GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

300TH MEETING

FULL COUNCIL SESSION

Omni Hotel Houston, Texas

JUNE 26-27, 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
LT Carl Fuhs.....USCG

STAFF

Max Birdsong.....Social Scientist
Assane Diagne.....Economist
Matt Freeman.....Economist
John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant
Verena Wang.....Fishery Biologist

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Neal Adams.....FL
Eric Brazer.....Shareholders Alliance
Adam Brick.....TX
B.J. Burkett.....Panama City Beach, FL
Rick Burris.....MS
Shane Cantrell.....Galveston, TX
Assistant Commander Les Casterline.....TPWD
Mike Celata.....BOEM
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Mike Colby.....Clearwater, FL
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Jason Cox.....
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Bob Zales.....Panama City, FL

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TABLE OF MOTIONS

PAGE 107: Motion to approve the changes to Sections 2.5.3 and 2.6.3. The motion carried on page 107.

PAGE 107: Motion to accept the proposed changes to the SOPPs in Section 3.8, Council Member Compensation. The motion carried on page 108.

PAGE 108: Motion to accept the proposed addition to Training in Section 4.8.1 of the SOPPs. The motion carried on page 108.

PAGE 122: Motion to direct staff consider if wahoo in the Gulf of Mexico is in need of conservation and management. The motion carried on page 125.

PAGE 126: Motion that the need for this action is to improve management and monitoring of the federally permitted for-hire and headboat component of the recreational sector of Gulf reef fish and CMP fisheries to prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continual basis, the optimal yield. The motion carried on page 126.

PAGE 139: Motion to request the Southeast Fisheries Science Center conduct a desk MSE on Spanish mackerel to examine the impacts that the unknown magnitude of recreational landings data may have on management performance of Spanish mackerel. This evaluation should consider but not be limited to differences in historical calibrations of landings in the eastern Gulf as well as uncertainties in these calibration for state and federal landings that may contribute to additional management uncertainty. The evaluation could also consider the performance of decreasing the recreational bag limit. The motion carried on page 140.

PAGE 141: Motion to request that NOAA Fisheries recommend that the National Academies of Sciences follow up on "Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits" with a second Consensus Study Report that, as noted in the current report, "would build on this contribution by evaluating equity in select, illustrative fisheries using the information available. The motion carried on page 141.

PAGE 142: Motion to direct staff to write a letter to ask for an extension to the EBFM Roadmap request comment deadline of July 31, 2024, to allow the ETC to meet and provide their input prior to submission. The motion carried on page 142.

PAGE 143: Motion to postpone the discussion of the following vision until the August 2024 council meeting. Fishery vision: a cohesive commercial fishery that includes a diverse suite of successful businesses and fishery trusts that optimizes access to and use of available IFQ shares. Process vision: a simple, automated, and transparent process that ensures IFQ shares and allocation are equitably distributed by NMFS to a defined user group, the impacts of which are measurable and evaluated over time. The motion carried on page 149.

PAGE 156: Motion to direct staff to explore the possibility of establishing a permit pool from those commercial reef fish permits that will be terminated. The motion carried on page 159.

PAGE 165: Motion to direct staff to begin a framework action to remove the twenty-fathom recreational seasonal closure for shallow-water grouper. The motion carried on page 166.

PAGE 167: Motion to request staff to start a document to evaluate minimum size and bag limits and other measures to stay within the ACL for lane snapper. The motion carried on page 167.

PAGE 168: Motion that the council requests the SEFSC to conduct an interim analysis for lane snapper. The motion carried on page 168.

PAGE 180: Motion to move Action 3 to Considered but Rejected. The motion failed on page 182.

PAGE 183: Motion to delay action on Framework 14: Modifications to Spanish Mackerel Catch Limits and Accountability Measures until CMP stakeholder engagement is complete. The motion carried on page 183.

PAGE 199: Motion that agenda items not fully in the briefing book five calendar days prior to their time on the final agenda shall be deleted from the agenda and scheduled for the next council meeting. The motion failed on page 202.

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The Full Council of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at The Omni Hotel in Houston, Texas on Wednesday morning, June 26, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Kevin Anson.

CALL TO ORDER, ANNOUNCEMENTS, INTRODUCTIONS

CHAIRMAN KEVIN ANSON: Welcome to the 300th meeting of the Gulf Council. My name is Kevin Anson, chair of the council. If you have a cell phone, or a similar device, we ask that you place it on silent or vibrating mode during the meeting. Also, in order for all to be able to hear the proceedings, we ask that you have any private conversations outside. Please be advised that alcoholic beverages are not permitted in the meeting room.

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

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

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

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

In-person attendees wishing to speak during the public comment should sign-in at the registration kiosk located at the back of the meeting room. We accept only one registration per person. Public comment may end before the published agenda time if all registered in-person and virtual participants have completed their comment.

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

MR. J.D. DUGAS: J.D. Dugas, Louisiana.

MR. BILLY BROUSSARD: Billy Broussard, Louisiana.

MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE: Chris Schieble, Louisiana.

MR. RICK BURRIS: Rick Burris, Mississippi.

MR. DAVE DONALDSON: Dave Donaldson, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission.

MR. MICHAEL MCDERMOTT: Michael McDermott, Mississippi.

MR. DAKUS GEESLIN: Dakus Geeslin, Texas.

DR. KESLEY BANKS: Kesley Banks, Texas.

MR. TROY WILLIAMSON: Troy Williamson, Texas.

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

MR. ANDY STRELCHECK: Andy Strelcheck, NOAA Fisheries Southeast Regional Office.

MR. FRANK HELIES: Frank Helies, NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Regional Office.

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

MS. ANNE KERSTING: Anne Kersting, NOAA Office of General Counsel.

LT. CARL FUHS: Carl Fuhs, Coast Guard District 8.

MR. TIM GRINER: Tim Griner, South Atlantic liaison.

MR. BOB GILL: Bob Gill, Florida.

MR. ED WALKER: Ed Walker, Florida.

DR. C.J. SWEETMAN: C.J. Sweetman, Florida.

DR. TOM FRAZER: Tom Frazer, Florida.

DR. ANTHONY OVERTON: Anthony Overton, Alabama.

MS. SUSAN BOGGS: Susan Boggs, Alabama.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS: Carrie Simmons, council staff.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dale, you're online, correct? Can you identify yourself?

MR. DALE DIAZ: Dale Diaz, Mississippi.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Well, this is -- June is a meeting where some of our appointed members leave the council, unfortunately, but oftentimes their membership on the council runs out, after their nine years of consecutive service, and we have a members that are currently on the council that won't be joining us for our next meeting, and so I just wanted to take a few minutes to talk about those folks.

I am honored to extend my gratitude to three exceptional individuals, whose dedication on this council has significantly impacted our fishery. Susan Boggs, Bob Gill, and Dale Diaz have exemplified true commitment and passion in their service to managing our nation's fisheries.

Susan Boggs' strategic insights and steadfast commitment to sustainable fisheries management will leave a legacy on our council's work. As a marina owner with years of experience with the for-hire industry, Susan has led the charge to improve fisheries management, by working with the for-hire industry and the agency to develop a reporting program to improve data collection for the industry. As a strong advocate, Susan has worked hard to manage our fisheries fairly, and her contributions will be missed.

Bob Gill's steadfast commitment to the principles of conservation and collaboration has been instrumental in shaping council policies for over a decade. His advocacy for the preservation of our marine ecosystems, and the livelihoods of our fishermen, has been both inspiring and invaluable. Always well prepared, Bob's attention to detail and drive to improve efficiencies in the council process and management overall will be dearly missed.

Dale Diaz's unwavering dedication to the Gulf of Mexico's fisheries and coastal communities has been truly commendable. His leadership at the council table, and tireless efforts to foster cooperation and dialogue among stakeholders, have been instrumental in

advancing our shared goals. Dale's passion for conservation, and his commitment to the welfare of our fishing communities, will continue to make a profound impact on fisheries management for years to come.

As we express our appreciation to Susan Boggs, Bob Gill, and Dale Diaz, we should acknowledge the legacy they leave behind. Their contributions have not only enriched our council, but have also left an enduring imprint on fisheries management in the Gulf. Thank you, Susan, Bob, and Dale, for your service and dedication.

We have a couple of items. Unfortunately, Dale, you couldn't make it, and we're sorry to hear that you had other matters to attend to, but we have some gifts available for you, as well as Bob and Susan. Bob and Susan, could you -- Tell you what. Susan, could you come up, and we'll have you up first?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: In honor of your dedicated service to the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, from 2018 to 2024, we offer you this clock, and, for Mr. Gill, in honor of your dedicated service to the Gulf Council from 2006 to 2024, and that includes your first council appointment, your service on the SSC, and your recent service on the council, sir. Mr. Diaz, your service from 2015 to 2024, and thank you for serving as the chair as well, and your leadership during that time. Thank you.

MR. DIAZ: Kevin, if I could, I would like to say a few words.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Go ahead, Dale.

MR. DIAZ: First off, I want to thank -- I'm sorry that I couldn't be there in-person this week. My wife's grandfather fell and broke his hip right before the meeting, and so it just was not possible for me to travel this week. I have been on the council since about 2009, being a state liaison and an at-large member, and, anyway, it's been -- I've learned a lot, and I've met a lot of good people.

I often think -- You know, it would think that it would be easier to manage a fish, but it's an incredibly difficult thing, and folks work incredibly hard to manage those fish.

I also want to thank a few people. First, I want to say something about the public though. One thing I hope the rest of the council members think about is, when I look back, the best ideas that we've worked on, and the best things that we've come up with -- I mean, it generally starts with public testimony, and I've met so many good people over the years, in-person and on the phone, and that's one thing that I will always remember, but it's valuable. It's

very valuable. The public process is what makes the whole thing work.

