we have in our fishery, in terms of small, medium, and large-
20 scale businesses.

21

22 To me, I think this is reflective of those conversations, and it
23 also, to me, is kind of reflective of what we talked about with
24 our equity and environmental justice strategy and the importance
25 that we place on individuals that are participating in this fishery
26 and the access that they would achieve.

27

28 In terms of Troy's comments, I think my concern, Troy, with what
29 you're suggesting is that you're proposing something that, to me,
30 is very contrary to the goals and objectives that we spent quite
31 a bit of time hashing out last year, and that we're now moving
32 forward with Amendments 59 and 60 to address, and so a proposal
33 like you have is sweeping change, and you believe, I think, that
34 that's needed, and I think that would be highly disruptive, and
35 something that probably is not necessary, and that we can make
36 sweeping changes within the program, to improve it and benefit all
37 stakeholders involved.

38

39 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Gill.

40

41 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If there's crickets, let me
42 express what I think -- Where we are today and where we go with
43 this. What I think I would like to see is, okay, and this may not
44 be the right wording, and we do have to wordsmith it, et cetera,
45 but, conceptually, the council buys in, or doesn't buy in, to what
46 we have here, that can be then formalized, the next time we revisit
47 59 and 60.

1
2 It's more of kind of a thumbs-up, or thumbs-down, or, hey, you're
3 close, but why don't we do this, modify it slightly, just kind of
4 mesh it into something that says, yes, we can utilize that the
5 next time we come here, or no we can't, and so we, if you will,
6 put this off, in terms of accepting it, and that's why I took it
7 off the motion mode, because I don't think we're ready for that,
8 but whether or not it's in the direction the council wants to go,
9 expresses the sentiment, roughly, of what the council thinks is
10 appropriate, and, if not, then, okay, is it modifiable? It would
11 prep it, if you will, for the next time it comes up at council,
12 and that's my thought on the outcome of what we have on the screen.
13 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14
15 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** So, before I get to you, Mr. Williamson, I
16 think what I hear is you're asking the council, and the staff, to
17 revisit this the next time that 59 or 60 comes up in a meeting,
18 and it's just as simple as that, and we'll revisit it, and we'll
19 work -- Maybe remove, or edit, some of it, and we'll just keep it
20 on the radar?

21
22 **MR. GILL:** No, a little more than that, and I'm thinking the next
23 time that it gets discussed, considered, and formalized, and
24 motioned, to acceptance or rejection. This time, it's the broader,
25 hey, are we going in the right direction, do we have what we want,
26 and maybe we need to modify it a little bit today, but, ultimately,
27 whatever we do with it now becomes the baseline for what's
28 utilized, with an eye towards accepting it in a motion and
29 incorporating it into the documents.

30
31 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, sir. Mr. Williamson.

32
33 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Well, to Andy's comment about sweeping change, I
34 think that's what we were intending to do here. We were to try to
35 improve the program to address the issues that we hear every time
36 we have public comment. Folks get up, and they say they're not
37 able to acquire allocation, that the shareholders are, true or
38 false, blackballing them, or whatever, and we've heard it for years
39 now.

40
41 It doesn't seem, to me, that the shareholder concept, although it
42 has a lot of advantages for management, seems to be working for
43 the new entrants, the new groups coming in, and so, you know, for
44 that reason, perhaps a fresh approach, like an auction of the
45 allocation, needs to be considered, and so, you know, I would --

46
47 **I don't know whether it's the appropriate time or not for a motion**

1 to include, in the progress of Amendment 60, but I would make a
2 motion that the staff include, in the development of Amendment 60,
3 a method to equitably reclaim the shares and to distribute them,
4 the commercial allocation, through a public auction, to be
5 administered by an independent third party.
6

7 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a motion on the board. Is
8 there a second to the motion?
9

10 **MR. GEESLIN:** I will second.
11

12 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. I will pause, and I'm moving a
13 little quickly. We'll get the motion correctly on the board. Mr.
14 Williamson, is this --
15

16 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** No, and it was a method to equitably reclaim the
17 shares.
18

19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** The shares or all shares?
20

21 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** To distribute the commercial allocation in a
22 public auction, to be administered by an independent third party.
23

24 **DR. BANKS:** Andy wants to know if you want "the shares" or "all
25 shares".
26

27 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** I'm sorry. It would be to reclaim all shares.
28

29 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Is that your motion, Mr. Williamson?
30

31 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Yes.
32

33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Do we have a second for Mr. Williamson's
34 motion? Mr. Geeslin seconds. Is there discussion? Mr. Gill.
35

36 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I disagree with Mr.
37 Williamson's premise, and my recollection of the many years of
38 discussion of this was, or is, that the system we have is working
39 well, and it's not working perfectly, and there is no perfect
40 system, and it does need adjustments, and tweaks, to improve it,
41 and no system works perfectly, and I understand that, but the
42 objectives that we had for 59 and 60 was to modify it, and not to
43 completely overhaul it, and so I think the premise for this motion
44 is in error, and not that supported in the many discussions that
45 we've had, and I will not support the motion.
46

47 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Strelcheck.

1
2 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I will not support the motion as well. I see
3 this as contrary to Goal 3 that we passed last year, which is to
4 maintain flexible fishing options and economic stability within
5 the IFQ program, and I think this would create economic
6 instability, and I also see an auction system -- Granted, we
7 haven't talked about it how it would be designed, but usually
8 they're designed as to going to the highest bidder, and that is
9 contrary to improving opportunities for participation in the
10 program, and, as Mr. Gill indicated, I think this goes far more
11 toward overhauling the program than what we've discussed to this
12 point, relative to improvements to the program.

13
14 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

15
16 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I disagree with the motion, on
17 the same grounds as Mr. Gill and Mr. Strelcheck.

18
19 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Gill.

20
21 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One more point. Auctions, as
22 Andy mentioned, go to the highest bidder, and so this appeals to
23 those that have the funds, and it disadvantages those that don't,
24 and the whole discussion, thus far, is how we get new entrants
25 into the fishery, and the little guy doesn't have the funds to
26 compete against the big guy, and so this just shifts everything to
27 those with the greatest resources to be able to purchase those
28 shares, and so it goes exactly against what we've been talking
29 about and trying to accomplish in the Goal 1 that we established
30 back in June.

31
32 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Bannon.

33
34 **MR. BANNON:** Troy, I think you and I have discussed it before, and
35 I struggle with a small number of people owning a public, you know,
36 entity here, which is fish, and how to do that, and so I guess my
37 question is, and I think it's kind of going around the room, is is
38 this the right place for this, and it's a pretty -- Man, it's a
39 complicated issue, and I think I would disagree with Andy a little
40 bit about what he said about putting things at a disadvantage, but
41 I do agree with Bob that auctions can be a challenge, because
42 people have money win auctions, and so there has to be some
43 equitable way to figure out how to move these shares to make them
44 available to other entrants.

45
46 This is a super complicated issue, and so I'm supportive, in
47 theory, of what it is, and I think we've got to do something with

1 that, and I'm not scared of making sweeping change. I think
 2 sometimes we have to make sweeping change, and I think we have to
 3 -- We talked earlier about getting outside the box, but I think
 4 most of the IFQ system works really well. I mean, it's -- Man,
 5 what an accurate system, and what an accountability system, and it
 6 works really well for a handful of folks, and I do have a little
 7 concern, and, Troy, that's my thoughts, and I'm not sure if this
 8 is the right spot for it, but I would be open to some further
 9 discussion down the road.

10
 11 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Williamson. Ms. Boggs.

12
 13 **MS. BOGGS:** I would like to ask for a roll call vote.

14
 15 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Is there any more discussion on the motion?
 16 Seeing none, we're going to use our clickers. Okay. I will read
 17 the motion. **The motion is to include, in the development of**
 18 **Amendment 60, a method to equitably reclaim all shares and to**
 19 **distribute the commercial allocation through a public auction to**
 20 **be administered by an independent third party.** We're ready to
 21 vote.
 22

B9.1 to include in the development of amendment 60 a method to equitably reclaim all shares and to distribute the comm allocation through				
First Name	Last Name			
Scott	Bannon		No	
Susan	Boggs		No	
Billy	Broussard		No	
Dale	Diaz		No	
JD	Dugas			Abstain
Anthony	Overton	Yes		
Tom	Frazer		No	
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill		No	
Michael	McDermott		No	
Chris	Schieble		No	
Joe	Spraggins		No	
Andy	Strelcheck		No	
Kesley	Banks			Abstain
CJ	Sweetman		No	
Troy	Williamson	Yes		
Ed	Walker		No	
Results - Failed	Subtotals	Yes (3)	No (12)	Abs (2)

23
 24
 25 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** The motion fails three yes, twelve no, two
 26 **abstentions.** Mr. Williamson.
 27

1 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to let all of
2 you know that I am not leaving in a huff, and I have a plane to
3 catch. Well, maybe a little huff.

4
5 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

6
7 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Okay. Bernie, I have a motion, if you could bring
8 it up, please. While we're waiting on the motion, as we were
9 discussing in committee, I had suggested that we put together a
10 draft purpose and need and a list of actions that could be included
11 in this amendment, and so we've taken a first stab at doing that,
12 and so that's the content of my motion. Not that one. The one
13 after that one.

14
15 **All right, and I will read it, and certainly we can wordsmith, if**
16 **needed, but it's to approve the following purpose and need and**
17 **list of actions for inclusion in Amendment 60. Purpose: The**
18 **purpose of this action is to increase access and opportunities to**
19 **Gulf of Mexico IFQ programs by equitably distributing IFQ shares,**
20 **and allocation held by NMFS and reclaimed from inactive accounts**
21 **or accounts not meeting certain eligibility requirements. Need:**
22 **The need for this action is to address access barriers creating**
23 **inequities in the Gulf of Mexico IFQ fisheries. Actions -- We just**
24 **listed them more as kind of the content of actions, giving staff**
25 **flexibility, but what shares to redistribute (reclaimed, inactive,**
26 **other); what allocation to redistribute (quota increases, other);**
27 **redistribution methods; eligibility criteria for receiving shares**
28 **and allocation); and an appeals process, and so if I have a second,**
29 **then --**

30
31 **MR. GILL:** Second.

32
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I've largely explained that reasoning, and the
34 rationale, but I think the key here is that we're focused on not
35 taking shares away from people, as much as using the inactive
36 shares that NMFS has, as well as any inactive allocation, and
37 anything else that's reclaimed through other mechanisms, and then
38 coming up with equitable ways to redistribute that to IFQ program
39 participants, and the amendment would form the framework of how we
40 go about doing that, and so I will leave it at that.

41
42 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Gill.

43
44 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so I had, independently
45 from Andy, and in concert with folks in the industry, generated a
46 purpose and need that is almost identical to this, and it's
47 different wording, but the exact same concept, and virtually the

1 same actions, and so I support the motion.

2

3 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Is there any other discussion on the
4 motion? Ms. Boggs.

5

6 **MS. BOGGS:** I think all IFQ issues does need a roll call vote, as
7 contentious as it is, and a lot of people not sitting in the room
8 today, and they can see what's happening, or what happened.

9

10 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Yes, and that's fine. Dr. Frazer.

11

12 **DR. FRAZER:** I think this is a good start, and I'm certainly going
13 to support it. The only thing that I'm thinking about, Andy, and,
14 I mean, we can wordsmith this down the road, and we don't have to
15 do it today, but just thinking a little bit about the focus is
16 specifically on the fishermen, you know, and I kind of get that,
17 right, but there's also the issue of trying to be considerate of
18 the resource, right, that we're trying to manage, and so I don't
19 think that's quite in here, but, ultimately, we can get there, and
20 I'm good with this.