I do want to thank a few people for helping me, and supporting me, and, first, I want to thank my wife, Deborah. She has supported me all along, watching me working on briefing books at all hours of the day and night, taking care of my family while I'm gone, and, you know, folks out there listening to this realize that all these council members that are there -- You know, there is good people behind them, taking care of their family, and their business, and making sure that they can do this job, and so, anyway, I'm very thankful for that.

I have to mention my mentor, Corky Perret. Corky was on the council before me, and I kind of followed him in my career, and I'm very fortunate to be able to work with Corky, and to learn from him, and I will always be thankful for that.

Also, I want to mention General Spraggins. I appreciate General Spraggins' leadership and support since I've been on the council, and, if you all ever meet a harder working person than General Spraggins, I wish that you all would introduce me to him, because I don't know a person harder working than him, and I appreciate his support.

I do want to thank the council staff. You know, I've been around a long time, and we've got a really good council staff. I appreciate Dr. Simmons, Dr. Froeschke, Ryan, Bernie, and the rest of the staff. You know, I can compare them to other councils, and I've seen other councils, and we have a very good staff, and I appreciate all the support in helping me do things that I needed to do over the years. They have always been there for anything I've asked.

I think this is kind of enough of this, but it's just, in closing, I'm thankful that I've been able to be a small part of the good work that this council has done in the Gulf of Mexico, and I really believe that, during my time here, we have managed the fisheries for the greatest good of the nation, and I'm proud of that, and I'm proud to have served with every council member that is there today, and thank you all very much, and I will be seeing you all in the future.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thanks again, Dale, and, yes, we hope to see you soon. With that, one other item that I would like to bring up for folks is there will be a social this evening, Celebration for their

Service is what the title is, and it will be from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., here in the hotel, at the Birdie's Café, which is just out here off the main lobby, to continue our appreciation and celebration of the work that Bob and Susan have given to the council, and Dale of course, and so that is all that I have for announcements.

That will take us then to Adoption of the Agenda and Approval of the Minutes, Tab A, Numbers 3 and 4. Are there any changes needed for the Adoption of the Agenda? Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would request that we add to Other Business a request for comment discussion.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Okay. A request for comment discussion in Other Business has been added. Does anyone else have any other items for Other Business? Seeing none, is there a motion to accept the agenda with the addition of the additional Other Business item?

MR. GILL: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

MS. BOGGS: Second.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: There is a motion, and it's seconded by Susan. Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. The next item is Approval of the Minutes, Tab A, Number 4. Does anyone have any changes or comments to the minutes? Seeing none, can I have a motion to accept the minutes as written?

MR. GILL: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

MS. BOGGS: Second.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. We have a motion to accept the minutes, and it's seconded. Any discussion on the motion? Seeing none, any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries. That will take us to -- Next is an update from the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management on Wind Energy Development in the Gulf of Mexico, Tab A, Number 7. Ms. Lyncker is here in-person. Welcome.

PRESENTATIONS
UPDATE FROM THE BUREAU OF OCEAN ENERGY MANAGEMENT ON WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

MS. LISSA LYNCKER: Good morning. I'm Lissa Lyncker, and I am the Chief of Staff for the Gulf of Mexico Region for the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. I will be presenting with a colleague that is online, Karoline DiPerna, and we also have Mike Celata,

who is the Senior Advisor, and he will be online to help field questions, as needed, and so I just wanted to mention that upfront.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. This partnerships, and collaboration, are vital to continuing to successfully develop the wind program in the Gulf of Mexico, and transparency is also -- It's been important from the beginning, and we're committed to laying out processes from our regulations early, and rolling up our sleeves to sit down and help people understand what it means and work collaboratively to figure out solutions, ask hard questions now.

Today, we want to talk about -- We're going to take a step back and talk about a little bit of process of, you know, looking at our mission and the full range of our authority.

We talk mostly about wind development, but, actually, renewable energy in the Gulf of Mexico, and actually in our jurisdiction across the nation, includes a full range of other types of renewable energy projects, and so we just want to -- We want to lay that out, and then we'll put hydrogen -- We'll bring hydrogen development back in context.

Another thing we want to make clear is we talk a lot about the competitive wind leasing process, but we also have other means of obtaining a lease in our regulations, and that includes an unsolicited lease request, and it also includes a noncompetitive lease process. Then I will wrap it up with where are we with wind in the Gulf of Mexico, following the PSN publication, our proposed sale notice publication.

BOEM's mission is managing responsible development of the offshore, and the offshore is going to be -- You will hear me say "offshore", and you will hear me say "OCS", or outer continental shelf, and that is waters, federal waters, which, for most of the United States, is three miles offshore, but, off of Texas, and the western coast of Florida, it's nine miles, and so that's what -- In those waters, we're responsible for the mineral and geologic resource management development in an environmentally and economically-responsible way, and so what does our mission include in those waters?

It includes conventional oil and gas, and it includes marine mineral extraction, and it includes renewable energy activities, and, in 2021, BOEM also gained the authority for carbon storage, or carbon sequestration, and so we just wanted to show that BOEM covers a broad range of acres. Thirty-two billion acres we're looking at managing these four mission areas, and this includes

the territories, the U.S. territories, and so projects in our mission area are oil and gas, renewable, marine minerals, and, in the future, carbon storage, and that could even occur in the territories, and we just want to make that clear.

I would be remiss to say that the Gulf of Mexico is unique, in the fact that we have all four mission areas happening at the same time, and so, while we don't have the carbon sequestration regulations out, and the program is not moving, internally, we are looking, and considering, all four program areas when we're making decisions in prioritization of one program over another.

When we look at our renewable energy authority, we mostly focus on wind, but, again, we want to take a step back and talk about what is the full range of renewable energy potential, and so OCSLA, which is the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, is our main legislative authority that gives us the right for the mineral and energy resource management, but, in 2005, it was amended to include language that you see here that we can also manage energy from sources other than oil and gas.

Then, in 2009, BOEM published our final regulations for renewable energy, and we made it clear in that that these regulations were developed to allow for a broad spectrum of renewable energy development, which, in the preamble, specifically noted hydrogen production, and so, in that energy policy act in 2005, it gave us the authority for renewable, and it also gave us the authority to look at alternative use of oil and gas platforms for other uses.

Fast forward a decade or so, and we then have a new administration that puts an executive order out, in January of 2021, talking about government-wide initiatives to reduce impacts from climate change and reduce carbon emissions, and so one -- Along with the law that talked about carbon, that gave BOEM the authority for carbon sequestration, we also have the administration coming out and talking about promoting hydrogen production.

Then, coming to present time, our modernization rule, and this is basically, from 2009 to present, we had some lessons learned in our renewable energy program, and we wanted to bring things up-to-date. That rule was published this year, and it will be in effect on July 15 of next month, July of this year.

Looking at the Gulf of Mexico, with an understanding that we have this authority now, this broad authority, what is the range of technology, and what is the range of viable options, for renewable energy in the Gulf of Mexico, and so this is actually -- There's a link on the bottom of this, and I can get this, and this is a

study that BOEM funded with NREL, and it was published in 2020, looking at the range of technologies, the range of types of renewable energy in the Gulf, and so, if you can see to the left -- The blue is the potential, and then for the -- It's basically based on the resource, and the red is the technological potential.

All the way to the left is wind, and this is why wind has dominated, because it's got a great potential, and great technological potential, to move forward. If you look to the right, the tallest one is solar, and, at the time this was published, it had very minimal offshore technological opportunity, and so, when you look across the bottom, things that we have in our purview for renewable energy include offshore wind, include wave energy, tidal, ocean current, and then solar, and then to the right is ocean thermal energy conversion, which is using temperature differentials to convert the movement of water into energy.

What you don't see on this figure is hydrogen, okay, and so, in 2020, when this study was published, hydrogen was such a small potential. Hydrogen production from wind was such a small potential that it was not one of the top runners in what we were looking at, and so why are we looking at it now, and why are we talking about it to you now?

This is a rendition from a project that was funded. The Greater New Orleans Partnership, in 2022, received $50 million to analyze the production of green hydrogen, research and development, and even research projects, in Louisiana, and so this is a rendition of offshore wind sending electricity to shore, and producing hydrogen onshore, and why do we show this? Because, right now, Louisiana is producing a huge amount of hydrogen onshore, and is consuming a huge amount of hydrogen onshore, but most of it is being done -- The hydrogen is being produced by blue or gray, which is developed hydrocarbon use, and so this potential is that green hydrogen can replace -- Lower carbon emissions for the sources for hydrogen production in Louisiana.

The types of uses in Louisiana are, right now, chemical, feed stock, fertilizers, oil refining, and steel. These are things happening right now, and what the data shows is Louisiana is one of the biggest consumers of hydrogen, industrial hydrogen, use right now, and so, taking all of that into consideration, BOEM has -- You know, one thing that I wanted to note as well is that DOE has been provided a large sum of funds to study hydrogen as well, and so we see the administration making it a priority.

It's our authority, and it's been our authority, and so what happened? We looked at our leasing instrument, and we decided

that, to allow leases to propose hydrogen production, and not permit it, and to not allow it, but just to propose it, our solicitors wanted to revise some language, and so that's what happened when we published the proposed sale notice earlier this year. I presented to you that we made this edit.

Now where does green hydrogen fit into our process, and so, looking at where we are today, we just published a proposed sale notice. We had one sale last year in the Gulf, and we have one lease. That lease does not propose to make hydrogen, but -- We don't have a project proposal from them at this time, but, even in the onset, they have not proposed hydrogen development.

We do not have a second lease sale yet, and we don't have a project in place, and we don't have a proposal for this. Again, it's our goal to get out here early, and share some context, and to be transparent, so that we can move through this together, and we can learn together, and we value the comments, and the input, from this council.