21

22 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other discussion on the motion? Okay.
23 Not seeing any, we're going to vote with our clickers. **I will**
24 **read it into the record. Motion to approve the following purpose**
25 **and need and list of actions for inclusion in Amendment 60.**
26 **Purpose: The purpose of this action is to increase access and**
27 **opportunities to Gulf of Mexico IFQ programs by equitably**
28 **distributing IFQ shares, and allocation held by NMFS and reclaimed**
29 **from inactive accounts or accounts not meeting certain eligibility**
30 **requirements. Need: The need for this action is to address access**
31 **barriers creating inequities in the Gulf of Mexico IFQ fisheries.**
32 **Actions: 1) What shares to redistribute (reclaimed, inactive,**
33 **other); 2) What allocation to redistribute (quota increases,**
34 **other); 3) Redistribution methods; 4) Eligibility criteria for**
35 **receiving shares and allocation); 5) Appeals process.**

36

B9.2 To approve the following purpose and need and list of actions for inclusion in Amendment 60: Purpose, Need, Actions				
First Name	Last Name			
Scott	Bannon	Yes		
Susan	Boggs	Yes		
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz	Yes		
JD	Dugas			Abstain
Anthony	Overton	Yes		
Tom	Frazer	Yes		
Dakus	Geeslin	Yes		
Bob	Gill	Yes		
Michael	McDermott	Yes		
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Joe	Spraggins	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck	Yes		
Kesley	Banks	Yes		
CJ	Sweetman	Yes		
Troy	Williamson			
Ed	Walker	Yes		
Results - Passed	Subtotals	Yes (15)	No (0)	Abs (1)

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VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS: Okay. **The motion passes with fifteen yes, zero no, one abstention, and one absent.** Okay. Dr. Frazer, moving on.

DR. FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Other Business, Reef Fish Amendment 53, a committee member discussed the legal proceedings regarding the Reef Fish Amendment 53 and the three aspects of that final rule which were remanded to NMFS for further clarification.

The committee member stated that the council should consider revisiting Amendment 53, in preparation for the court decisions and the results of the next red grouper assessment (SEDAR 88) stock assessment. NOAA General Counsel replied that there is nothing specifically to fix in Amendment 53, based on the court decision. Rather, NMFS needs to further clarify or support certain decisions related to approval of the amendment and promulgation of the final rule. Staff added that, without the results of the red grouper stock assessment and the SSC's review of that assessment, they lacked the data necessary to frame out the actions to be taken in the document. Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS: Okay. We have a question from Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Thank you. Not so much aa question, and so, when I did

1 my briefing on the litigation, I didn't get into a bunch of details
2 in the decision, and I'm not going to do that now, but given, you
3 know, some statements, during public testimony, about what the
4 court decided, I feel like I should read, or let you know, the
5 portion in which the court decided that the remand without vacating
6 the rule was appropriate, as it regards to the economic analysis.

7
8 There're only two sentences there, and the court remanded without
9 vacating the rule, saying there would appear to be a strong
10 possibility that the Fisheries Service can differentiate between
11 the two economic analyses. In technical areas, further
12 explanation, with sufficient support from studies, may adequately
13 inform the court of the Fisheries Service's reasoning.

14
15 I just wanted to make it clear that there's a clear opportunity
16 for the Fisheries Service to go back and provide further
17 explanation. The court did not hold that one economic analysis
18 was appropriate, and one was, quote, inappropriate, and the court
19 basically said that they looked like they were in conflict, and
20 that the court needed further information.

21 22 **CLOSED SESSION REPORT**

23
24 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Ms. Levy, thank you for that update.
25 We're going to move down our list here and go into the closed
26 session report by Mr. Anson, and I will read it.

27
28 Closed Session Report, April 8, 2024, Mr. Anson, Council Chair.
29 Selection of Reef Fish, Shrimp and Ad Hoc Commercial Red Snapper
30 and Grouper-Tilefish IFQ Program Advisory Panel members, the Full
31 Council was convened to review applicants for the Reef Fish, Shrimp
32 and Ad Hoc Commercial Red Snapper and Grouper-Tilefish IFQ Program
33 Advisory Panels. The council discussed the applicants and made
34 preliminary appointments for each advisory panel. Appointees will
35 be announced at the June 2024 council meeting in Houston, Texas,
36 after completion of background checks for fishery violations.

37
38 Selection of 2023 Law Enforcement Officer/Team of the Year, the
39 council reviewed the nomination information and recommendations
40 received from the Law Enforcement Technical Committee. The council
41 selected the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's
42 Northwest Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) Team for the 2023 Law
43 Enforcement Officer of the Year. The team will be honored at the
44 November 2024 council meeting in St. Petersburg, Florida. This
45 concludes my report. We're going to continue moving down the list
46 to Mackerel. Mr. Geeslin.

1 **MACKEREL COMMITTEE REPORT**

2
3 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Mackerel Committee report,
4 the committee adopted the agenda, Tab C, Number 1, and approved
5 the minutes from the October 2023 meeting, Tab C, Number 2, as
6 written.

7
8 Coastal Migratory Pelagic Landings, Tab C, Number 4, Mr. Frank
9 Helies, from NMFS SERO, reviewed the recent coastal migratory
10 pelagic (CMP) landings for the Gulf migratory groups of cobia,
11 king mackerel, and Spanish mackerel. A committee member inquired
12 about the geographic distribution of cobia landings. Dr. Mike
13 Larkin, also from SERO, reported that 70 percent come from
14 Florida's west coast, with 10 percent from Alabama, 10 percent
15 from Mississippi, 10 percent from Louisiana, and 1 percent from
16 Texas.

17
18 Moving right along, CMP Special Engagement Session Summary, Tab C,
19 Number 5, council staff presented the results of the CMP special
20 engagement session that was held with the CMP Advisory Panel. This
21 session was held as a part of the council's broader CMP
22 communications strategy that aims to gather stakeholder feedback
23 on king mackerel, Spanish mackerel, and cobia that will shape
24 future council management considerations for these species.

25
26 Staff summarized the themes that emerged from the session,
27 including changes in abundance, location, fishing behavior, and
28 ecological factors influencing each CMP species. The committee
29 suggested that staff hold special engagement sessions with each AP
30 that has relevant CMP experience. The committee also suggested
31 that data be gathered on respondents' length of experience in the
32 fishery, because it may influence their perception of the stocks.

33
34 A committee member asked whether respondents to the CMP
35 communications effort would be continuously engaged, as their
36 feedback is considered by scientists and managers. Council staff
37 indicated that they planned to update participants on the effort
38 of the management actions, as management actions are considered
39 and scientific information on the stocks becomes available, by
40 sending the results of this effort to those that participated.
41 Staff also plan to encourage respondents to participate in the
42 development of future management actions resulting from the
43 effort.

44
45 The committee then inquired about what science currently exists to
46 groundtruth what is being heard from fishermen and whether the
47 science could be influenced by this engagement effort. Numerous

1 studies are tracking CMP species but may not be examining changes
2 in migratory behaviors. Stock assessments for all three CMP
3 species have been completed in recent years, and subsequent
4 assessments are scheduled for the coming years.

5
6 Moving right along, CMP Advisory Panel Recommendations, Tab B,
7 Number 6, Mr. Martin Fisher, the CMP AP Chair, summarized the CMP
8 AP meeting. A committee member questioned Dr. John Walter, from
9 the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, about the possibility of
10 creating a shark working group. Dr. Walter responded that, while
11 it hasn't been established yet, it's an option the Southeast
12 Fisheries Science Center will consider, potentially in
13 collaboration with the council. He also mentioned ongoing
14 predation studies. Several committee members highlighted the
15 availability of grant programs, like those under NOAA Sea Grant,
16 which support such studies.

17
18 Draft Framework Amendment 14: Modifications to Gulf Migratory
19 Group Spanish Mackerel Catch Limits and Accountability Measures,
20 Tab C, Number 6, council staff reviewed the document that considers
21 modifying the catch limits and accountability measures for Gulf
22 Spanish mackerel, based on the recent SEDAR 81 stock assessment
23 and the council's SSC's revised catch limit recommendations.

24
25 SEDAR 81 transitioned the recreational catch and effort data to
26 the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort
27 Survey (MRIP-FES) and determined the stock was healthy as of 2021.

28
29 The SSC recommended an overfishing limit (OFL) of 12.074 million
30 pounds whole weight and an acceptable biological catch (ABC) of
31 9.63 million pounds whole weight. An alternative using the
32 council's Annual Catch Limit (ACL) and the Annual Catch Target
33 (ACT) Control Rule would result in an ACL of 8.667 million pounds
34 whole weight, reduced from the ABC by 10 percent, based on
35 historical landings and fishery performance. Though recent
36 landings have not exceeded the proposed catch limits, there is a
37 possibility an overage of the ACL in the future remains.

38
39 The committee discussed Action 1, which would modify catch limits
40 for Spanish mackerel. The committee noted that Alternative 1, no
41 action, is not a viable option and that the action alternatives
42 are a reduction from current allowable harvest limits. The
43 committee considered Alternative 2, that would set the ACL equal
44 to the ABC at 9.63 million pounds. Alternative 3 would apply the
45 ACL/ACT Control Rule and reduce the ACL by 10 percent relative to
46 Alternative 2.

1 A committee member expressed support for Alternative 3 given some
2 concerns about recent declines in Spanish mackerel that may not
3 have been captured in the stock assessment. Another committee
4 member expressed reluctance to support Alternative 3, considering
5 it overly cautious, and preferred Alternative 2. **The committee**
6 **recommends, and I so move, to make Alternative 2 the preferred**
7 **Alternative in Action 1.**

8
9 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. We have a
10 committee motion on the board. Is there any discussion on the
11 motion? Mr. Strelcheck.

12
13 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, whoever wrote this report did an excellent
14 job of letting me down easy, right, rather than saying my motion
15 crashed and burned that I expressed support. I thank whoever wrote
16 that, but, no, I'm fine, obviously, with the preferred alternative
17 as it stands, and so thanks.

18
19 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Any discussion on the motion? **Seeing**
20 **none, is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the**
21 **motion carries.** Mr. Geeslin.

22
23 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The committee then reviewed
24 Action 2, which considers modification of the Spanish mackerel
25 accountability measures. The intent of this action is to consider
26 an alternative that may provide more flexibility in the management
27 and application of AMs, noting that in-season AMs can be difficult
28 to apply, given the timing of, and uncertainty in, the landings
29 data.

30
31 The committee discussed the desire to avoid seasonal closures,
32 while meeting its conservation responsibilities. The committee
33 further discussed that seasonal closures may disproportionately
34 affect some regions of the Gulf, given the migratory nature of
35 Spanish mackerel, and that a closure would affect both sectors.

36
37 A committee member indicated that Alternative 2 would be more
38 manageable than an in-season closure accountability measure, and
39 beneficial for the fishery, by allowing more time to adjust to any
40 planned seasonal closures. **The committee recommends, and I so**
41 **move, to make Alternative 2 the preferred alternative in Action 2.**

42
43 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have another committee motion on
44 the board. Any discussion on the motion? Okay. **Not seeing any,**
45 **any opposition to the motion? Not seeing any, the motion carries.**
46 Mr. Geeslin.

1 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Next, the committee discussed
2 a potential action to reduce the recreational bag limits of Spanish
3 mackerel. The aim of this action would be to reduce the harvest
4 rate and corresponding likelihood of exceeding the catch limit.
5 The Committee also discussed that few anglers likely retain the
6 current fifteen-fish bag limit. A committee member recommended a
7 ten-fish bag limit, and staff noted that it could be considered as
8 part of a range of reasonable alternatives. **The committee**
9 **recommends, and I so move, to add an Action to Framework Amendment**
10 **14 looking at bag limits.**

11
12 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. There's another committee motion on
13 the board. Any discussion on the motion? **Not seeing any, any**
14 **opposition to the motion? Not seeing any, the motion carries.**
15 Mr. Geeslin.

16
17 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Gulf Migratory Group King
18 Mackerel Management Discussion, Tab C, Number 7, Dr. Larkin
19 presented historical landings of Gulf migratory group king
20 mackerel (Gulf king mackerel). Council staff summarized the
21 current management status and provided some discussion points for
22 consideration, including changes to catch limits, recreational bag
23 limits, and fishing seasons to improve the management of king
24 mackerel.

25
26 A committee member thought reducing the recreational bag limit
27 from three to two per person would likely meet little opposition
28 from the fishing community. Another member concurred, suggesting
29 that a reduction could also create a perception among fishermen
30 that steps are being taken to replenish the stock. Council staff
31 added that, since few anglers catch more than one kingfish per
32 person per trip, a decrease in the bag limit would probably be
33 acceptable but may not have much effect on reducing harvest or the
34 associated fishing mortality.

35
36 A committee member pointed out that lowering the ACL might not be
37 an effective approach if environmental factors are the main cause
38 for the perceived decline in the stock. Others agreed, suggesting
39 that bag limits and seasonal closures could be more effective
40 measures.

41
42 Further, a committee member observed that king mackerel tend to
43 fluctuate cyclically and may simply be experiencing such a cyclic
44 downturn. The committee member also highlighted experience from
45 studies showing a significant presence of juvenile king mackerel
46 in shrimp culls, suggesting this as a potential source of mortality
47 to the stock.

1
2 A committee member then suggested a tiered management system, where
3 certain landing thresholds would trigger adjustments in the catch
4 limit. They noted that, while such measures might not have an
5 immediate impact, they aim to ensure the system is flexible enough
6 to adapt to future changes.

7
8 Another committee member suggested that the current estimates for
9 discard mortality might be lower than the actual rates. Dr. Walter
10 expressed doubt that this is the primary cause of the stock's
11 decline. He also mentioned the potential presence of
12 hyperstability in the stock, indicating potential zones where
13 fishing mortality exceeds healthy levels for stock sustainability.

14
15 The committee discussed potential spawning closures for king
16 mackerel. The committee noted that king mackerel spawn in the
17 summer, and the impact of closures would likely affect Texas and
18 Louisiana more than Florida, raising concerns about the fairness
19 of the proposed measures.

20
21 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Walter.

22
23 **DR. WALTER:** I guess a minor point, and just that the current
24 estimates for discard mortality rates might be lower than the
25 actual ones, and perhaps we say, "the ones used in the stock
26 assessment might be lower than the actual rates", just so that we
27 know what is implied by "current". Someone could think "current"
28 means what's currently going on in the fishery, which is the hope.
29 Thanks.

30
31 **MR. RINDONE:** Okay. We can make that change.

32
33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Walter. I have Ms. Boggs.

34
35 **MS. BOGGS:** So, the first sentence on page 4, and it says, "A
36 committee member pointed out that lowering the ACL might be an
37 effective approach". Dakus read "might not" and so is what is on
38 my screen not correct?

39
40 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

41
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I guess the question is for staff at this point,
43 and we had made the motion to consider looking at reductions in
44 catch limits, and so I'm just curious, in terms of guidance to
45 staff and next steps for this action to be developed.

46
47 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.

1
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Not really
3 from my perspective, and, I mean, what kind of reductions in
4 catches are you looking at? Do you want to use some of the recent
5 historical landings that I presented, or do you want to use
6 something else, and is that all you want to consider, and so, if
7 we could have a little discussion, I think that would be helpful,
8 and then, also, where is this in the priority, which we'll talk
9 about at the end, but I do think just an indication on that would
10 be helpful, with everything else we have going on.

11
12 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, during committee, I was hearing mixed
13 sentiment for whether we should proceed, or not proceed, and,
14 obviously, we have a motion recommending we do something. In that
15 light, or vein, you know, I would agree with Ms. Simmons, and I
16 think looking at kind of recent levels of landings, and trying to
17 lower the catch limit commensurate with that, given the decline,
18 would be one action, and then we did hear quite a bit of support,
19 during public testimony, for consideration of a bag limit
20 adjustment on the recreational side, and so I would be open,
21 obviously, to looking at the bag limit again.

22
23 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

24
25 **MR. WALKER:** I would agree with that. I think we should examine
26 the viability of a bag limit adjustment and if it's going to have
27 any impact at all, and that would be a good thing to have more
28 information on what proposed gain we might get out of that, for
29 further discussion.

30
31 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Froeschke.

32
33 **DR. FROESCHKE:** As part of the range of alternatives for the catch
34 limits, would you want to entertain things that may result in a
35 predicted seasonal closure, or early closure? I mean, just
36 thinking on one hand, if you don't reduce the landings sufficient
37 that it requires some change in the fishing behavior, it may not
38 accomplish much, except for, if it is a cyclical thing, and then
39 you get a bunch of king mackerel that show back up, and now you
40 have a problem.

41
42 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

43
44 **MR. WALKER:** I think it would be important at least to know exactly
45 where that threshold is, so we try and work around it, and maybe
46 get close, but knowing the limit of where we're risking a closure
47 would be a good thing.

1
2 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

3
4 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I would agree with that as well, and I recognize
5 that there might be some differential impacts that we need to look
6 at, based on geography. The other thing, which I mentioned during
7 committee, is thinking about this from a dynamic standpoint, and
8 so, if we do see a rebound in the stock, you know, what maybe is,
9 you know, built in that we could start working our way up, in terms
10 of increasing those catch limits again, and so I guess I will have
11 to put my head together with my team, and get back to you on that,
12 but we would love to, obviously, explore some of those ideas as
13 well, so we don't have to be back at this table adjusting catch
14 limits when things get better.

15
16 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.

17
18 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I think
19 that's helpful. I think we have some direction that we could start
20 working on, and so perhaps we can get a little bit of feedback on
21 priority now of this, and it looks like we're looking at
22 potentially two actions, and so it could be perhaps
23 straightforward.

24
25 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Mr. Geeslin.

26
27 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Remaining Items from CMP AP
28 Meeting, Tab C, Number 6(c), Mr. Fisher covered all the CMP AP
29 items earlier. Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

30
31 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Mr. Diaz.

32
33 **MR. DIAZ:** Would this be a good time to address that issue that I
34 discussed with you earlier, or would you prefer to wait?

35
36 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I have your item on the list to do, but it's
37 not now. I didn't forget about it.

38
39 **MR. DIAZ:** Thank you, sir.

40
41 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I am moving down the list. Next is
42 going to be the Supporting Agencies Updates, Alabama Law
43 Enforcement Efforts, and Major Downey.

44
45 **SUPPORTING AGENCIES UPDATES**
46 **ALABAMA LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS**
47

1 **MAJOR JASON DOWNEY:** Good afternoon. All right. Well, I'm Jason
2 Downey, the Chief of Enforcement for Alabama Marine Resources.
3 I'm going to give you a brief update on Alabama's JEA program for
4 2023 and 2024.

5
6 Alabama's JEA agreement runs from August 24 to August 23, each
7 year, and this year, we received \$406,408, which is a little lower
8 than last year, due to the removal of the SEFHIER program.
9 \$160,000 was spent on direct purchases, which included two law
10 enforcement vehicles, two outboard motors, and a fendering system
11 for our eight-meter patrol vessel. \$65,000 was spent on training
12 and other indirect costs.

13
14 Our priorities this year are the same as last year, minus the
15 SEFHIER. This slide here shows our priorities and the amount of
16 money allocated for each priority. In Alabama, we allow our
17 officers to work overtime to fulfill the JEA contract, and so these
18 will be patrol hours worked on top of their forty-hours-per-week
19 of state time. For turtle excluder devices, we have a total of
20 614 patrol hours, and it's broken down by offshore patrols and
21 nearshore patrols and dockside patrols.

22
23 For recreational reef fish, we have 300 offshore patrol hours.
24 The IFQ quota, the individual fishing quota, is 300 dockside patrol
25 hours, and IUU is eighty-one shore patrol hours. Marine mammal is
26 225 patrol hours, broken down to nearshore and dockside patrols,
27 and, for general CMP and HMS, we have 265 patrol hours, broken
28 down to offshore, dockside, and outreach hours.

29
30 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Downey, we have a question from Mr. Gill.

31
32 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could you go back a slide,
33 please? My question is, is that a typical distribution of how
34 you distribute your JEA priorities, recognizing that they change
35 by no SEFHIER or SEFHIER, and I understand that, but, generally,
36 is this kind of representative of what a typical year might be?

37
38 **MAJOR DOWNEY:** For us in Alabama, yes, but every state is
39 different, their priorities. They may be the same priorities, but
40 they may have more hours toward a priority, and like, if you look
41 at our IUU hours, we don't have very many, and we don't have as
42 much as say Texas or Florida.

43
44 **MR. GILL:** Yes, and I'm talking for Alabama, and so this is a
45 typical, representative kind of give-and-take.

46
47 **MAJOR DOWNEY:** Yes.

1
2 **MR. GILL:** Thank you.
3

4 **MAJOR DOWNEY:** Yes. So far this year, officers have worked a total
5 of 1,143 hours of JEA patrols, more than 328 commercial anglers
6 inspected, 361 recreational anglers inspected, twenty-four
7 charter/headboats inspected, and these numbers are going to
8 drastically increase over the next few months, as activity
9 increases.

10
11 One of the topics of discussion this year, amongst the Gulf states,
12 has been the use of FADs. In Alabama, we don't feel like this is
13 a huge problem, but we do come across these from time to time,
14 when we're out on patrol. Here, we have two FADs that were found
15 while on patrol in Mobile Bay. One of them is just a piece of
16 lattice work framed in PVC, and the other is just a plastic
17 flowerpot with a float inside, and so these types of FADs tend to
18 appear when the tripletail start showing up in Mobile Bay.

19
20 We don't have any laws in Alabama pertaining specifically to FADs,
21 and so we consider this criminal littering, and so, if someone is
22 caught deploying them, they will be cited for that.

23
24 One of the best ways we've found to combat this issue is through
25 our outreach programs. Our outreach events are a great way for
26 these officers to interact with the public and answer the many
27 questions they might have. We participate in around fifteen
28 outreach events a year, not counting the presence at the many
29 fishing tournaments in our area.

30
31 We give out tons of educational materials at these events, both
32 state and federal information. This year, we're putting a little
33 more emphasis on educating the recreational boaters on the marine
34 mammal interactions. We have focused a lot of attention, in the
35 past, on the dolphin tour industry, but we realize that there are
36 a lot of marine mammal interactions between recreational boaters
37 and the personal watercrafts.

38
39 Another issue we're focusing on this year is the illegal charters.
40 This would be the state-licensed charter boats who venture out
41 beyond the state waters and target the reef fish. This is a common
42 issue across the Gulf states, and we're working with other
43 agencies, through the Illegal Charter Taskforce, to come up with
44 ways to combat this problem. Have you got a question?

45
46 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Are you catching any illegal
47 charter guys?

1
2 **MAJOR DOWNEY:** So, we're checking a lot of these inshore guys out
3 there, that are close to federal waters, but we haven't caught any
4 in federal waters. We do get phone calls, periodically, that it's
5 happening, it's happening, but we don't get any specifics on who
6 is doing it, when they're doing it, and so that would help a lot,
7 if the phone calls had a little more information, but I think our
8 presence out there has shown to help.
9
10 **MR. WALKER:** (Mr. Walker's comment is not audible on the recording.)
11
12 **MAJOR DOWNEY:** I can go the next slide, but that's the end of my
13 presentation, if anybody has any more questions.
14
15 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Ms. Boggs.
16
17 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you for being here, Major Downey. I have a
18 question and a comment, and so I'm surprised to see the patrol
19 hours, and the outreach hours, on CMP and HMS, and is that common
20 for you all?
21
22 **MAJOR DOWNEY:** Those outreach hours, it has to fall somewhere on
23 this, for us to put the hours in, but we do outreach for -- When
24 we're at outreach events, we cover all these topics, and it just
25 happens, with the JEA, the way it's written up, it has to fall
26 somewhere, and that's where we put it.
27
28 **MS. BOGGS:** Then the other thing was I saw some of the officers at
29 the Wharf Boat Show, and that's the first time that I had seen the
30 Fish Rules ruler that I believe that one of your officers created,
31 and that's pretty --
32
33 **MAJOR DOWNEY:** Yes.
34
35 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Bannon.
36
37 **MR. BANNON:** Do you know how much that dang ruler costs? That's
38 the most expensive giveaway we have, but I do want to -- The one
39 thing on the charter stuff, like Mr. Walker pointed out, is those
40 are extremely difficult cases to make. The Coast Guard, our folks
41 at Marine Resources, and the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement have
42 been working jointly, across all the states, to do this, and they
43 did some great operations, and, as a matter of a fact, I want to
44 recognize Officer Glen Carnegie, who I think was like officer of
45 the year, or something like that, under that program, because --
46 It was very well-deserved, because of the cooperation, and the
47 sharing of information, and trying to address that issue, not just

1 like, hey, we're just going to go out there and make a show, and,
2 I mean, they tried to use intel, intel-driven patrols, to highlight
3 the areas, and there's a lot of water, and there's a lot of boats,
4 and so I just want to commend the taskforce, and I can't -- Did it
5 have a name?
6

7 **MAJOR DOWNEY:** (Major Downey's comment is not audible on the
8 recording.)
9

10 **MR. BANNON:** The illegal charter taskforce, and so they put
11 tremendous effort into it, and I think you're going to see more of
12 that in the future, and so we are excited about that, and, as I
13 always tell folks, if somebody is doing something illegal, rat
14 them out.
15

16 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** All right. Thank you. Do we have any more
17 questions? Okay. Thank you. Thank you for being here. Okay.
18 We're going to move on to the NOAA OLE and Mr. Walia.
19

20 **NOAA OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**
21

22 **MR. MATT WALIA:** Thanks, everyone. I know we're at the end of the
23 day, and I'm Matt Walia, the Compliance Liaison. My apologies
24 that the screen is off, but, while we're waiting for it to get
25 pulled up, I'm just going to note that we're in between our council
26 reports, and the quarter just ended eleven days ago, and so that
27 one is not done, but I'm going to give you updates on some current
28 stuff we're working on, and our latest council report, from October
29 to December, is in the briefing book, and so I encourage you to
30 check that out, and you can look in more detail.
31

32 On this slide, what I wanted to note is we've had some vacancies,
33 in the past, in the Gulf of Mexico, as far as our enforcement
34 officers, and we've actually been able to hire, and so, where you
35 see them circled, in Harlingen, League City, and Houston, St. Pete,
36 and Fort Myers, they're now all hired, and so we're fully staffed,
37 as far as officers in the Gulf of Mexico. It put us at fourteen
38 right now, and it has helped. We've been able to get more of a
39 presence, work on joint patrols, work with JEA as well, and so
40 everyone is in some form of training right now, but they are
41 formally hired in the Gulf of Mexico right now.
42

43 Some of the stuff that we are focusing on is involving the
44 sanctuaries recently. Down in the Keys, in the Keys Sanctuary, we
45 continue to get a high volume of referrals, and those come from
46 the state officers, as well as sanctuary staff, and you see where
47 it's usually areas to be avoided, with larger ships running through

1 the sanctuary, and groundings, which take a lot of time to do
2 assessments and get outcomes on, and it's pretty time and labor
3 intensive. Then a lot of prohibited fishing and gear use in the
4 Keys.