What is covered at this stage? Right now, the only thing that would be allowed, should a sale go forward, should a lease be let, is site assessment, and so this is meteorological buoys, and this is vessel trips, and then some surveys. It does not allow a company to go build a windfarm, and it doesn't allow -- It doesn't have project specifics. All of that will come. This means that there will be numerous opportunities for continued engagement throughout this process, and learning.

If we were going to have a hydrogen project, if a company was going to get a lease, and they were going to propose it, where would that fit it? If you can recall, we were over to the left, and it's about a year to six years before we're even at a site assessment and we would begin to understand what they would be interested in developing, and then another five years or so before they would even -- They would move through the construction and operation process, and so we're looking at five to ten years down the line before we have an awareness if companies are interested in hydrogen, beyond the context that I've shared with you already. We have time. The goal, with talking to you all about this, is getting out here early, and hearing the concerns early, and working together.

This is a hypothetical, and so this has not been submitted for proposal, and we actually borrowed this from you all's comment to us in the PSN, and this is three renditions of what a hydrogen production installation could look like.

The top one is onshore, and the second one is a unified location with an electrolyzer, where the electricity is coming from multiple -- From multiple turbines, and then the third -- This one is offshore, and then it's sending hydrogen onshore, and then a third format, or scenario, would be an electrolyzer on each of the turbines, and so, again, this is hypothetical. It could look like this, or it could look different than this, but this is just an example, to get a visual of what does this look like, what does green hydrogen look like.

Where are we today? No leases with this, and we're five to ten years out, before any construction plans, and we're continuing to collaborate. We're continuing to learn. We have submitted study profiles, and so we have congressional funding to understand the effects of our permitting and management actions on the outer continental shelf, and we've submitted study profiles, but this might be a great opportunity where the council can begin to think and submit study ideas as well to be approved for funding.

Just I want to say two weeks ago, I filled out a doodle poll, and I'm going to be meeting with countries like the UK and Denmark, as they have been working through this already, and we want to learn from them, and we've been coordinating with DOE. There is a master's thesis link on here, and this is from the Netherlands, and this specific research looks at water uptake impacts from offshore green hydrogen development, and so we are gathering information. We'll share what we have, but we're to communicate and offer the opportunity for these comments. At this point, I will turn it over to Karoline DiPerna online to walk us through these set of slides.

MS. KAROLINE DIPERNA: Good morning. My name is Karoline DiPerna. I'm a project coordinator for the BOEM Gulf of Mexico Renewables Leasing Team, and so, today, we just wanted to walk through some general information about our unsolicited lease request process and the noncompetitive lease award process.

There's a lot of information here on this slide, but we just wanted to give a quick visual overview of the noncompetitive lease award process. After BOEM reviews a company's unsolicited application, as well as their qualification documents, the next step would be to publish a request for competitive interest in the Federal Register, and so this is a public notice that has a forty-five-day comment period.

Following that comment period, BOEM will determine if there is, or is not, competitive interest in requested area in that request for competitive interest. We will break this down a bit more in the

coming slides.

Okay, and so you can see here that these are the BOEM regulations on our unsolicited lease requests, and so some information that must be included when submitting this lease request is the requested area, of course, a description of the project, its objectives, how the company intends to achieve these objectives, general schedule of the proposed activities, available and pertinent data and information, and, if available, a statement that confirms that the company's proposal abides by state and local energy planning requirements.

An example to note of how we can work together to make sure that we are working in the most deconflicted areas is we had a company, at one point, submit a proposal for a very large area in the Gulf. They submitted data, maps, and other information that they have gathered from and outside party.

BOEM received the proposal and compared the company's data with BOEM's data, including our modeling efforts with NOAA NCCOS, and we saw that parts of the requested area were quite conflicted, and so what we did, at this point, was we worked with NCCOS, and we performed more data modeling within that area, using data currently available, and, from there, BOEM was able to present the company with a reduced and more deconflicted area.

Just as a note, the information that companies submit may help BOEM determine if a project is not only feasible in this area, but to make sure that we are within deconflicted areas in the Gulf.

As we mentioned earlier, after the request for competitive interest is published in the Federal Register, BOEM decides whether or not competitive interest exists in this requested area, and so, if competitive interest is determined, through the comments received, BOEM does have the option to move forward into the competitive leasing process, and so this process is simply our typical competitive lease award process that you've seen with our previous auctions. This would include a proposed sale notice, a final sale notice, and, finally, an auction.

Now, on the other hand, if BOEM determines that there is no competitive interest in this requested area, we'll then publish another public notice to the Federal Register, and this is called a determination of no competitive interest, and so this is just a brief document that informs the public about the status of the unsolicited lease request that was discussed and that request for competitive interest.

Following the publication of the determination of no competitive interest, we do have a few more steps, for not only the company, for also for BOEM as well, before we even consider lease issuance, and so, as Lissa mentioned, the BOEM modernization rule is effective next month, and part of this identifies that BOEM will be responsible for preparing and providing a written cost estimate of the proposed fee to pay for processing costs, including environmental review that BOEM may deem necessary before lease issuance.

Following that, the company that has submitted an application is also responsible for submitting consistency certification, as well as data and information applicable to the state CZMA agencies, as well as to BOEM. Finally, BOEM consults with affected federal, state, and local governments, as well as affected indigenous tribes, to review the noncompetitive lease request.

Our last slide here shows some significant topics that were considered during the unsolicited lease request process, and that's our NEPA considerations and environmental consultations. These can be lengthy processes in themselves, but they ensure that we're doing our due diligence to ensure that we're working within those deconflicted areas and that we're consulting with affected parties.

For NEPA, BOEM assumes that the environmental assessment covers site characterization and site assessment activities only, and so this timeframe may include six to twelve months of preplanning, creating scenarios, identifying the scope, and coordinating any public announcements, and so I do note that, if significant impacts are found, BOEM prepares an environmental impact statement, and this could take up to an additional two years.

Moving into our environmental consultations, these must be complete before any activities in the area can be done, and so, again, BOEM takes about six to twelve months of preplanning, and about twelve months to actually conduct these consultations, and these consultations are assumed to be for lease issuance, site characterization, and site assessment activities only.

In addition to this, if there is no competitive interest, the potential lessee must provide detailed information about their proposed activities and any other information that BOEM requests to support scenario development. Again, this can be lengthy, possibly up to eighteen to twenty-four months, and that's if no significant impacts are found.

After all the requirements have been met, BOEM decides -- If BOEM decides on lease issuance, the process follows a similar protocol as seen with competitive leasing, and so, just to wrap it up, our goal today was to provide some general information as to what an unsolicited lease request may look like and what could possibly be expected in the event that we had one, and so I appreciate your time, and I will pass it back to Lissa. Thank you.

MS. LYNCKER: Thank you, Karoline. As you can see, there's a lot of details there, and I really appreciate her walking through those, and, again, like Karoline just said, our takeaway is that we have the competitive leasing process, which we've talked to you a number of times about, but just as viable is this unsolicited lease request, where companies could come in and ask for a project anywhere in the Gulf, and then we have the noncompetitive process.

In the event that a competitive process winds up not having competition, it can then move into a noncompetitive process, and that's viable as well. One thing that I think it's important to note here is we've done a substantial amount of work, in a large portion of the Gulf, where we have deconflicted areas for wind, and if, and when, a company would come in and ask for an unsolicited proposal in those areas, those areas would have had the upfront deconflicting done, and it doesn't preclude like subsequent steps of making sure the NEPA is adequate, and CZMA, and it's not going to preclude the site-specific plans, when those come in, but it's just the fact that if like a plan -- If a proposal would come in outside of the call area that we have become familiar with, then it would be a more extended process, a full NEPA process, a full review, that mirrors that longer competitive leasing process that you all have come to know so far.

Just a quick where are we with wind in the Gulf right now, and so, in March, we published our proposed sale notice, looking at four potential sale areas in the Gulf of Mexico adjacent to the current lease area in south Louisiana. We received twenty-four comments on that, and so we're in the process of reviewing those, and we appreciate the council's comments, and we are -- We got a number of comments that we're working through.

We are reviewing those, and then we will make our responses to comments public, and so those will likely be published on our website, and we will make sure the council is aware of those responses. The next step would be a potential publication of a final sale notice, which would give the details and the timing of the final sale, of the sale, and so where are we now?

We're continuing our outreach and engagement, to make sure

everybody knows where we are in the process, and what the next steps look like, and we are planning a transmission workshop in the Gulf of Mexico, in partnership with DOE and NREL and NCCOS, and this is important, because, just like we've deconflicted areas for where wind would be most suitable, and not that we would dictate where industry would put their transmission lines coming to shore, but we can certainly help look at the data and make a collaborative recommendation for pathways to shore that would reduce impacts to coastal communities.

If you look to the figure on the right, there is three areas circled. The Secretary, in April, came out with our new wind leasing, our five year wind leasing, schedule, and the Gulf of Mexico does propose to have three sales, including the one this year, and so that's more than any other region in the nation. Even with the wind potentials being greater in other areas, the Gulf of Mexico is on the map, and so we are -- Behind the scenes, we're updating our NCCOS siting model for our subsequent -- For our upcoming potential proposed sales, and we're looking at the next set of wind energy areas, and I will take questions. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Do we have any questions? Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the presentation, Ms. Lyncker. The question might be for Dr. Walter, or you, and I don't quite know, but, prior to the introduction of the green hydrogen process, the integration of the Science Center -- Between BOEM and the Science Center has been excellent, and fruitful.

With the introduction of green hydrogen, that's a different kettle of fish, and so my question is how the Science Center gets integrated into that process, given the EA, and potential EIS, results, and are they part of the process, or are they the review side of it, and how is that going to work?