5
6 One thing that I did want to highlight though is we have a story
7 that we put out in February regarding a mutilated sawfish. Right
8 now, as you may know, it's bad news down there, and there's a lot
9 of sawfish strandings going on, a lot of finfish in trouble, and
10 a lot of folks are trying to work to figure out what's going on.
11 This happened at the same time, and we had reports of a stranded
12 sawfish that was in trouble.

13
14 Our officers came on scene in the morning, and, when they came on
15 the scene in the morning, it was dead with the rostrum cut off,
16 like this picture, and so we have a story out, and we're offering
17 a \$20,000 reward for folks that may have any info to help lead to
18 conviction on this, and I'm just reiterating that, and a reminder
19 that it's unlawful to possess any parts of these species, even if
20 they're dead, and to not have that.

21
22 I will note that NOAA is doing an emergency response team, and we
23 have these cards, so, if stakeholders in Florida need them, I'm
24 sure we can get it out, and it has the reporting 800 sawfish
25 number, and I can get that in folks' hands, if you guys need it.

26
27 The Flower Gardens, we've been engaged recently too, and we've had
28 a couple of recent cases on commercial fishermen that have been
29 fishing inside the Flower Gardens, and there seems to be a
30 reeducation and outreach that we're doing, and it was back in 2021
31 that they expanded the area, and so it's not new. We did a lot of
32 outreach, and the sanctuary did, but we're still coming across
33 people that are not quite aware of it, and so just a reminder that
34 no anchoring is allowed.

35
36 You can hook-and-line in the area, and that includes bandit reels,
37 but no longline is allowed in there. The sanctuary does have
38 mooring buoys, and so we're trying to get this out to the public.
39 We're working with sanctuary staff, and the Coast Guard has been
40 very helpful. We've been going on flyovers with them, over the
41 area too, and I was actually able to -- That picture on there, I
42 just developed a flyer, and I just got it printed last week, and
43 so we're looking to get this out to the field, and to sanctuary
44 staff to pass out too, so we can get that in folks' hands.

45
46 There's a barcode, and, if you scan on here, it will go to all the
47 closure areas, so you can put those corners into your plotter, and

1 you're good to go, and, from that assistance, another thing that
2 we have going on is we're working with some fishing events, for
3 outreach, and a lot of the sanctuaries, nationwide, are doing some
4 events, coming up in June, and they're going to be holding some
5 fishing clinics.

6
7 We have some spots going out of the Flower Gardens, and it's
8 primarily veterans and military families, and so we're going to be
9 doing outreach, and we'll get our officers onboard and out fishing,
10 and I'm trying to replicate that in the Keys. They're doing a
11 trip down there as well, but that's a good time to get awareness
12 out there, of what we do and how to do it out there.

13
14 Observer program safety, which continues to be a high priority
15 nationwide and divisionally. What we do, with our officers, is we
16 go over and train the observers, and we teach them how to prevent,
17 when it comes to sexual assault and harassment, job impediment,
18 and any observer coverage, and so folks are taking observers when
19 they need to, as well as fishery violations they may see, and I
20 want to put a reminder here that this letter, on the page, is a
21 notice that came out about a year ago.

22
23 It's a notice to all owners and operators that are mandated to
24 take observers, to remind them of their requirements. We've had
25 some issues in the past, but it essentially runs through
26 prevention, response, and reporting requirements for fishing
27 vessel owner, if they encounter a sexual harassment scenario, and
28 so, essentially, if the owner does know something has happened,
29 and they hear it from their captain, they need to terminate that
30 trip, order their captain to come back into port, and, when they
31 do come back into port, they are also required to report it to the
32 Coast Guard, the Coast Guard Investigative Services, and that's a
33 notice nationwide that's out there.

34
35 Unpermitted charters, we just talked about this, and, as Mr. Bannon
36 noted, the Gulf Coast Illegal Taskforce is great, and we've been
37 working with that, and we're looking to expand on that with our
38 folks and state partners. We go to captain's meetings, and that
39 picture is we've gone to some with state partners, with FWC, where
40 it's mostly state-permitted folks. Some are dual, and they may go
41 over the lines, and we're there to answer those federal questions.

42
43 We do outreach as well. Myself, I was down in the Florida Keys a
44 little while ago, with one of our officers, and we worked from
45 Islamorada down to Key West, stopping at all different local
46 marinas and trying to talk with folks and remind them of what the
47 requirements are, everything from vessel ID, sea turtle gear, what

1 do you know on the water, what have you got to say, and it gives
2 us an opportunity to talk to folks and figure out what's going on
3 in their neck of the woods, and we make our presence known.

4
5 I talked about our new hires, and we have a new hire down in Fort
6 Myers, and we've been getting out and doing a lot more patrols by
7 ourselves, doing joint ones with JEA, and I've been working with
8 Major Downey and his officers, and we're working with the Coast
9 Guard, and that's been real successful, and, from some of that,
10 we've had some recent outcomes that I want to announce, working
11 with our Office of General Enforcement.

12
13 You mentioned some penalties, and we've had about three recent
14 ones around \$20,000, civil penalties that were assessed, and you
15 see the range here, and we've got some current -- Some active
16 investigations underway, and we continue to do that throughout the
17 Gulf, and so that is some recent efforts, and we recognize and
18 continue to work on the issue of charters.

19
20 Outreach is a major component too, and we want to make sure that
21 people see us out there, and they know what we're doing, what to
22 do, how to do it the right way, and those top pictures may not be
23 familiar. In Florida, they host a yearly outreach event, hold in
24 conjunction with FWC, at their MarineQuest and ScienceFest with
25 USF.

26
27 We had an exhibit with one of our patrol boats, and it was great,
28 and I think there was over 13,000 people that came on the public
29 day. They had a school day, and there were about 1,600 kids that
30 came, and I got to educate and deputize a lot of junior agents. I
31 told them how to not feed dolphins, how to treat wildlife out
32 there, and there are some pretty smart kids out there, and they
33 know their stuff, and so that was cool to see.

34
35 We do try going to other events, and that lower-left picture is a
36 conference that I was at in Tampa, and it's surprising, and there
37 was a lot of folks involved with the Gulf of Mexico, that work in
38 science, that did not know what a descender device was, and so I
39 had to explain, to a lot of them, what it is and how to work it,
40 and so we got word out with that.

41
42 The middle picture, we've been doing a lot of outreach with sea
43 turtles, to remind folks that fill in holes when they're at the
44 beach, especially with tourists and families coming down, to not
45 hurt sea turtle hatchlings when they come, and the shark mako
46 picture that you see on there -- It's been a zero-retention ban
47 for shortfin mako for over a year or so now, commercial and

1 recreational, and we're still seeing that happen, at times, and so
2 it's just another reminder, and HMS put out a Fishery Bulletin as
3 well, but to remind folks that you cannot retain and bring those
4 back in and sell them.

5
6 Partnerships, I can't speak enough of that, and you saw our first
7 slide, with our staffing and where we are, and we are fully staffed
8 in the Gulf, but, still, fourteen EOs is not a lot, from Texas all
9 the way over and down to the Keys, and so we rely on these
10 partnerships. I do want to give credit to Officer Carnegie, that's
11 in here, and our relationship we have with Alabama. It works
12 really well, and we're able to do a lot of joint ops and patrols
13 together.

14
15 The upper-left picture, the shrimp picture, is from joint ops with
16 federal and state partners that we've had, and the lower-left is
17 doing a SIMP patrol, over in the Port of Mobile, and so we've done
18 a lot of those efforts recently, ramping up too and working with
19 Alabama Marine Resource folks, watching seafood that's coming in,
20 figuring out the point of origin, and is it wild-caught, or is it
21 aquaculture, and do you have the right paperwork, and is it getting
22 imported in right?

23
24 That other picture too is we've even had shipments of shrimp coming
25 into New Orleans that looked kind of questionable, from Ecuador,
26 and the importer is based here in Mobile, and so our folks came
27 over, and worked with Alabama, and we tracked everything, and it
28 ended up being okay, but we watching that traced seafood, and
29 trying to make sure that everything is coming in the way it should
30 be.

31
32 Another thing with partnerships is we continue to do trainings.
33 Those pictures on the right is our officer in Florida working with
34 FWC officers, where we held essentially an IFQ workshop, and we
35 taught newer officers how the IFQ program works, how to conduct an
36 offload, what to expect, how to work with industry, and then we
37 put it into practice, and they actually went, and they did
38 inspections, and so it was good to have hands-on training and
39 getting to work with the officers.

40
41 Some recent targeted operations, and I just mentioned all the
42 Seafood Import Monitoring Program and seafood coming in that has
43 revolved around that, and the Port of Panama City is kind of
44 similar, with a JEA referral, and we did a combination of trainings
45 and working with the ports and inspecting the containers.

46
47 Down in Texas, we've been doing a lot of ports of entry over the

1 time, and it's becoming more common, working with Customs, Texas
2 Parks and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Customs and Border
3 Patrol, and you see, in this picture, that everyone does what they
4 can in their jurisdiction. We work on the fisheries side, for
5 seafood coming in, and Fish and Wildlife tracked down some
6 snakeskin boots, in that picture on the left, and all sorts of
7 exotic goods coming in, and the state was able to find some oysters
8 that were coming in illegally under their purview, and so it's a
9 good example of all of us working together and getting the job
10 done.

11
12 This is just a reminder too, and we always put this number up, and
13 so, if someone does have info to report, and you want to get this
14 out to the industry, the captains, and you can call, and you can
15 leave this anonymously, or you can give your info, and we can give
16 you a callback. We always monitor this line. We have someone
17 rotate on it. If you give us something, we will try to act on it,
18 and, if you do request a number, we can get back to you and let
19 you know where we are, and so we encourage that, to help conserve
20 the resource. I think, with that, I will take if there's any
21 questions. Thank you.

22
23 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a couple of questions. Mr.
24 Gill.

25
26 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Matt, for coming
27 down and updating us, and thank you for all that you do. What I
28 didn't see there, and perhaps I missed it, was I'm assuming that
29 you all coordinate with the Coast Guard quite closely, and perhaps
30 specific operations, perhaps just general coordination, but would
31 you talk to that a little bit, about things like lanchas off of
32 Texas and other areas in which you may participate together?

33
34 **MR. WALIA:** Sure, and the lanchas are a little bit of a different
35 story. That's the purview of the Coast Guard, and that's their -
36 - What they go after. Usually what happens, in that case, is they
37 will intercept a lancha, and they will bring the folks back to
38 shore, confiscate the boat and gear, and notify us, but then, I
39 would say, usually most people are expatriated back across the
40 border, but then the gear is confiscated, and, currently, some
41 folks in Pascagoula are looking into it, and they're trying to
42 figure some stuff out with the gear, of how it's used, where it's
43 from, and so, in that way, NOAA is involved.

44
45 Obviously, with the Coast Guard, yes, we do -- I mean, in the
46 sanctuary, we've been working here local out of Sector Mobile,
47 where we'll do fly-alongs with them, and our officer here has gone

1 along with them, to build relationships, and we can go over
2 different closure areas in the Gulf, observe if boat are out there,
3 and then do follow-up interviews afterwards. They do a lot of
4 shrimp boardings when they're offshore, and you saw the Coast Guard
5 report yesterday, and so we work with them on shrimp referrals,
6 for TEDs and BRD violations, but, yes, we'll do joint ops with
7 them all the time, on the Atlantic Coast and Caribbean, and it's
8 just those happen to be the couple that I highlighted just this
9 time, but absolutely, yes, and they're an integral partner.

10
11 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, sir.

12
13 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

14
15 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you. First off, I just wondered, and do they
16 let you ride in the jet, too?

17
18 **MR. WALIA:** Not me. I want to go, but they let this guy out, and
19 I've got to figure out how to get over there.

20
21 **MR. WALKER:** Because we have issues with the Steamboat Lumps Marine
22 Sanctuary out there, and it's 130 miles from shore, and so we
23 understand the extreme difficulties in monitoring that, and I just
24 wondered -- A flyby in a jet would save everybody a lot of time,
25 and I didn't know if that was anything that you guys had access to
26 or not, but is there somewhere that we can get more details on
27 these cases that you listed, between \$5,700 and \$20,000 in the
28 charter thing, because I always run into a brick wall when I try
29 and --

30
31 You know, there's a guy at my marina, that I was told, by our local
32 enforcement guy, that we finally got that guy that's been flipping
33 his nose at us, and everybody hates him, and he's busted for
34 undersized fish a lot, but they finally got him on the offshore
35 charters, that we've all reported him for, and that was it, and
36 nobody has any details on it, and I understand that these cases
37 take a while, and, if it's a big case, it may take a while, but so
38 none of these have I ever actually gotten legitimate proof that
39 they got any of these charter guys that we've all been turning in
40 and complaining about for a long time, and can I access that
41 information anywhere?

42
43 **MR. WALIA:** Yes, absolutely, and so there's -- I can provide the
44 site to you later, but our Office of General Counsel -- They have
45 a webpage, where they actually have their charging information,
46 and so you can -- As they update their sheets -- And I incorporate
47 that into our council reports, at the end of it, and so, if you

1 look at it, in the council report, it's all in there, but, when we
2 work with General Counsel, and they issue a Notice of Violation
3 Assessment, a NOVA, that becomes public after that.

4
5 It will list the subject, the amount, what the violation is, and
6 so all of that is publicly available, and it's a matter of it
7 becoming adjudicated, you know, the final outcome, but we do -- I
8 know, in the past, I've done a story on outreach, and we try to
9 promote it, and we're probably going to do a similar one leading
10 up to the federal for-hire season, where we can highlight recent
11 actions, and kind of similar to this, but put into a story what
12 we've done, where we've worked, and here's some outcomes, and so
13 I can make folks aware of it.

14
15 **MR. WALKER:** That would be great, because I think what we're all
16 -- I say "we all", but a lot of us for-hire guys are just waiting
17 for a guy that we can just put on blast, and say, look, this is
18 what happens when you get caught doing illegal charters, and, as
19 far as I know, we don't have anything like that, that we can put
20 out there and essentially threaten these guys that are doing it,
21 to deter them from doing it, especially if it had huge fines on it
22 as well, and it would be a helpful deterrent, if I could share
23 that.

24
25 **MR. WALIA:** I will get with you after the meeting. Absolutely. I
26 appreciate it.

27
28 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. I'm not seeing any other questions.
29 Thank you for your presentation.

30
31 **MR. WALIA:** Thank you.

32
33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** We're going to move down the list to the
34 Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission and Mr. Donaldson.

35
36 **GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION**

37
38 **MR. DONALDSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know it's finally the
39 time where I get to give my presentation, and everybody has been
40 waiting with bated breath, and so rest assured that it is here.

41
42 I just wanted to update the council on some of our IRA activities.
43 I mentioned, at the last meeting, we're putting together some
44 workshops, and the steering committee has been established, and it
45 is meeting regularly. A facilitator has been selected for both of
46 the workshops, and the proposed date for the effort validation
47 workshop is June 4th through 6th, and the proposed date for the

1 discard workshop is July 30th through August 1st, and we're still
2 working on the locations, but they will be, more than likely,
3 either New Orleans or St. Pete, but hopefully those will be figured
4 out soon, and we'll get the information out.

5
6 Kind of a new development, under IRA, is at-sea sampling, and we're
7 working expanding coverage to the western Gulf of Mexico, focusing
8 on the for-hire fishery and reef fish species, working with Texas
9 and Louisiana. They've developed statements of work and budgets,
10 and work is scheduled to begin being conducted in January of next
11 year, through December of 2026.

12
13 As was discussed during the state red snapper reports, we're
14 continuing with the recreational fishing effort pilot, and it's a
15 one-year pilot to test the LA Creel effort survey in Mississippi
16 and Alabama. As reported, work continues, and is going well, and
17 we're beginning the planning of, between the Gulf States and staff,
18 to conduct the estimates, so we can start evaluating those, and
19 we're actually having a meeting later this month, with Louisiana,
20 Mississippi, and Alabama, to develop the program and to begin
21 developing those estimates, and, once the estimates are developed,
22 we'll -- The analysis will be conducted to compare and contrast
23 the various effort estimates. As I reported in the past, this
24 presents a unique opportunity to examine the differences between
25 the state and federal recreational surveys.

26
27 As Andy talked about during the Shrimp Committee, we are -- We, in
28 conjunction with Sea Grant, are planning a Southeast Shrimp
29 Strategy and Planning Meeting, and it's scheduled for April 30th
30 through May 1st in Baton Rouge.

31
32 The first day will be a variety of different presentations, and
33 talking about the trade updates, a market buyer panel, and then
34 the USDA and NOAA Fisheries are going to be providing presentations
35 on the work that they're doing, in terms of the shrimp fishery,
36 and then the second day is kind of where the rubber meets the road,
37 and we're going to have breakout sessions to prioritize, and
38 identify, actions for industry, the agency, and Sea Grant. I will
39 mention that the meeting is quite large, and the meeting is invite-
40 only.

41
42 Then the last -- I don't have it here, but I just wanted to mention
43 that some of you know that Ron Lukens, who was a long-term employee
44 of the commission, passed away last October, and I participated in
45 an eternal reef dedication for him in Sarasota last month, and his
46 wife, as well as members of our artificial reef subcommittee,
47 participated in it, and there is plans to deploy similar reefs,

1 reef balls, in the other four states, and so his ashes will be
2 distributed throughout the Gulf of Mexico, and so I just wanted to
3 let folks know, and, with that, I will take any questions.

4
5 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Donaldson. We have a
6 question from Mr. Gill.

7
8 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Dave, for that.
9 I'm sorry to hear about Ron. I knew he was in bad shape, but I'm
10 always sorry to hear the endpoint. I was just going to comment
11 that I like your new form, using these fancy PowerPoint slides,
12 better than your old form, when we didn't have them, and so keep
13 it up, if you would.

14
15 **MR. DONALDSON:** I appreciate that, and I would agree with you.

16
17 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

18
19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I feel I'm missing something, like an interpretive
20 dance. Maybe not a question for Dave, but more for Alabama and
21 Mississippi, and, with the LA Creel expansion to your states, the
22 sampling universe you're using -- Is that people that -- Did you
23 essentially institute a reef fish permit, or are you using the
24 universe that is essentially signed up for Snapper Check and
25 Mississippi Tails 'n Scales?

26
27 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Burris.

28
29 **MR. RICK BURRIS:** Thank you, and so Mississippi did -- We did
30 implement a recreational offshore landing permit, similar to
31 Louisiana, and it started in February, and I think, right now, we
32 have about a thousand of those permits issued. It's a free permit,
33 and we have about a thousand so far, and we expect to be anywhere
34 between 5,000 and 8,000.

35
36 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, you're seeing it, obviously, grow over time.

37
38 **MR. BURRIS:** Yes, and, once snapper season opens, it should grow
39 considerably.

40
41 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Bannon.

42
43 **MR. BANNON:** I tell a lot of stories, but I don't want to tell a
44 lie, and so I don't know if we're using our reef fish endorsement
45 database or our saltwater license database. Dave, I don't know if
46 you remember which one.

1 **MR. DONALDSON:** I don't, off the top of my head.

2
3 **MR. BANNON:** But I can get that. I will get that information, and
4 Kevin had to get offline for another call.

5
6 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Any other questions for Mr. Donaldson?
7 Not seeing any, we're going to move along, and Dr. Simmons is going
8 to walk us through a Discussion of Council Planning and Primary
9 Activities.

10
11 **COUNCIL PLANNING AND PRIMARY ACTIVITIES**

12
13 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so,
14 in an effort to make our PowerPoint presentation much shiner next
15 time, we're going to try to do an interactive web tool, but, until
16 then, you're stuck with Tab R, Number 6.

17
18 **MR. DONALDSON:** I thought you were going to say interpretative
19 dance.

20
21 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** No, and that's above my paygrade.
22 All right, and so I will try to focus on June, since that's our
23 next meeting, and so we did try to add some text in here, but you
24 have to right-click on it, and it's kind of a pain, and so that's
25 why we're going to try the web-based tool.

26
27 Focusing on June, we're planning to bring the for-hire data
28 collection document back, and so SEFHIER 2.0. I don't think we're
29 going to be able to take final action on the Spanish mackerel catch
30 limits in June, and we'll have to think about probably pushing
31 that at least until August, and so we'll see if we can bring a
32 draft back with taking a look at the bag limits, as well as your
33 preferreds for the other actions.

34
35 Gag framework management measures, that's something you postponed,
36 and so that's from a previous meeting. For Reef Fish 60, IFQ
37 distribution, we heard you would like to have some more agenda
38 time, and so we'll work with the Chair and Vice Chair to see if we
39 can do that. We had planned to bring, I think, a draft of Reef
40 Fish 59, IFQ permit requirements, and we are not planning to bring
41 back anything for the shallow-water grouper catch levels for the
42 next meeting, but bring something back, that's a little bit more
43 comprehensive, for the August meeting.

44
45 You have decided to postpone work on the midwater snapper complex,
46 and so you will not see that in June, and then you will not see
47 the framework action for shrimp until August, and so, Mr. Chair,

1 I will see if there's any questions.

2

3 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Any questions for Dr. Simmons? Mr.
4 Gill.

5

6 **MR. GILL:** It sounds, to me, like a light agenda in June, no?

7

8 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I don't think so. We have the
9 sanctuary folks wanting to come talk to us about wahoo, and we
10 have at least a half-a-day of IFQ discussion, from what I can tell,
11 and so I don't think it will be light, but I will certainly be
12 working with the Chair and Vice Chair and let you know as soon as
13 possible.

14

15 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a couple of questions. Mr.
16 Strelcheck.

17

18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Carrie. We have, obviously, a lot of
19 fairly complex, long-term actions that we're working on, that I
20 know are time-consuming, and we talked today about the red snapper
21 framework, and you also were asking for advice on kind of where
22 mackerel fits in, and so I would love to hear from you, given this
23 schedule, and midwater falling off, what you think the capacity is
24 for staff to work on those actions and the timing of those.

25

26 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.

27

28 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I will give a shot, and no promises,
29 as you took our fishery biologist, and we're trying to hire another
30 one, and so, that being said, I think my understanding is the king
31 mackerel framework action is a higher priority, just because we
32 are concerned about the stock, and I think we have a little bit of
33 time, based on the fact that the red snapper effort is likely not
34 going to take place until next year, and so we'll try to do
35 something for August, for that, I would anticipate, and try to
36 bring something back for king mackerel in June, would be my
37 understanding of priority, but jump in if you have a different
38 idea.

39

40 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

41

42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I don't, and I think we need to certainly talk to
43 -- I need to talk to my team, and get a good handle on kind of
44 workload, and you may have said this, and so, with Reef Fish 60,
45 would we at least bring some actions, and alternatives, back in
46 June, for some discussion? Would that be worthwhile, just to help
47 with the August meeting?

1
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** That was not my understanding, but
3 I'm going to look at Dr. Diagne, and I thought we were going to
4 try to continue to work on 59.

5
6 **DR. ASSANE DIAGNE:** Yes, and the initial plan was to work on 59,
7 but, given that, as a council, I mean, you have a draft purpose
8 and need, and, you know, the general, quote, unquote, categories
9 of actions, if that is what the council is looking to see in June,
10 we'll just have to talk with the other members of the IPT, and, as
11 you said -- I mean, it's the same people that's doing it, right,
12 59 and 60, et cetera, but, if that is what the council would like
13 to see, we are going to make every effort to at least bring
14 something to support your discussions.