DR. WALTER: Thanks for the question directed to us. One thing we have been working together with BOEM on is the marine spatial planning. Up until this date, it's been highly successful. We did not actually incorporate green hydrogen concerns in that marine spatial planning, and so one of the things that we think, from a science perspective, is that a data layer that would be including eggs and larvae, which the main concern we have so far on green hydrogen, from what we know, is the impingement of eggs and larvae, and that it could be fairly substantial, and so a data layer that would consider those and then be able to say maybe a particular location is, or is not, suitable for that would be helpful in the planning.

It was not included to-date, which is one of the things that is in our letter on the proposed sale notice, and it's something for the third round of Gulf Wind 3, for the marine spatial planning, and we would like to be able to get a data layer like that into the consideration, to say whether an area might be suitable or not for that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Just to follow-up on both of those comments, so, I mean, I understand that BOEM has solicited a review, right, of the environmental impacts, and most of the hydrogen production to-date has been done on land, right, and there is a lot of produced water. The interesting thing about the potential proposals that you might receive are to do that in a marine system, right, and you're still going to require a water, and so the effects extend well beyond those on eggs and larvae and things like that, and so who is going to determine, you know, what types of information you would collect, you know, recognizing that there will be like production of nitrogen oxide and things like that, and so what chemical samples would you actually collect, right, and then who would be ultimately responsible for determining what a sampling protocol might look like, to determine whether or not there was an impact or not, and that wasn't clear to me.

MS. LYNCKER: That's a good question, and so we -- So BOEM has a team of scientists, an Office of Environment, with almost fifty people, where we have experts in various ranges of -- Or various disciplines of biology, and so we have a couple on the call actually, and so they have begun looking into what are the range of activities related to production of hydrogen, green hydrogen, and so then, once we understand what are the actions, then we can understand, okay, what are the potential impacting factors, what are the things related to that.

We're open to -- That's why we're talking to Denmark, and the UK, and looking at the Netherlands, and what have they seen to inform this. Once we understand that, then we can begin developing studies, and so sometimes we will contract out studies, and we'll have the actual lead for those studies tell us that here's what we think you need to know, and begin to investigate, and we also have -- We get that input from all over.

We get the input from NOAA, what they feel like, and we'll get the input from other stakeholders that maybe more -- That have expertise in that area, but we're certainly open, and the point is that we have time in the process to figure this out, in our opinion,

and we're very early, and we're putting the feelers out now, so that we can capture what we need early.

DR. FRAZER: Thank you.

MS. LYNCKER: I do agree -- You know, just to follow-up on what Mr. Walter said, that we have a number of other -- We have a range of renewable energy opportunities in the Gulf, and a number of them focus on some water uptake, whether it's tidal, whether it's hydro, and so, you know, regardless of -- Just focusing on green hydrogen, better understanding the larval transport, and the timing across the Gulf, and having a layer for that, would be really helpful.

We -- Just as an aside, we're developing layers for carbon sequestration, and so what is the potential in the Gulf of Mexico, and how does it overlap, and, even though we don't have regulations yet, you know, and so it is the model yet, creating areas that are off the table? No, but we do understand that it's coming, and so, you know, just in discussions that we've had recently, and this is not the end of the conversation, but, when we better understand the larval patterns, and the entrainment issues, we can potentially create subsets of more suitable areas for hydrogen.

In some areas of the Gulf, wind -- You know, in all areas of the Gulf, wind is, you know, what we've -- We have these wind energy areas that it's suitable for wind, and then a subset of that may be more suitable for wind and hydrogen, but, you know, stay tuned.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thank you, Lissa, for being here and presenting. Great presentation, and it was very informative. I had a question more about the transition workshop, and so you indicated that you were coordinating with a number of federal agencies, and is the vision there to be more of a federal family meeting, or would there also be stakeholders pulled into that discussion? For example, obviously, the shrimp industry has certainly been very engaged, and you've been doing a great job of communicating with them, but they're going to very interested in where those transmission corridors are ultimately developed, and so I'm just curious when their engagement might be in this process as well.

MS. LYNCKER: So we're at the very early stages, and I would say DOE was lead, and they contracted with NREL, and the scope of this workshop is still being -- I know that one component was data gathering, for the scope of the workshop, and it doesn't have to be the only workshop we do on this, but the scope of this one will

still be underdetermined, and BOEM isn't necessarily the lead, and so we are in the planning meetings, but our role can be to make sure that we encourage a robust -- Depending on what the scope is for this, to make sure we have all the appropriate people represented for the resources.

NCCOS is the lead for the data, and I will be learning -- You know, we're sending emails back and forth right now, and the scope is still being finalized, and so I will definitely follow-up on that.

MR. STRELCHECK: Great, and I definitely would love to chat with you more, and, you know, we have our monthly tag-ups, and we can certainly talk further then, and it extends beyond the fishing industry, obviously, to our coastal communities, and engagement, and involvement, with our equity and environmental justice strategy, and so certainly, whether it's this workshop or future workshops, I just want to make sure that we're engaging all of those key stakeholders.

MS. LYNCKER: Thank you, and we commend the efforts that we've seen with you and your staff, and we have touched base, and we're looking at ways that we can learn and share from your EEJ outreach efforts. Thank you.

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

DR. WALTER: Yes, and thanks, and I really want to thank BOEM for their engagement here. I think they've been to almost every council meeting in the past year or so, and often in-person, and so I think that's a really high level of engagement, and so that's really good.

Just a couple of developments. One, we're working closely with BOEM and your staff, Lissa, on our survey mitigation strategy, and we should have that document -- We hope for it to be finalized fairly soon, in the next couple of weeks, and so that will really set the stage for how we're going to mitigate and keep our surveys whole with this new development.

In terms of incorporating things that may be on the horizon, and I think one of the keys we learned about the marine spatial planning is to do it big, do it for as much area as you can, because it's easier than -- It allows you to do another round of leasing, based on that original marine spatial planning, but also to do things that might be on the horizon, green hydrogen and the other energy sources, and so I think we are looking forward to engaging, in terms of incorporating those into the planning, so that we can really do an informed planning for the blue economy in

the Gulf of Mexico.

The other engagement that's been productive is engaging actually with the developer, RWE, and we've had productive conversations with them, early and often, to be able to begin to have the discussions of what their monitoring might look like and how that can be folded into potentially survey mitigation, and so that's been productive.

The one concern I think that we have is, as I noted on things that weren't included in the marine spatial planning, like green hydrogen, is putting things in later on means that you aren't really using the marine spatial planning process for its full benefit, because you're not necessarily looking at areas that might be better for an activity if that activity is then allowed in the leasing process, and so we would say we certainly want to get that in, if possible, for Gulf Wind 3 considerations.

Then, for in particular the noncompetitive lease sales, have -- They're challenging, because it's not as transparent as to how that decision would get made, and it's not through the full process, and so I think the only real way to maintain transparency, and for that to be as effective as the original competitive lease process that was done with the marine spatial planning is for that planning to be used to also vet any noncompetitive lease sale and for there -- There was mentioned engagement with stakeholders about what those are, and it's not clear what that engagement is going to look like, whether there would be an additional taskforce meeting to consider noncompetitive ones, and maybe my main question here is what does engagement look like if a noncompetitive lease sale were to kind of go to fruition, and maybe if you could explain what that would look like.

MS. LYNCKER: Thank you for the -- Do you want me to try to answer now, or is this a follow-up?

DR. WALTER: As you wish, but I think a lot of people want to know, like if a lease sale, noncompetitive, were to be offered, when would there be public comment opportunity? Thanks.

MS. LYNCKER: Okay, and so there's a few things to unpack. Thank you for all of that. I appreciate the thoughtful input, and we -- - As John have said, we have considered -- Right now, we have done -- So I will tackle this, I guess, one part, looking at the NCCOS and the siting, and what we've done now, and what we could do, and then I will talk about the public review process.

As you can imagine, looking at the entire Gulf of Mexico, and

having an unsolicited lease coming in anywhere -- You know, just data modeling is not our only concern, and so we're looking at workload, and what if we have a whole bunch of them come in, and so we -- Just recently, about a month ago, we had our leadership come together and how we best situate ourselves for success when considering this range of unknowns, where we don't know where, we don't know when, and we don't know what kind of data we would need for it.

One of those tasks is to look at building the capacity into our process now to expand the NCCOS modeling across the Gulf, and so we have to do it in stride with timing and finances, and so we were looking at our schedule, and there is -- In that proposed three sales, there's a break in there, and so maybe, you know, while we're moving towards an earlier sale, in the background, we start the development -- So, anyway, we're looking at -- We agree, and we're looking at timing of where it fits in for capacity for workload and for funding. Thank you for that insight, and we agree, and we want to work with NCCOS to figure out how we can maneuver that.

As far as the public -- The opportunity for like say the council to weigh-in on an unsolicited lease proposal, so the company comes in, and they have to be qualified, financially qualified, before they can even move forward in the process, and so this is happening in the leasing.

They have to give us enough information for us to understand where the project is going, but it is not more information than we would know if somebody was going to get a lease in one of our wind energy areas, and so then we put it out for a request for competitive interest, and it's a forty-five-day public comment period.

That is an opportunity for this council to look at that and say we don't -- We don't understand enough, and we need more time, or this is really well understood, and here's our comments, and so we have that first request for competitive interest opportunity. Following that, if a lease was issued, we would then -- If it was not in the call area, we would walk through the NEPA process, and we would either start off with an EA, or, depending on if we could foresee significant impacts, we would move to proposing an EIS, to reduce the potential for having to do an EA and two years later start an EIS, and then the NEPA process would start with scoping, and then with a draft review and a final additional comment period.