15
16 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

17
18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** To that point, I mean, these are, obviously,
19 complicated amendments, and I agree about the kind of alternating
20 back and forth, and I'm just -- I'm concerned when we wait four
21 months, or five months, between meetings, right, to give staff
22 direction, and then we're reacting, and that maybe it could benefit
23 the process if we -- If we don't ask staff to bring back a full
24 amendment, but just a kind of initial rough-cut of the actions,
25 and the alternatives, so that we can weigh-in, and then that
26 provides better guidance for the August discussion, and so that
27 was my suggestion, but I recognize that we would have to find time
28 on the agenda to make that happen.

29
30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Let's chat after this meeting, after
31 you talk with your team, and let's get back together. Thanks.

32
33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Moving down the list, next up is the
34 Federal Charter Vessel ID Marking Requirements. Mr. Strelcheck.

35
36 **OTHER BUSINESS**

37 **FEDERAL CHARTER VESSEL ID MARKING REQUIREMENTS**

38
39 **MR. STRELCHECK:** During the Law Enforcement report, Matt alluded
40 to law enforcement doing some outreach, and one of the requirements
41 that's been in existence, since I believe it was Amendment 1, is
42 numbering requirements on vessels, and they have to be -- Excuse
43 me. For-hire vessels, and they have to be a certain size,
44 depending on the size of the vessel, and we've been messaging,
45 obviously, the need to, obviously, meet these requirements, and
46 there has been certainly some pushback by industry, but I think
47 they've brought up a reasonable concern, and so, for those that

1 aren't familiar, the letters have to be at least eighteen inches
2 in height for vessels over sixty-five feet, ten inches in height
3 for vessels over twenty-five feet, and three inches in height for
4 vessels twenty-five feet long or less.

5
6 The complaint has largely been for that middle-range of vessels,
7 the twenty-five to sixty-five feet, and ten-inch tall letters, on
8 a twenty-five-foot vessel, takes up half the boat, right, and so
9 I've talked to law enforcement, the head of law enforcement, Manny
10 Antonaras, and he's certainly amenable to looking into this. I
11 forwarded this to Carrie, and shared this information, and I wanted
12 to bring it to your attention, because we have gotten some calls
13 from captains, expressing their frustration about it, and I think
14 it's worth revising, but I would like to get some law enforcement
15 input, and so my thought would be that we could provide this before
16 the Law Enforcement AP, and have them weigh-in, and then we could
17 consider their input thereafter.

18
19 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Walker.

20
21 **MR. WALKER:** I think that would be outstanding, because, as a
22 vessel that falls in that range, those letters are unreasonable to
23 ask me to put on my boat. I have them, but they're absurdly large,
24 and really unnecessary, but it's in the rule, and so you have to
25 do that, and so I would greatly appreciate an opportunity to
26 discuss finding what's acceptable to law enforcement and maybe
27 getting us some more reasonably-sized lettering for our
28 commercial, small commercial, vessels.

29
30 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

31
32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, do we have a schedule for when the Law
33 Enforcement AP typically meets? Are they scheduled to meet anytime
34 soon?

35
36 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** They typically meet with the Gulf
37 States Commission, and it's the same time, in the spring and the
38 fall, but I think, for the spring, we just had the virtual meeting,
39 and so I think the next one would be scheduled for like the second
40 week in October, or something like that, the second or third week
41 in October, but we talked about, if there needed to be an interim
42 meeting, like just a virtual call, if you thought that it rose to
43 that, but I wasn't sure where we landed.

44
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I think there's frustration around this.
46 Is there urgency? Probably not, and, I mean, I think, as you
47 pointed out, it could probably be handled with a virtual call, if

1 you wanted to set something up, or wait until October, but I did
2 want to kind of get it in the queue for consideration, and then I
3 think, if we did make changes, it could be hopefully kind of a
4 simple, expedited action that we would work on.

5
6 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We're going to move on to Mr. Diaz,
7 and you had some concern regarding BOEM?

8
9 **DISCUSSION OF GREEN HYDROGEN PRODUCTION**

10
11 **MR. DIAZ:** Yes. Thank you. Bernie, can you pull up that slide
12 that we were talking about? If you all can remember, yesterday,
13 I asked the question of the presenter, who gave us the presentation
14 yesterday, about this slide, and some minor edits were made to the
15 lease instrument in the PSN to allow lessees to propose green
16 hydrogen production as an energy product of offshore wind
17 generation, and two core areas were adjusted. I'm not sure what
18 that means.

19
20 The reason I'm bringing this up is this caught me by surprise, and
21 I've talked to several council members this morning, and nobody
22 has heard anything about green hydrogen until this slide come up,
23 and, when I asked that question, they told me that it was in the
24 prior iteration, and I don't know what that means, but I haven't
25 known about it until this meeting, and so, you know, we've been
26 having presentations on offshore wind, and I think we've been
27 acting very responsible with offshore wind, and we've been mostly
28 concerned with where they site these things, and BOEM has been
29 great about working with us, and I like the process and all, but
30 green hydrogen is a whole different thing.

31
32 IF green hydrogen is part of the equation, we should be asking
33 different questions, and so I don't know enough about this topic
34 to talk very intelligently, and I probably know enough just to be
35 dangerous, but you can produce hydrogen from regular water, okay,
36 and, if it's done on land, with conventional sources, it's just
37 hydrogen, but, if you use a renewable source, it's called green
38 hydrogen, and so, in the Northeast, where we've already got some
39 offshore wind projects, the states in the Northeast have mandated
40 that utilities in those states have to buy the power generated by
41 those offshore wind.

42
43 From an article that I read last night online, that's not happening
44 in the Gulf, and there's no mandate that the state utilities buy
45 those powers, and so it's probably very appealing to do green
46 hydrogen in the Gulf of Mexico, and I think we probably should
47 expect that a lot of these ventures will probably do that, and so

1 I'm kind of rambling, and I know it's late in the day, and I
2 apologize for that, but, a long time ago, and Dave, or some of the
3 other folks that has been around a while can help me, but there
4 was some proposed LNG projects in the Gulf of Mexico.

5
6 At that time, we thought the U.S. was going to be an importer of
7 LNG, and, to re-gasify the liquid LNG, there were ways that they
8 would suck water out of the Gulf to warm it up, and so it was open-
9 loop systems and closed-loop systems, and we were very concerned
10 about the open-loop systems that used a massive amount of water,
11 because you could have larvae that get into these systems and don't
12 make it, and I can't remember the numbers, but the numbers were a
13 huge amount of larvae that was impacted by this, and I think this
14 may have the potential for something like that, but we haven't
15 asked the questions.

16
17 I think we need to, today, figure out a way to do something, where
18 we get some answers, and there's the comment period, from what I
19 understand from the presentation, that ends on May 15, and we don't
20 even have another meeting between now and then, and we don't know
21 how much water they're going to use, and we have no idea. You
22 know, does the desalination process put waste back in the water?
23 How many larvae is liable to be impacted? Are there any pollutions
24 from the cleaning processes that's going to have to be done? I
25 mean, the questions just go on and on and on.

26
27 I would like to see if other council members are concerned, and,
28 if you all are, help me come up with a way that we can do something
29 to react to this in a responsible way. I mean, I think it's our
30 job to look out for things that impact the living marine resources
31 of the Gulf.

32
33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Simmons.

34
35 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I think
36 this is a valid point, and I will kind of express a little -- I
37 mean, I think BOEM has been very responsive in providing updates
38 to the council, but I will express a little bit of frustration
39 with providing them the materials at the last minute, and it puts
40 us in an awkward position, where we are not prepared, especially
41 when we're seeing potential new information, or changes that we
42 have not seen in the past, and so I can certainly work with them,
43 and try to do a better job at that, which I have, but I will try
44 to keep doing that, and so that was one thing.

45
46 The other thing I can do is reach back out to them immediately and
47 try to get more information on this, and they have answered the

1 councils in writing that they could not answer during the meeting,
2 and I have distributed that to the council as well, and so I could
3 start with that, and then, if other council members want to weigh-
4 in on other things you would like me to do, and we can go from
5 there.

6
7 **MR. DIAZ:** From my perspective, I would like that, Dr. Simmons,
8 but I would not like this May 15 deadline to pass without us making
9 some comments that we've got some real concerns, because I don't
10 think we're commenting on wind projects, but we're commenting on
11 something that has the potential to use a massive amount of water
12 out in the Gulf of Mexico, at multiple locations, and we have no
13 idea what the impacts would be, and so I will shut up for a minute,
14 and see if other people have ideas. If they don't, I will try to
15 throw something out there.

16
17 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

18
19 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so my interpretation of
20 this, which could be jaded, coming from Louisiana, right, and all
21 the things that go on over there, but it was to allow the lessees
22 to propose green hydrogen production in there, and so the areas,
23 the call areas, that were previously available for leasing -- There
24 was only one small section that was actually leased out of all of
25 that the last time, and so what I think they're doing here is
26 trying to make this a little bit more favorable, or palatable, to
27 the industry, to potentially lease the second round of this, in
28 Gulf 2, whatever they call it, those areas, but that doesn't
29 necessarily mean that's what's going to happen over there.

30
31 It gives them the potential for that, right, but they may still be
32 putting in facilities that are just wind energy only, with
33 electricity piped inshore to produce hydrogen inshore, and I don't
34 really know, and it could be offshore, and it would make sense to
35 me, and I understand the concerns.

36
37 We have multiple LNG projects taking place in Louisiana right now,
38 but they're all taking place within state waters, right, and
39 they're actually on land, but they utilize some water entrainment
40 for whatever, cooling purposes or whatever they do with it, but
41 it's for LNG export, and not import, is what that's for, and we've
42 had many reviews, and we were able to provide comment on that
43 stuff, and I think, in this process, we'll probably get another
44 update, at the next meeting, from these guys, where we could ask
45 more questions, but you're right, and the deadline for comments,
46 on at least this part, is due in May, but I don't think it's going
47 to dictate what they actually are able to do within those lease

1 areas. My interpretation of what we saw is that it just gives an
2 extra option here, right? That's just my opinion.

3
4 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have a list. Dr. Frazer.

5
6 **DR. FRAZER:** I agree with Dale. I mean, this is the first time
7 that I really saw any of this, and I think, because you have to
8 have comments in a relatively short order, one of the comments
9 might be, you know, next time they give us a presentation, what is
10 the magnitude of, you know, hydrogen production that they're
11 talking about, and how much water might be involved, and that will
12 help us, I think, better understand what types of impacts we might
13 want to consider and provide feedback going down the road.

14
15 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Freeman.

16
17 **DR. FREEMAN:** Thank you, and so I just wanted to add to Mr. Diaz's
18 comment. As you all know, the Shrimp AP met, just about two weeks
19 ago, and they receive a BOEM presentation regularly, and it's one
20 of the industry groups that is highly involved in providing
21 feedback, and I am a bit disappointed to share with the council
22 that this was not relayed to the Shrimp AP, and I think that was
23 a missed opportunity, where the AP could have provided additional
24 feedback to the council, should a letter, with comments, be
25 provided.

26
27 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Go ahead, Mr. Gill.

28
29 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so my question is for Dr.
30 Walter, being on the taskforce, but also whether the Science Center
31 can provide any guidance on this for us, and, secondly, whether
32 the Science Center intends to comment on it directly.

33
34 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Walter.

35
36 **DR. WALTER:** Well, I'm glad that we got an extension on our
37 presentation for the taskforce, because developments seem to
38 happen fairly rapidly in the offshore, in whatever arena that we
39 are now, and so, yes, absolutely, we're going to comment on this
40 in our taskforce, and I think it's concerning, for two reasons.
41 One is because we did the marine spatial planning specifically for
42 offshore wind, and green hydrogen is a different thing, that I'm
43 not very familiar with as well, and I'm really just scrambling to
44 learn about it, and I think you might do that planning, and siting,
45 differently, if it had different impacts on our trust resources.

46
47 Leasing, with the option for something else, when you plan for a

1 particular activity, is problematic, and I think we'll probably
2 comment on that, and then the other aspect of it is that the time
3 that we're able to consider something like this is really short,
4 particularly because I think many of us, staff who have worked on
5 LNG considerations for many years, and there were substantial
6 concerns related to impingement for many of our species.

7
8 I think both are those are going to -- We'll comment on, and that
9 we really need more information about this, and a greater
10 understanding of the process for how the lease for wind also gives
11 -- What it gives relative to opportunities for green hydrogen for
12 the lessee, and so, yes, this is a new development that's also
13 been a bit of a surprise to us. Thanks.

14
15 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Diaz.

16
17 **MR. DIAZ:** So it sounds like several folks are concerned, and we're
18 late in the day, on the last day, and so I don't want to drag this
19 out, and is it possible for us to leave this, Dr. Simmons, where,
20 when you make your contact, if you see there's some things that
21 are concerning, based on what you've heard from the council members
22 today, that we would give the Chair the authority to write a letter
23 for the comment period, to just note that we have some concerns,
24 and we would like further information, and a chance to dig into it
25 more, or something to that effect?

26
27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I would feel comfortable working with
28 the Chair and Vice Chair to do that, yes.

29
30 **MR. DIAZ:** Does that require a motion?

31
32 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I think we've had enough discussion,
33 and I think I'm okay. Thank you.

34
35 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Strelcheck.

36
37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** One other thought is John and I have a monthly
38 call with the Director for BOEM in the Gulf of Mexico, Jim Kendall,
39 and it may be appropriate to invite Carrie, and council staff, to
40 participate in one of those calls, going forward, to give you a
41 platform to share some of your concerns with regard to fisheries
42 issues, and so we'll think about that, and talk to the staff that
43 we usually coordinate with on those calls, and we'll let you know,
44 but certainly we'll share some of these concerns that we're hearing
45 today during our comments at the taskforce meeting.

46
47 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Next up on the list is the MSA Data

1 Confidentiality Proposed Rulemaking, and NOAA Fisheries staff is
2 online. Mr. Wiedoff.

3
4 **MAGNUSON-STEVENS ACT (MSA) DATA CONFIDENTIALITY PROPOSED**
5 **RULEMAKING**
6

7 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Just a little bit of background, if
8 I could, and so this came out, and I think it was sent out in a
9 press release, as, you know, a notice of the proposed rulemaking,
10 like March 8 or something like that, and then the deadline, I
11 believe, is like coming right up, and it's at the end of the month,
12 and so that's why we're trying to squeeze it in under Other
13 Business today.

14
15 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay, Mr. Wiedoff.

16
17 **MR. BRETT ALGER:** My name is Brett Alger, and I work for the Office
18 of Science and Technology at NOAA Fisheries Headquarters. Today,
19 I'm representing the agency, on behalf of both sort of a small
20 group of folks that have been working on this effort at
21 Headquarters, in addition to a much larger sort of advisory group
22 that's comprised of staff from all of our Regional Offices, all of
23 our Science Centers, and a number of national programs, and so
24 what I'm going to be presenting to you is kind of very
25 comprehensive of across a lot of issues, a lot of programs, across
26 the agency.

27
28 The first thing that I want to start with is sort of why are we
29 doing this rulemaking, what is it all about, why now, and the
30 Magnuson-Stevens Act has a number of provisions in it, and,
31 specifically, one of them is protection of confidential
32 information, and, in the statute, it provides that the Secretary,
33 and this is the key term, shall, by regulation, prescribe
34 procedures that may be necessary to preserve the confidentiality
35 of information, and the point there is this is not being done by
36 choice, or by discretion, and this is a mandate that comes from
37 the statute itself.

38
39 That said, there are a number of elements to how we manage
40 confidential information that are out-of-date. The relevant
41 regulations were last updated in the early 1990s, and we have the
42 NOAA Administrative Order 216 that was last updated in the mid-
43 1990s, and then there's been a number of additional updates to the
44 statute, from 1996 to 2006, and then, in 2015, there were
45 amendments to the Moratorium Protection Act.

46
47 Lastly, there is clearly new ways of collecting data nowadays, in

1 terms of camera-based electronic monitoring, electronic reporting
2 programs, and, you know, the agency, in partnership with councils
3 and states and the fishery industry, and a whole host of other
4 partners, you know, share and disseminate different data products
5 in different ways, for different reasons, and so this is also an
6 opportunity to kind of look under the hood and potentially
7 streamline some of those procedures as we move forward.

8
9 The last point that I want to make, here on this slide, is that,
10 you know, we sort of -- We believe that a lot of what we're doing,
11 and undertaking in this rulemaking effort, is really just bringing
12 the regulations up-to-speed with how we operate today, and we don't
13 see this as an effort that is wholesale changing a number of
14 things, and it's not taking some amount of data and moving it to
15 the other side of the line and, you know, broadcasting it anywhere,
16 and we see this as an effort that's largely just recognizing what
17 we do in practice today across all of our fisheries, all of our
18 regions, and just bringing the regulations kind of up-to-speed, if
19 you will.

20
21 In the rulemaking, I would break it down into sort of two broad
22 categories. The first would be different technical and sort of
23 procedural elements, and so I mentioned, a moment ago, the previous
24 statutes that made amendments to -- The actions that made
25 amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and one, in particular, is
26 that it changed the wording of "confidential statistics" to
27 "confidential information". That word change seems small, but
28 it's, you know, quite important.

29
30 Then, also, that, you know, information that's submitted to the
31 Secretary -- You know, it applies to state agencies, to marine
32 commissions, and others, and, you know, it's not just the physical
33 NOAA Fisheries, and we have these partner organizations that are
34 sort of under that umbrella of information that's being collected
35 by the agency.

36
37 The rulemaking sets out a procedure for improving, you know, how
38 we manage confidential information, things like MOUs, data-sharing
39 agreements, the rule of three, and those types of things are kind
40 of set forth in the rulemaking. There are a number of exceptions
41 in the Magnuson-Stevens Act, with respect to disclosing
42 information, and one example here would be that, you know, councils
43 can access confidential information, and so the rule talks a little
44 bit about that, and then, lastly, you know, we're making some
45 updates for how states, or observer service providers, or EM
46 service providers, can collect confidential information.

1 In addition to, you know, some of these sorts of technical changes,
2 we're also -- We already have a number of terms, and definitions,
3 which exist in regulation today, but they have often, you know,
4 had a little bit of uncertainty. There's been kind of, you know,
5 not quite an understanding of maybe specifically what a term may
6 mean, and those are really important terms, and I will go through
7 these quickly, but the rule is basically providing the agency's
8 definition of how we define some of these pieces of information,
9 and so providing a definition of what confidential information is,
10 defining the "business of any person", in quotes, and protecting
11 that information from aggregate or summary-form disclosures.

12
13 There are a number of elements within the limited-access program
14 exception that are being defined, and then it clarifies who can
15 submit a written authorization for the release of confidential
16 information, and so the example there would be like, if you're the
17 vessel owner, and you want to release your information to an
18 outside third party, it offers a little bit more certainty in that
19 process and who is responsible for putting that written request in
20 for authorizing the release of that data.

21
22 Let's start by, you know, defining what is confidential
23 information, and it's broken into two components. The first one
24 is any observer information is considered confidential, and so
25 data collected by observers, data collected by camera-based EM
26 systems, but then the much broader suite of data, and they're going
27 to be any information that's required, and that's the key word
28 there, is required to be submitted to the Secretary, a state
29 agency, or a commission, and so that's going to be logbooks, and
30 that's going to be VMS, and that's landings, and that's the whole
31 suite of data that's potentially required to be submitted to the
32 agency.

33
34 The inverse here would be, you know, what about information that's
35 voluntarily collected, right, and there is lots of research
36 projects that go on, and sometimes you might have logbook
37 requirements, but you might collect a few other pieces of data.
38 Information that's collected voluntarily would not be considered
39 confidential under these definitions.

40
41 Moving down, you know, what is not confidential information, and
42 so, to address the amendments in the Moratorium Protection Act,
43 information that is collected under sort of agreements between the
44 United States and specific RFMOs, such as fishing effort, catch
45 information, and other forms of vessel-specific information that
46 we need to provide to those RFMOs to satisfy those sharing
47 obligations, and that information would not be considered

1 confidential, nor would information collected by the agency under
2 the Magnuson Act regarding specifically foreign vessels.

3
4 The next kind of layer down is, you know, what is not confidential
5 information, and so the slide in front of you here basically goes
6 into, you know, we deploy observers across our different fisheries,
7 largely under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, but, of course, as
8 fisheries are out and operating, and observers are on vessels
9 collecting information, and they're recording interactions with
10 species protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and
11 sometimes the Endangered Species Act, and so the rulemaking goes
12 into -- To sort of bifurcate that, you know, under the MMPA, there
13 is very specific provisions that information must be provided for
14 the public decision-making process, and so that's going to be
15 information like the date, the time, the location of interactions,
16 the type of species, the fishing practices, and those are pieces
17 of information that would be treated as not confidential, so they
18 can be made available through those public processes, such as a
19 TRT.

20
21 However, the Endangered Species Act does not have provisions
22 regarding the public use of information, unlike the MMPA, and so
23 the rule talks about how we would continue to treat interactions
24 with ESA-listed species as confidential information.

25
26 I mentioned, a moment ago, you know, some definitions under the
27 LAP exception, and so the rule goes into defining these very
28 specific terms, which have largely been used for setting up limited
29 access programs, setting up catch share fisheries, and so, you
30 know, due to maybe how those have been set up in the past, people
31 have -- Industry groups, councils, and others, have raised issues,
32 or questions, about what do these very specific terms mean, and so
33 the rule does that.

34
35 It defines a limited-access program to mean a program that
36 allocates specific fishing privileges, such as a total portion of
37 catch, a certain amount of fishing effort, or say specific access
38 to a fishing area, and it defines that word "determination", which
39 means a decision that is specific to a person or exclusive fishing
40 privileges that are sought or held under a limited-access program,
41 and so, you know, sought being, you know, as the program is being
42 developed, obviously, there is processes for fishermen to sort if,
43 you know, demonstrate their participation, and history, in the
44 fishery, and so that would be an example of when you're seeking
45 the development of a limited-access program.

46
47 These decisions are -- You know, they could be any number of

1 things, like allocations, approval or denial of a lease or a sale
2 of those fishing privileges, or indices and adjustments, and then
3 the last definition is required to be submitted.

4
5 That is interpreted such that the exception here applies at the
6 level of confidential information that the agency has used, or
7 intends to use, for a regulatory determination, and so a quick
8 example there would be like, if the agency uses vessel landings,
9 for a given three-year period, for, you know, determining
10 allocations, the aggregated catch across those three years would
11 be subject to disclosure.

12
13 However, you know, a vessel's yearly, or monthly, or trip-by-trip
14 landings, would not be subject to the exception, because that
15 information wasn't necessarily used to make the very specific
16 determination at that three-year level.

17
18 Digging a little deeper into the written authorization exception,
19 I mentioned that, you know, there is an exception in Magnuson that
20 allows the agency to disclose confidential information when the
21 Secretary, and I'm reading the quote there, when the Secretary has
22 obtained written authorization from the person submitting such
23 information to release it to persons for reasons not otherwise
24 provided here, and so you are the person that has the
25 responsibility to release that information, and you submit, you
26 know, a request to the agency, and that's on you to determine, you
27 know, who specifically you would want that information to be shared
28 with.

29
30 If you go down to the second bullet though, that really starts to
31 get into specifically observer information, and so you may put in
32 a request to say that I want my logbook data, my landings data, et
33 cetera, et cetera, but, specifically with respect to observer
34 information, the rule clarifies that observer information is
35 submitted by the person who is subject to the observer coverage
36 requirement.

37
38 In other words, that's saying that an EM service provider is
39 providing the observer services, but they're not necessarily the
40 one that has the authority to release the information, and that
41 release has to come from the person that is responsible for the
42 observer coverage requirement in the first place.

43
44 The last part here is, you know, how does the proposed rule address
45 aggregate and summary release of information, and the very kind of
46 bedrock part of this component is defining the business of any
47 person, and so the agency may, you know, aggregate, or summarize,

1 confidential information, and then release it publicly, but not if
2 -- You know, if directly, or indirectly, it discloses the identity
3 or business or any person, and so the proposed rule defines
4 aggregate or summary form to explicitly address the business of
5 any person, meaning, you know, the financial and operational
6 information that is collected, and we see this change as providing,
7 you know, broader protection for fishery information that is
8 submitted through say logbooks or collected through observers and
9 electronic monitoring programs.

10
11 Lastly, I want to spend just a quick moment on this slide, because
12 it has raised a number of questions, through doing these briefings
13 and other conversations, and so there's a part of the rule that
14 talks about how the agency will undertake, you know, developing,
15 or improving, our internal control procedures, and the three
16 elements that you see in front of you we see as sort of core to
17 that effort.