After that, that is still just site assessment, and so this -- It looks similar to the leasing that you've seen, and it is just not laid out like we've been communicating the competitive leasing

process, but it is similar, and I would say the difference is the request comes in unsolicited, and that's the difference. Like it's not out there for everybody to know when it's happening, and that's the difference. It comes in, and we're not even expecting it, per se, and so we do hear that that is potentially, you know -- It's an unknown to people, when is it going to come in, and we don't even know, and so it's -- But we do commit that we will move through the process and provide these opportunities for engagement and appropriate siting, as we've learned from, you know, all the work with NCCOS so far. I am not sure if that answered it all, but I'm certainly available for follow-up.

DR. WALTER: Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you so much for the presentation, and we appreciate all the meetings that you and your staff helped us with following the April council meeting and our letter to try to better understand this process.

One of the big things we have on the horizon, and I think we're probably going to put this in front of the council in August, is the first company's communications plan, which is RWE's fisheries communication plan. That is outlined in their lease, and my understanding is that that would go before the council here soon, and they have provided a draft to us to take a look at, and the staff we would need to be involved in that.

The other consideration with that, as we learn this process, is, if another company comes along, they use that same communications plan, is my understanding, and so this is really important, that we lay out a good, solid foundation at the beginning for the communications plan that other companies would kind of add on, or come into that as well, as they get those other leases, and so I just wanted to bring that up and make you all aware.

MS. LYNCKER: Thank you, and it's a great point. Right now, we have one company in the Gulf, and so a lot of that falls on the shoulders of one company, like versus the Northeast, where there's multiple companies kind of developing this communication strategy, and so it doesn't mean that we would put in this one -- Not we, BOEM, but what is put in this one, in BOEM reviews, is the final say, and it's just -- I mean, I would definitely, you know, be thoughtful, but we can always do better as we learn more.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other questions? I'm not seeing any. Ms. Lyncker, thank you very much for being here, and we appreciate,

again, the update, and certainly your time to come here in-person. Thank you.

MS. LYNCKER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Next, that will take us to Texas Law Enforcement Efforts, Tab A, Number 8, and Assistant Commander Casterline. Welcome, sir.

TEXAS LAW ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

ASSISTANT COMMANDER LES CASTERLINE: Mr. Chairman and council members, good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the efforts that are going on with enforcement with our officers up and down the coast. We definitely appreciate the opportunity to speak to you here today.

In kind of putting this presentation together, and I have given quite a few of these over the years myself, and I know we have, through the years, had some different council members get on the council, and so, this time, I was going to add a few different points to this, just to kind of give an idea and some background on what each of these little components might be, and please, at the end, if you all have any questions, please ask about it.

First of all, my name, for the record, is Les Casterline, and I'm the Assistant Commander of Fisheries Enforcement for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Law Enforcement Division, stationed out of Austin, Texas. Also in our shop, and some of you all may have had a chance to meet Lieutenant Carmen Rickel, and she's our Lieutenant of Fisheries Enforcement in our fisheries shop up at headquarters.

What we're here today to speak to you about is our enforcement efforts through our joint enforcement agreement with NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement. This is a long-standing agreement that has stood between our agencies, as well as other state agencies, with NOAA for years.

Just to kind of give you some background on this agreement, for those of you all that aren't as familiar with the process, we have a five-year agreement, a cooperative enforcement agreement, which grants the state agencies and their officers federal authority, a deputization, to enforce federal regulations on fisheries, not only within the state boundaries of their individual states, but it also gives us the authority to go out and enforce this out to 200 nautical miles, out in the Exclusive Economic Zone.

That follows up with each year we all renew a -- What you all have

come to talk about as one component of the joint enforcement agreement, where there is also a funding component yearly that allows the states to participate in enforcement of the regulations they've been given that authority for.

Here in Texas, we have priorities consisting of -- We have our general enforcement, and so you'll have game wardens assisting with different species, such as coastal migratory pelagics and our highly migratory species. For the current year, just to give you an idea, we utilized two different types of platforms, a mid-range vessel, which is usually like a twin engine, twenty-nine or thirty-foot vessel, and, for this year, we had 108 hours, patrol hours, for this priority in the mid-range. We also have two long-range vessels, a sixty-five-footer and an eighty-footer, that participate and had forty hours allotted to their patrols for this general enforcement section of our agreement.

As you can see, we've got a couple of pictures there that you can see, and I would say, as far as highly migratory species specifically, it continues to be our issue with south Texas, with the vessels coming out of Mexico that are targeting sharks and red snapper, and so that definitely affects our enforcement on our general enforcement program. I will also speak about that a little bit later.

Another one of our pretty high-level priorities is TED enforcement. That's always a very high-level priority for us in the State of Texas, as well as our partners with NOAA and the Coast Guard, that we work well with through our fisheries enforcement, and, this year, we utilized three different platform types.

We have our nearshore vessels, that we use inside the bays, and so our smaller bay boats, and we had seventy-two hours of vessel patrols. Our mid-range vessels, we had 144 hours of vessel patrols, and we had 144 hours of long-range vessel patrols offshore as well, and so kind of a mix of the different areas where we incur shrimping vessels, whether it's the bay, whether it's closer inshore or offshore, or further offshore into the Gulf of Mexico on the EEZ.

We spread that around, so that we have different platforms for each of those different areas, and, as you can see in the pictures, and that's kind of a smaller vessel, and some of these vessels get up to around a hundred foot in length, and so we're kind of adjusting our patrols to where we're addressing all of those.

Then we move on to reef fish, and, as you all are well aware, we're involved in the enforcement of reef fish enforcement in the State

of Texas and our other Gulf states. This priority is broke up into mid-range patrols and long-range patrols. Mid-range consisted of 108 hours this year, and then forty hours for our long-range patrols.

Each of these patrols, and any of these priorities, just so you know, they're going to stretch from the Texas-Mexico border to the Louisiana border. We have fishermen, in each of these priorities that you're going to see today, that utilize the waters up and down the coast, and so we spread those hours out, and we try to have consistent enforcement up and down the coast for all priorities.

Also, another priority that we have will be the IFQ enforcement, and so, especially if you get up into the upper Texas coast, around the Galveston area, you're going to find that's where the majority of the landings in Texas will be for our IFQ vessels, whether you're talking about, you know, red snapper, groupers, or tilefish. The majority of those landings are going to occur on the upper Texas coast. You may actually find those vessels fishing up and down the entire coast, but most of them are homeported out of the Galveston area, or at least up in the upper Texas coast. I believe we have one or two vessels in south Texas, and that's currently all that we have in that area.

This is a dockside patrol, and so basically what will happen is we actually get -- We had 114 hours for this current year. We will get notifications from the IFQ system, and they will go out to our game wardens. The game wardens that are on duty in the area will actually show up and inspect the offload, to make sure that everything is in compliance, and they've done a great -- They always do a great job with this.

I actually had a compliment paid to our officers by one of our commercial fishermen yesterday, their professionalism in their work over there, and that they were seeing them quite often at their off-loadings, and so that's a good thing to hear. That's what this funding is for, and that's what we try to accomplish by utilizing this funding given to us by the federal government.

One of our newer priorities would be our sanctuary enforcement. Of course, this is pretty big feat for us, and we only have one vessel that really -- Well, two vessels that have the capabilities to hit all of the actual banks within the Flower Garden Banks, our eighty-foot Captain Murchison, which is out of Corpus Christi, and our sixty-five-foot Captain Williams, that is out of the Galveston area. We utilize those two platforms to go offshore, to have multiday patrols, to try to enforce the regulations that apply

within the Flower Garden Banks itself.

If you can see in the picture, and that was a pretty neat picture they got, and they actually, at the time they were out there in this photo, showed up, and the NOAA staff was actually out there doing their surveys, their biological work out there at the Flower Garden Banks, and it was a pretty nice opportunity to get a joint picture kind of showing the unified effort and all the efforts that we have in the Gulf of Mexico area.

Then this is also one of our newer enforcement efforts. You know, a lot of people hear the term "IUU" in recent years, the illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and these are also dockside patrols. It's one that we really put a lot of effort in in Texas, and it's -- When we started this priority, working jointly with our partners at NOAA, we really were finding a lot of issues on imports that were coming in.

It gained some attention at our agency level, and we really put a lot of effort, as well as funding from the state, paired with the federal dollars, to extend these efforts, and so, while we had 273 hours' worth of dockside funding from NOAA, I would venture to say that, dollar-wise, we actually spent well more than that, out of state funds, to extend the efforts.

What we've done in the past few years is we've started along the lower Texas border, down in Brownsville, and we've kind of worked that area, and we have worked some airports, like up in the Houston area here, but we've also expanded to other areas that normally don't have JEA enforcement, because you don't really see them as being a place where you would be dealing with fisheries issues, and so, this past year, we worked with our partners at NOAA, as well as U.S. Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Customs, the FDA, and other agencies, and we actually worked up in the El Paso area, which is pretty far from the coast, but, if you think about it, we're talking about imports.

They're able to come through multiple ports of entry within the state, and so you have to kind of work outside of the box, look outside of the box, and think outside of the box, and look at where are the other locations that we wouldn't normally kind of view as being a location that that product would come through.

We still see, in some of these operations, some issues that we have found, are some of illegally-imported oysters. As you can see the little bags right there on the left in that ice chest, and those are oysters that don't meet the health code for the State of Texas or the United States. They are not properly labeled, and

they were not handled correctly in Mexico, and those were being brought across at the port of entry and seized.

On the flip side, we ran into an instance in El Paso that was more of a fisheries issue for us, more of a state fisheries issue, but we actually seized a pallet of half-shell oysters that were Pacific oysters, and those type of oysters in Texas are actually -- Since they're not native, they're prohibited from being brought into the State of Texas, other than in shucked form, and so we actually seized a pallet of oysters that could have posed some issues for us in the environment, if something had made it to the coast and possibly been introduced to the system there.

I will kind of round out my presentation with an issue that's really important to us in here in Texas, and that kind of plays off the IUU enforcement that we do with NOAA, but it's actually the IUU fishing that occurs along the Texas-Mexico border.

If any of you all haven't heard this discussed, and we have, of course, a long border along Texas and Mexico, and we deal with illegal fishing, whether it's on the Rio Grande River, our border lakes, and especially in the Gulf of Mexico. That's the issue that -- It's an issue for us, and it's an issue for our partners at the Coast Guard, our partners at NOAA, and it's one that we're pretty passionate about maintaining our presence out there and working towards addressing that issue.

There's not currently a NOAA priority that provides funding for these offshore patrols. The cooperative enforcement agreement does provide our authority to go out there and patrol it, but, currently, you know, that occurs on normal patrols that we're doing for other priorities. If we encounter a lancha offshore, we address that, and we address the gear, or, in some circumstances, that occur quite often, we actually put state dollars towards it, because we feel that it's so important for our state, for our constituents, our fishermen, and our resources, to make sure that we're putting that type of effort towards this type of illegal fishing and preventing it.

You know, just to kind of give you an idea of what we kind of look at, I mean, I kind of looked at some numbers, and, a few years back, the Coast Guard had run some studies, and, back then, I believe the numbers were close to about three-quarters of a million pounds that were projected of being taken each year for red snapper, when they had done a study. If you just kind of look at that in reality, compared to just what we get for our recreational anglers, for that private angler component of around 286,000 pounds, that's nearly triple what the poundage is that is being

allotted to our recreational fishermen here to go out and there enjoy the outdoors and have an opportunity at that resource.

Not only that, but it's occurring in basically the lower fifty miles of our 367-mile coastline, and so not only is it an abundance of resources being harvested, but the concentration is in such a small space, and that is a huge amount of pressure on that space there, particularly -- Which, you know, poses a lot of issues for our resource and for any kind of efforts that we do, not only a state, but as a whole of what you all are doing here to try to rebound a stock, you know, and it's definitely a negative for that area, but I think it's a negative for the whole system that we have in place.

A positive thing, another positive thing, on that that we have coming, and I think I mentioned it the last meeting, but we did get a project, a NRDA project, approved that would include $2.22 million that would go towards equipment, which could be one to two long-range vessels.

After those vessels would be acquired, it would also provide funding towards a five-year patrol plan to patrol for this illegal gear, and, of course, if, during those patrols, we encounter a lancha, we would utilize our authority, and we would work with the U.S. Coast Guard, as we do on a regular basis, to address the lancha issue in federal waters, and then we also work with them when they would encounter one in state waters, and that's a long-standing partnership that we've had with the Coast Guard.

It's a great one, and we work with them all the time with this, and also with our partners over at NOAA. Everybody is pretty concentrated on trying to address this issue, but that is something that we definitely still put a lot of effort to. A lot of kudos to our officers, and to our partners, for the efforts they're doing. I mean, it's work that is there every day, and it doesn't seem to be slowing down, or going away, and they still keep going and looking for the gear and looking for the fishermen. That's the end of my presentation. If you all have any questions, I would be happy to answer any of them.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. I think we have at least one. J.D.

MR. DUGAS: Thank you, Les. On Slide 7, you mentioned the Flower Garden Banks, and, tomorrow, we're scheduled to have a presentation about wahoo landings in the Flower Garden Banks, and I'm wondering if your agents are seeing a lot of landings coming from there.

ASSISTANT COMMANDER CASTERLINE: You're talking about wahoo

landings?

MR. DUGAS: Yes, sir.

ASSISTANT COMMANDER CASTERLINE: I don't have any data on that right now. If you like, I could kind of poll our folks and ask, you know, where, or how many they're seeing, and provide that back to you, if that's something that would interest you. I could either get it directly to you, or I could provide it to staff, and they could provide it to the rest of the council as well. Whichever you please.

MR. DUGAS: That would be great. I would like to see it. I don't want to speak for everyone else, but I would.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other questions? Mr. Geeslin.

MR. GEESLIN: Les, I just wanted to applaud you and Lieutenant Rickel in the audience, and I appreciate the presentation. I think it does highlight, you know, the diverse work you all are doing, not only to, you know, protect our marine resources, but, admittedly, we've got a border war going on, protecting our safety and security of our nation, putting yourselves out there in harm's way, and, you know, there's a lot going on down there, all the way to the Rio Grande, and our folks are going out there on these assignments, and so I just wanted to tip my cap to you and our Texas game wardens and our partners at NOAA OLE and the Coast Guard for, you know, engaging in this, and it seems like an ongoing war that we've got going on down there.

ASSISTANT COMMANDER CASTERLINE: Thank you, sir. I will pass that on to our officers there. They're definitely doing a great job out there in the field, and they're moving forward, and keeping at it, and doing a great job while they're doing it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I just wanted to point out there is some landings information by state for wahoo in Tab A, Number 10, and I don't know that you need to do any more work right now, until maybe the council makes a decision on what they want to do, and that would be my suggestion, since there is some preliminary information in Tab A-10, but that's just a thought.

ASSISTANT COMMANDER CASTERLINE: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Assistant Commander Casterline, thank

you very much for the presentation, and I will echo what Mr. Geeslin said. Thank you to you, and to your fellow officers, for all the work that you do, and the federal officers as well, and we appreciate all the work.

ASSISTANT COMMANDER CASTERLINE: Thank you, Chairman. You all have a good day. I appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, and so we have about nine minutes before our scheduled lunch. I've heard that we might be able to dispense with one of the items here potentially with the remaining nine minutes, and that would be a liaison report from the commission. Dave, is that enough time for you? Go ahead, please.

GULF STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION LIAISON REPORT

MR. DONALDSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to update the committee on the IRA funding activities that we're conducting in conjunction with NOAA Fisheries and the states. As I mentioned at the last meeting, we're conducting two workshops, an effort validation workshop and a discards workshop, and we had the effort validation workshop earlier this month in New Orleans. We discussed a variety of different alternative methods for estimating effort, and the best methods are still to be determined, and will probably be a suite of options, and may vary by state, and then the recreational discards workshop is scheduled for the end of July, the first of August, and that will be in New Orleans as well.

Once both of these workshops have been completed, we'll develop RFPs to solicit proposals to address both effort and the discards issue. Proposals will test a variety of methodologies and examine their effectiveness. The details of who and what still need to be worked out, but that's our plan moving forward.

Then I just want to kind of update you all on the recreational fishing effort pilot survey that's being conducted in Mississippi and Alabama, utilizing the LA Creel effort survey. Work continues, and is going well.

The states have -- The states met earlier this summer, at our office, and developed the programming to produce the estimates, and, while the states haven't conducted the actual production of the estimates, there are plans for that to happen here in the near future, and, once those estimates are developed, an analysis will be conducted to compare and contrast the various effort estimates. As I mentioned in my last report, this provides a unique opportunity to look at the difference between the state and federal

recreational surveys.

We also -- I will mention that we met -- The state directors and myself and Carrie and NOAA Fisheries folks met for lunch yesterday, just to kind of get together and talk about the recreational issues in the Gulf, and one of the things that came out of that meeting is to kind of develop a visioning document that will kind of lay out the near-term and short-term and long-term vision of where recreational fishing is going within each of the states, kind of a roadmap, and hopefully we'll have that in the near future to share with the group, and so that is my last slide, and I will answer any questions, if there are any.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Mr. Donaldson. Any questions? Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: I think we've spoken about this before, but the reason that Florida is not included in that is just because the sheer size and different factors of access along the coast and stuff like that, and is that correct?

MR. DONALDSON: Yes, and, I mean, C.J. has been involved in discussions. He participated in the meeting, and they're participating in these workshops, and so they're not being excluded, but, for this specific effort survey, it was -- The LA Creel method was easily transferable to Mississippi and Alabama, without any major changes, which is important, because we didn't want to go through the certification process. If we did it in Florida, there would be -- There would have to be some major tweaks, and so yes.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just wanted to make a few more points, and not really questions for Dave, and so, with regard to Alabama and Mississippi, I certainly commend the efforts there. Based on conversations that have happened throughout this week, we recognize the need to feel more coordinated, specifically with Mississippi and Alabama, in terms of the transition plans, the certification of those surveys, and so we'll be ramping up some coordination there in the near-term.

The other thing I will just mention, and Dave kind of quickly glossed over the effort workshop, but it was really, to me, a very excellent workshop. There was great participation by all the state agencies. We are not going to be able to find that gold standard I think that we were hoping for, that is going to work for everyone at this point, but what was clear is that there's going to

eventually be a suite of different options that we can explore, through an RFP, from camera systems at inlets and, you know, choke points, to possibly doing some exploratory work with how satellite imagery could be used, and then there was really, to me, a very intriguing presentation with regard to even cellphone information.

Although it may not be able to quantify fishing effort, it could give us a lot of information around the kind of dynamics of the fisheries, where people are operating out of, the frequency of visits to boat ramps and other areas, and give us a lot of information with regard to how that could be correlated with weather conditions and other factors, and so more to come on that, but I feel like there was a lot of really good pieces of information that emerged from the effort workshop.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other questions for Mr. Donaldson? I am not seeing any, and so that will take us to our scheduled lunch break, and we will return for public comment at 1:30.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on June 26, 2024.)

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June 26, 2024

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

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The Full Council of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council reconvened at The Omni Hotel in Houston, Texas on Wednesday afternoon, June 26, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Kevin Anson.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Good afternoon, everyone. Public input is a vital part of the council's deliberative process, and comments, both oral and written, are accepted and considered by the council throughout the process.

The Sustainable Fisheries Act requires that all statements include a brief description of the background and interest of the person, or persons, in the subject of the statement. All written information shall include a statement of the source and date of such information.