18
19 The first being, you know, developing data aggregation standards,
20 and a lot of you have probably heard about the rule of three, and,
21 you know, how do you aggregate data together to make it releasable,
22 and we want to make -- You know, we want to make our decision-
23 making more consistent in that arena, so that, you know, a stock
24 assessment scientist in one Science Center is sort of evaluating
25 sort of data requests, or data disclosure, the same, or similar,
26 way as maybe a stock assessment scientist in another region, as an
27 example.

28
29 The next layer down would be, you know, how do third parties access
30 confidential information, and so I see this as sort of like
31 organization-to-organization data sharing, you know, between
32 councils, commissions, contractors, et cetera, and then the third
33 part I would say is more specific to like the individual boat
34 owner, the individual -- You know, the permit holder, in terms of
35 how do we improve, you know, data access for vessel owners and
36 operators and things like that.

37
38 You know, the example there would be, you know, as ocean planning
39 is occurring, and, of course, you know, windfarm, wind placement,
40 is a big issue. You know, fishermen are going to want to have
41 their own data, so that they can, you know, use it as they see
42 fit, as those ocean planning conversations go along, and so each
43 of these three elements -- I just want to kind of pause to state
44 that we're not necessarily promoting the idea of like uprooting,
45 and completely overhauling and changing, a lot of how we operate.

46
47 We see this as trying to perfect and make tweaks, and updates, to

1 specific MOUs, where appropriate, revisiting how fishermen access
2 their data in each region, and trying to make improvements to that,
3 you know, creating consistency in the rule of three, and these, to
4 me, are all sort of at the margins, in a sense, of trying to make
5 some improvements. I don't want people to feel like what you see
6 on your slide here, and what's in the rule, is it's some completely
7 new thing that the agency is undertaking. We want to make some
8 streamlining efforts to all of it.

9
10 I want to thank you for your time, and I know that this has all
11 kind of been put together, you know, and put on agendas in the
12 council meetings in a -- Not a rushed way, but in a hurried way,
13 I would say, and the comments can be received through Thursday,
14 April 25. The link, that you see on the screen, actually takes
15 you to the regulation, or to be able to provide comments, and, at
16 the bottom, you see an email address, if you want to send
17 questions.

18
19 I will just say, really quickly, just because we've received some
20 questions at some of these other briefings, from other councils,
21 that I think is very pertinent to yours, and any other councils
22 that we present to, and just a couple of things.

23
24 You know, we got a question around, you know, what would be the
25 impact, or the workload, on councils, and executive directors,
26 moving forward, and, in the short-term, you know, councils, and
27 directors, may need to review, and update, relevant MOUs and data-
28 sharing agreements, but, in the long-term, we expect this to
29 establish a more efficient process and reduce the overall burdens
30 to the councils and other partners.

31
32 We received a lot of questions around will this make it easier for
33 fishermen to access their own data, and yes. Yes, period. We
34 expect to improve our policies, and our technical systems, so that
35 fishermen, you know, can request, and access, their information,
36 and maybe the last one I will say is that, you know, what is
37 expected from updating these internal control procedures, that
38 last slide I hit on, and I just want to reinforce that we see this
39 as, you know, leveraging what's in place now, reviewing it, you
40 know, taking into account how well it works, and how well it
41 doesn't work, and trying to streamline a lot of that, moving
42 forward, and so, with that, I will stop, and I will answer what
43 questions I can. Thank you.

44
45 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Alger. Do we have any
46 questions on the presentation? Mr. Schieble.

47

1 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Alger. A real question, and, to use
2 a specific example, you mentioned the rule of three in there, and
3 can you expand, or hypothesize, on how you would see that
4 potentially impacting the way that data is handled from the
5 menhaden industry, and so the rule of three applies, because
6 there's only two major industries, or businesses, within that
7 fishery, and do you anticipate any changes to how that's being
8 handled?

9
10 **MR. ALGER:** Well, what I would say -- Well, one, I don't want to
11 dive too deep into very like fisheries-specific questions, and I
12 understand the question you're asking here, and how I would answer
13 that is there are a number of instances, around the country, where
14 quota shares, permit holding, you know, fishery operations, are
15 condensed into what would be less than three owners, or less than
16 three vessels, or things of that nature, and we're well aware of
17 those types of things, and I think this exercise will reveal that
18 there are going to be edge cases where, based on how the fishery
19 is prosecuted, and how it's permitted, and how quotas are
20 addressed, the status quo is going to stay the same.

21
22 I think where we're probably going to find most of our improvements
23 are in fisheries where there's a lot of permit holders, and there's
24 a lot of information being collected across a lot of data
25 collection programs, and there's probably some ways to more
26 streamline those sort of broader, you know, fishery operations, if
27 you will, but your point is spot-on, and it's something that, you
28 know, we take very seriously, and I think we would have a very,
29 you know, public, and transparent, dialogue about how any of these
30 changes would impact, you know, different fisheries, once we get
31 to that point in this process.

32
33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. We have more question from Ms. Levy.

34
35 **MS. LEVY:** It's not really a question, but just to Chris's
36 question, and so just keep in mind that these changes, and the
37 confidentiality provisions, apply to things that are required to
38 be submitted under the Magnuson Act, and so, for your particular
39 question, right, we don't manage menhaden, and so that information
40 is not required to be submitted under the Magnuson Act, or the
41 Magnuson Act regulations, and so these rules that they're talking
42 about are not going to apply to that, per se, and I think that's
43 why we don't want to get into fisheries-specific questions, and
44 it's going to depend on what you manage, right, and what you
45 require people to submit.

46
47 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

1
2 **MR. ALGER:** (Mr. Alger's comment is not audible on the recording.)

3
4 **MS. LEVY:** Sorry, but what did you say?

5
6 **MR. ALGER:** I just showed my own personal ignorance on how the
7 menhaden fishery is managed, and I don't have all the particulars,
8 but you're right. Some of the fisheries managed by states wouldn't
9 necessarily be impacted by this rulemaking.

10
11 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

12
13 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** We don't need to go into depth here, but so all the
14 data is handled by your office, and not the states. They send in
15 their daily fishing logs, and it's handled by NOAA, and, to request
16 that information, it's fully confidential, and it comes from your
17 offices, and that's what I was getting at, and it's not necessarily
18 the management of the fishery, particularly, and it's the
19 management of the data.

20
21 **MS. LEVY:** We don't have to get into now, but, I mean, there are
22 -- These rules that apply, they're implementing the Magnuson Act
23 confidentiality provisions. There may be data that comes into the
24 agency from outside of the Magnuson Act that may be, quote, not
25 releasable under FOIA, like for other reasons, right, because it's
26 confidential business information, but I'm just -- Those are two
27 separate things, and so I just wanted to be clear that these rules
28 are being implemented under the Magnuson Act provisions, and so
29 that's what they apply to.

30
31 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Levy, and thank you,
32 Mr. Alger. Okay. There is nothing left on the agenda. Mr. Gill.

33
34 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be brief. I originally
35 intended to add this to the Other Business, and I have a motion
36 that I had prepared, and I would like to just raise it to the
37 attention of the council, and see if there's any appetite for
38 considering it at the June meeting, and that is the briefing book.

39
40 As you know, the input to the briefing book was abnormally slow
41 for this meeting, and it's a perennial problem, and it's been
42 around forever, I believe, and this is not a slap at council staff,
43 because it's mostly related to inputs that come from outside of
44 staff into the briefing book, but the net result, considering what
45 the council's responsibilities are, is that a late arrival, say a
46 Sunday night arrival, and then discussion on Monday or Tuesday,
47 says we don't have adequate time to consider the issue at-hand,

1 much less make a good decision on it, and so it impacts how we
2 perform our responsibilities, and, ultimately, the shareholders.

3
4 There are solutions to them, and the solutions are not necessarily
5 well-received by everybody, and my motion was going to propose
6 one, but I wanted to see if the council had appetite to discuss
7 this in more detail at the June meeting, and perhaps take action
8 to consider a solution, because there are times, and it happened
9 back in -- I don't remember, but 2009, or 2010, but gag -- We had
10 a timeline on gag, and it was a complicated deal, and we got the
11 information late on Sunday night, and we had to make a decision on
12 Tuesday, and it's totally unacceptable.

13
14 Even though it didn't have any major impact this time, it could,
15 and I think, just thinking proactively, there are things we can
16 do, if we choose to do them, and it might be a little painful for
17 some folks, and it would have some consequences, but, if there is
18 an appetite on the council to do so, I would be happy to have that
19 conversation at the June meeting, unless you want to discuss it
20 now, but I'm thinking just a consideration for June. Thank you,
21 Mr. Chairman.

22
23 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Schieble.

24
25 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** To that point, Mr. Gill, I had similar concerns,
26 because I just had come from the Shrimp AP meeting, and some things
27 were late there as well, but I realize -- At least to me, I
28 attributed it to the fact that the council staff are short-staffed
29 right now, and they've had two folks leave, and I am correct in
30 this, recently, and so I kind of just attributed it to that, but
31 anyway.

32
33 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Mr. Gill.

34
35 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To that point, and so, again,
36 I don't view this as a council staff fundamental problem. This
37 time, on Saturday morning, when I checked, there was four items on
38 the agenda that were not in the briefing book, and, you know, every
39 time we've talked about this in the past -- The last time I was on
40 the council, you know, it was workload, and it was short-staffed,
41 and that's always an issue, and one solution to that is, okay, we
42 go to four council meetings, instead of five, right, and have the
43 same amount of time in each meeting, and it's not a good solution.

44
45 That's a problem that is probably never going to get solved, and
46 I'm thinking there's other things that we can do, and we can talk
47 about it, if the council desires, and we can think about it, and

1 we can talk about it come June.
2
3 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Any other comments? Mr. Schieble.
4
5 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I just have a question, and did I hear this right,
6 the other day, the next meeting is our 300th meeting, and is that
7 correct?
8
9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes.
10
11 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So that means our host has to have one hell of
12 social then, right, Dakus?
13
14 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** I think we can discuss it in June, Mr. Gill,
15 and I don't think it was the staff, and I think it was the staff
16 waiting on other entities to provide documentation, and so I think
17 we can discuss that in June. I have Mr. Geeslin and Dr. Frazer.
18
19 **MR. GEESLIN:** J.D., to that point, Mr. Gill, I completely agree
20 with you, but some of that material -- Our council staff are
21 compiling a lot of that, and some of that is incumbent upon those
22 that are providing those materials. You know, case-in-point, our
23 state red snapper rec updates, and Ryan provides a date, and most
24 of us are going to get them to him on that date, and some of us
25 are going to go beyond that date, and so that's a shared
26 responsibility, as our staff compiles all that effort.
27
28 **MR. GILL:** Absolutely, Dakus, and I think that's the bulk of the
29 issue. It's the input to staff, and it is not the staff itself.
30
31 **MR. RINDONE:** I am going to congratulate Mr. Schieble on being the
32 first one.
33
34 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Louisiana, baby.
35
36 **MR. GEESLIN:** We all met your deadline, Ryan.
37
38 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Dr. Frazer.
39
40 **DR. FRAZER:** I don't think Bob is trying to point the fingers at
41 anybody, and I think we're always trying to talk about how to
42 improve efficiencies, and this just falls in that lingo a little,
43 and we can talk a little bit of time to talk about it, and that
44 would be all right by me.
45
46 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Me too. Mr. Strelcheck.
47

1 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I certainly have some ownership with dropping the
2 gag and red grouper presentation not even on Saturday, and it was
3 Monday afternoon, right, and so I will accept that as a critique.
4 One of the things that I've been thinking about as well is just
5 how we operate and work within a council meeting, and how we could
6 become more effective, in terms of decisions and dialogue and
7 discussion, and, you know, we do get a lot of presentations, and
8 sometimes those take a lot of time, and I'm wondering, you know,
9 if there's some suggestions that we could talk about as well in
10 June, about how those presentations are structured, kind of key
11 decision points, stopping points during presentations, to make
12 sure there's adequate time for dialogue, so that we can use that
13 information to the best possible way, and so, anyway, just a
14 suggestion.

15
16 **VICE CHAIRMAN DUGAS:** Okay. Thank you for that. All right. With
17 that, the only thing I have on my list is the June meeting in
18 Houston, Texas, at the Omni Houston Hotel. Thank you, staff, and
19 thank you, council members. Safe travels, and we'll see you in
20 Houston. We're adjourned.

21
22 (Whereupon the meeting adjourned on April 11, 2024.)

23
24 - - -
25