Oral or written communications provided to the council, its members, or its staff that relate to matters within the council's purview are public in nature. Please give any written comments to

the staff, as all written comments will be posted on the council's website for viewing by council members and the public and will be maintained by the council as part of the permanent record.

Knowingly and willfully submitting false information to the council is a violation of federal law. We will welcome public comment from in-person and virtual attendees. Anyone joining us virtually that wishes to speak during public comment should have already registered online. Virtual participants that are registered to comment should ensure that they are registered for the webinar under the same name they used to register to speak. In-person attendees wishing to speak during public comment should sign-in at the registration kiosk located in the back of the meeting room. We accept only one registration per person.

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

If you have a cellphone or similar device, we ask that you keep them on silent or vibrating mode during the meeting. Also, in order for all to be able to hear the proceedings, we ask that you have any private conversations outside the meeting room. Please note that public comment may end before the published agenda time if all registered in-person and virtual participants have completed their comments.

Before we get started in our public testimony portion of the meeting, I just wanted to take a few moments, and this particular meeting is a special one to the council, and it's the 300th meeting, as was mentioned at the beginning of the Full Council session today, and so we do have -- The hotel provided us a cake, and, council members, if you wouldn't mind going up, if you're interested in a piece of cake, to get a piece now, and then the rest of the cake will be brought out to the audience, and you're welcome to have the cake and to join the special occasion that we have.

Just to give some context as to what that first meeting was like, I guess, it was held October 12 and 13, 1976, in Kenner, Louisiana. The temporary chairman was William Stevenson, the Regional Director of the Southeast Region for National Marine Fisheries Service, and some of the agenda items were the election of the council chairman and vice chairman, and, in fact, it's on the

screen, and so you can see the topics.

Most of it had to do with administration, obviously, setting up the council AP, administrative issues, but they did have, near the bottom of the agenda, was a review of billfish and shark EIS and preliminary management plan, and so they were dealing with sharks back then too, but anyway, again, council members, if you would like a piece of cake, if you can go do that now, so that we can take the remainder of the cake to the audience. Otherwise, we're going to go ahead and start public testimony.

What has been done in prior public testimonies is we have folks that are in the audience, and we have folks that have signed-up online, and so I will rotate between the two lists. We'll start with those that are in the audience here in the meeting room, and then, after that person has finished, then we'll go to the virtual participants, until we conclude with that list. First up then would be Lawrence Marino, followed by Kelia Paul online.

PUBLIC COMMENT

MR. LAWRENCE MARINO: Good afternoon. My name is Larry Marino, and I'm here on behalf of Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill. The purpose and need statements for Amendments 59 and 60 say it a little more nicely, but they're about reducing sharecropping. That concern isn't limited to pure speculators though who don't fish at all. It includes anybody who leases their shares out for the lion's share of the proceeds, instead of fishing them.

Certainly some actual fishermen lease out some or all of their shares in any given year, because they're ill, or their boat is broken, or any other number of reasons, but generally there is no justification for giving the right to harvest the nation's fish to anyone who uses that right only to make money off of someone else who does.

Amendment 59 tries to address requirements for shareholders to retain shares, but the current approach to the participation requirement in Action 2 treats participation as a binary thing. Fishermen either are or aren't active, depending on whether they fish a threshold percentage of their shares. They would lose all of their shares if they don't and none if they do.

Contrary to some comments yesterday, 25 percent is a small threshold, not a large one, and you would be authorizing a 75 percent sharecropper, which is contrary to the purpose. Instead of a threshold, active participation should be a proportional analysis, where shareholders lose the shares they don't fish over

a grace amount. Instead of a 25 percent threshold to keep all shares, 25 should be that grace amount that they can keep, even if they don't fish them.

It's reasonable to allow leeway, such as by averaging over two or three years, and to have a hardship waiver, which some folks have been calling an appeal, because the point is to ensure that the fish go to actual fishermen and not just to catch somebody out, and reclamation should be by type of share, and not by entire account, because fishing one species doesn't justify sharecropping another one, and, also, the active participation requirement needs to be added to the divestiture measures in Alternative 3 of Action 5, in order for it to take effect.

Amendment 60, regarding redistribution of the reclaimed shares, another action is needed for a quota bank to hold reclaimed shares and distribute allocation annually, rather than a one-time redistribution of the shares themselves. Don't repeat the sins of the past and just give it all away again. That's what got us into this mess in the first place, and, even if new entrants are the purpose addressed by redistribution at the outset, creating a quota bank now would create a mechanism allowing the flexibility in the future to address other purposes, if the need arises. Also, alternatives need to be added to the existing action to provide for distributing allocation instead of shares.

Now, this quota bank fits nicely with Action 3 regarding set-asides for quota increases, but those alternatives listed there are too small. They're restricted to increasing over the 2024 quotas, and we're hearing yesterday that they want to make it even smaller. The idea of limiting set-asides to quota increases is itself already a compromise, allowing the effective perpetual ownership of the fish to continue, and merely limiting that effective ownership to some threshold.

The quota in effect when the IFQ quota was instituted, or at least when public participation began, would be more appropriate, since that's how many fish they could harvest when the government gave them that right or when they were allowed to buy that right from whoever the government gave it to. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Mr. Marino. Next, we have Kelia Paul, followed by Bob Zales. Kelia, we can't hear you, if you're talking. All right. We'll come back to Kelia, and we'll go next to Bob Zales. Bob.

MR. BOB ZALES, II: Bob Zales, II, Executive Director of Southeastern Fisheries Association. First off, I want to talk a

little bit about Amendment 53. I'm also a fishery management consultant for SOFA, who is part of this lawsuit. What we would like to see is, in this process that the court has sent the thing back to the Fisheries Service to explain the differences between what they did with red snapper versus red grouper, we would like to see that process be held, and open, to where stakeholders can see what is going on, so that we just don't see the final answer. We would like to know how the answer was derived.

IFQs, the whole -- I don't want to offend anybody about what I'm fixing to say, because I'm not sure that everybody around this table fully understands the 59 and 60 are not plans to manage fish, and they manage people, and these people are fishers who typically come from historical multigenerational, small families, and they all have businesses to operate, and they have futures to look to, and they would just like to see some substantial movement in this process, so that they can begin to make plans for what's going to happen in the future.

They're all on pins and needles, whether they own quote, whether they don't own quota, and they want out what the end result is going to be, and it appears this thing is continually kicked down the road. We would like for you all to consider the real-world impact of what these plans will do.

Data is going to be my final topic, and you all know our position, pretty much, on recreational data, and we fully support doing some type of vessel permitting for the recreational sector, to identify so we get a better handle on the effort that's out there. We don't really care whether it's a state thing, or federal, and, however it gets done, we would like to see the process be done.

It's clear, from the Fisheries Service on data from different states, and you can look at the final rule for gag grouper, and there is a paragraph in there that describes perfectly what the discards and the discard mortality from the unaccountable recreational fishery is doing to stock assessments.

The stock assessment is up here, and you pull those wild numbers down, and the stock assessment comes down. We all lose fish, recreational, charter, commercial. You've got to get a handle on that effort. Otherwise, your fifteen-day gag grouper season is going to end up to a one-day season, like red snapper in the South Atlantic, and so, Andy, I think you all fully understand this. Somehow, you all need to get together and figure this out. Any questions?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a question from Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Bob, since you ran out of time, could you give us a short answer about what you're seeing with the Spanish and the king mackerel fishery?

MR. ZALES: Of what?

MS. BOGGS: The Spanish and king mackerel fishery.

MR. ZALES: Both of them -- I was today at lunch with some people, and apparently some kingfish are being spotted offshore of Louisiana, and so that fishery, I think, is not in trouble, and it's just those fish are somewhere, but we just don't know where they are. I don't know if it's the bait situation, because bait has been an issue in the Panhandle, where I'm from, and Spanish mackerel -- I haven't seen a problem there.

I don't really have a problem with taking bag limits down from fifteen to ten. I would highly suggest that you do kingfish to two fish, rather than three, and nobody wanted three when it was done, but I'm not sure that you need to really do anything to reduce any of the quotas in either one of those fisheries. Let's let it ride out, and see what happens, because I think, in both cases, the fish are doing pretty well.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Bob.

MR. ZALES: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We'll go back to Kelia Paul. Kelia, are you there?

MS. KELIA PAUL: Yes. Sorry about that. Can you all hear me now?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We can. Go ahead.

MS. PAUL: Good afternoon, council. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I apologize that I'm not there in-person, but this season didn't allow me to travel. My name is Kelia Paul, and I own two dually-permitted vessels in Panama City Beach, and I'm the President of the Panama City Boatmen's Association. Today, my comments will reflect the will of the association.

For SEFHIER, we encourage the continued work around the program, to get it set up as soon as possible. We want the data collection restarted, so that we can give the information the council needs

to make accurate management decisions. That being said, please do so in a way that does not leave us vulnerable for all the hard work to come crashing down, as it did with the first iteration.

Validation is paramount to its success, and we fully support it. However, if the only option is dockside intercepts, or what was basically said during the presentation were all different variations of VMS or GPS tracking, and we may need to go back to the AP, and the IPT, and come up with -- Let me be clear that a lot of our vessels are dually-permitted and have VMS, and some don't, but what was made clear by what happened last time is there's a vast majority that don't want VMS, and this could crash the program again, and that is the last thing we want.

For the economic information, at the last meeting, I stood up and said that we would like to see the survey sampling, like the commercial sector has, which is by permit and vessel. We were disappointed to only see examples at the trip level, which is far less desirable than a percentage of vessels reporting for the entire year. I do want to thank Captain Walker for his comments, and I fully agree that we seem to be repeating history here, adding things that were explicitly spoke against and throwing things in that will make the program so much harder to succeed. Please heed the comments, and let's get this thing off the ground correctly and where it will continue to stand.

For snapper, red snapper for the charter-for-hire, we support changing the start date, but we do not support a split season. We understand that, due to the wave data, that the second part of the season would not be until November, and we do not have any use for those dates. For us, May is better, and the weather is better, and tourism, and, after the second week of August -- Which is why we support a mid-May to mid-August. If we do not have that option, we would rather go with Mr. Strelcheck's idea of leaving June 1 as a start date and adding onto May, once we have exceeded those August days. We want a season to be a continuous season, regardless.

We also support the buffer reduction from 9 percent to 5 percent, and we thank the council for recognizing our continued efforts to maintain our catch levels.

For lane snapper, we support the increase in size limit to mitigate the overages we are experiencing currently, to keep the season open. As was stated yesterday, it is an important fishery to have in the shoulder season. We do support the twenty-fathom closure removal. It's unenforceable and ineffective.

For kings, I have seen some kings caught on our dock this year. They're mostly on the smaller size, but there have been one or two large ones. We do agree that there's something that needs to be done, and are also struggling with the steps to take. While we appreciate the issue is most likely environmental, that doesn't mean that this council can't continue to take action and mitigate what we can. We spoke against the three-fish bag limit when it was passed, and, at a minimum, we want the limit moved back to two, and I'm out of time.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Kelia. Any questions? I am not seeing any. Thank you. All right. Next, we have Ken Haddad, followed by Mike Sullivan online.

MR. KEN HADDAD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My name is Ken Haddad, American Sportfishing Association out of Llyod, Florida, and a reminder that we're the trade organization for the sportfishing industry. I first want to thank Mr. Gill, Ms. Boggs, and who is that last one? Diaz, who didn't show up, and so we're -- Dale, if you're on there, we miss you. We want to thank you for your service. You know, you're usually underappreciated by us, but we do appreciate you greatly. I just wanted to reinforce that for you.

The twenty fathoms, we support the direction of the council committee. If there's an opportunity to increase access, without any serious impacts, that makes sense, and we do feel that the action should be monitored for any unintended consequences, if that's possible to do.

Spanish mackerel, we agree with the current council committee direction, and we feel that, without a clear, science-based management need, then any action should be approached cautiously.

For king mackerel, as you progress with this, just remember that the recreational community primarily fishes based on, and the private particularly, on encounter and abundance, and, in some ways, this might be considered self-regulating, and you can see it in the recreational data, and, in addition, part of the fishery is catch-and-release, and so we don't fish these like we would a reef fish, and, as the innovative thinking is taking place for management, possible management, measures, please keep that in your minds. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Any questions? Thank you again. All right. Next, we have Mike Sullivan, followed by Mike Colby.

MR. MIKE SULLIVAN: Mike Sullivan, and thank you again, council,

for allowing us to do this virtually. We're out fishing right now. Mike Sullivan, Panama City. I own multiple inspected charter vessels, multiple dual-permitted vessels. I'm an IFQ holder, and I'm in a little bit of everything, just so we can stay afloat.

I will start with red snapper. I would love to see the start date pushed back into May, as has been suggested. I mean, even if it's a week, eight days, ten days, and anything is better. Obviously, nowadays, we have more and more hurricanes. The further we get into September, and just the weather gets, you know, way more unpredictable. I'm definitely against the split season. I like the way it's going now.

We have done very good since we've become sector separation, and, you know, we haven't gone over our 9 percent buffer, and many years have been, you know, way under, and I would love to see it reduced back to 5 percent.

I will go to amberjack. We would love -- I know we're supposed to find out in the next couple of weeks, but I would love for us to be able to, you know, get a continuous season, like knowing we're going to open and close. You know, sure, I appreciated the May days, but it's really hard to run a business when we find out a week or two before, and, I mean, it looks like it may open in August this year, and that's another -- You know, it's just tough, and then, if we've overfished, you know, the next thing you know, we don't get anything in September, and we've already booked amberjack trips, and it just makes it a little, you know, harder for us to run a business, especially in this tough economic time we're going through.

Lane snapper, definitely move it to twelve inches. You know, we want to try to keep open what we can, and we don't like anything closed. I'm going to go to Spanish mackerel. Ten fish per person is plenty fine. You know, again, I do not want anything to go overfished, to where we start having closed seasons, and the same with king mackerel. I don't know why we went to three fish. Two was plenty.

The SEFHIER, yes, we need to be validated. Yes, we need to have some sort of reporting system. Yes. We don't need to bog it all down, like it was, to where it fails again. You know, I know you want to know our economic data, and I don't understand why we can't do like -- I'm in the commercial sector, and, at the end of the year, I get the form, and it's pretty much like a tax audit that I fill out, and like that's the important stuff. What we charge each trip, I mean, that's just bogging down numbers, and it causes more resistance, and it causes more lawsuits, and it causes for

the whole program to fail, as it did last time, which is terrible, because a lot of data was there that was just thrown out the window.

Whenever they do it, obviously, you know, try to make it as painless as possible. I mean, to the apps, you know, if there has to be some sort of tracking or whatever, make it to where, you know, it's easy.

Then the last thing is I want to stand with the IFQ. I know, every meeting here lately, there's a huge push to do away with it, or take away with it, and I'm a guy who came into the business -- Again, I'm in the charter and commercial, and so I own quota. If the charter fishing is good, I don't have to go commercial fishing. If the charter fishing is bad, I've got to go commercial fishing. You know, I have everything to where I can stay in business, you know, year-round, but, you know, if the chartering is good, I'm going to get penalized, and you're going to take away something you forced me to have to buy, and, again, I don't understand that.

When I got into the business, I didn't get any quota, and I had to purchase what I had, and now there's a push where, oh, you ran good in the charter, and you didn't commercial fish, and we want to take it, and, you know, I don't understand that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mike, you have to wrap it up.

MR. SULLIVAN: Okay. That's fine. I appreciate the opportunity to speak, and thank you all very much.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you. Any questions for Captain Sullivan? I'm not seeing any. Thank you again, Mike. All right. Next, we have Mike Colby, followed by Brian Lewis.

MR. MIKE COLBY: Thank you, council, and Ms. Boggs and Mr. Gill, for all of your service to us. Mike Colby, and I'm a headboat charter operator from Clearwater, Florida, president of the Clearwater Marine Association.

The observations that I have, from Monday's discussion, I found kind of interesting, the talk about other chartered activities, in terms of reporting for federally-permitted charter boats. Now, I know that's a scoping document, and there's a lot of discussion that can take place on that, but considering that some of the units that we'll have for validation will have geofencing, I'm not sure where we go with other chartered activity, especially those that may occur inside the geofence, but I'm sure that's going to be open for discussion, you know, at later council meetings.

It's also interesting that -- In January, I had mentioned to this council that Woods Hole had produced a geofence application for their Nemo unit, which is a cellular device, and, in my discussions with them after that, they now have produced, or will produce, an app that can go on the fisherman's phone, and so they're trying to produce this one-stop shopping for the fishermen. They can put their app on your phone, do their catch report, and have it directly sent, through the Nemo device, in a secure link, to the Fisheries Service, and so they're kind of pushing this envelope for that kind of device, in terms of how they validate effort.

What else is interesting, to me, is the discussion on the economic reporting, and we've kind of gone into this random sampling, which kind of opens up maybe not quite so peripheral discussions on sample size, what species it might affect, or not affect, and do we go 5, 10, 20, 30, 50 percent, and I don't know where this council is headed with all of that.

I think you will find the soft place to land for it, and I'm particularly in favor of economic reporting across-the-board. I've worked with other industries with the Department of Interior, where those industries have had to produce some information on the value of their industry, and not necessarily the value of a single person, but the value of the industry.

As a wildlife biologist, I did fieldwork for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and we dealt with people all over the country on disaster assistance, mitigation issues, risk assessment, everything, and conservation land banks, where the land owner had to produce some information, and not all, and, I mean, there were a lot of price supports that came out of the farm bill, but we're not talking about price supports here, but they had to have some kind of idea of what the value of their industry was. I think the same applies here for fishermen, and the Department of Commerce, and so I hope we'll get a good soft place to land. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Mike. Mike, we have a question from Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you for being here today, Captain Colby. I know that you spent most of your testimony on the data collection, which I really appreciate that, but do you have anything that you can tell us about what you all are seeing with the Spanish and the king mackerel down in Clearwater Beach?

MR. COLBY: Well, on Spanish mackerel, it's kind of a ground-zero. The guys in our association, and there's eighteen or so federally-

permitted boats in our one group, and none of us are keeping fifteen mackerel per person. I mean, I'm down to five already, and they think pragmatically about this. Nobody wants to clean ninety mackerel at the dock, and, I mean, so we cut it off at thirty or forty for a group of six, and so we're already kind of into that harvest mode.

King mackerel, I will tell you, and, this spring, 2024, my boat, under my direction, and my other captain, we caught not as many kingfish as we have in the past, but they were nice fish. We didn't keep a fish under fifteen pounds. What was really interesting, and this brings to a point that one of our council members made, is we're seeing an uptick in recruitment in some areas, and, every single short king mackerel trip I took, we would catch five to eight undersized kingfish.

I don't mean twenty-three-inch, and I mean fourteen-inch. I have never seen that many -- I mean, that's, what, twenty trips, and that's a hundred fish or so, and I have never seen that many little tiny king mackerel. Now, that's the future of the fishery right there, but it does show there's some interesting recruitment I think going on with king mackerel. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. All right. Next, we have Captain Brian Lewis, followed by Ronald Chicola.

MR. BRIAN LEWIS: Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chair. My name is Brian Lewis, commercial fisherman, owner/operator, IFQ stakeholder, and we're located in Clearwater Beach. I wanted to bring some things to light here. One, we primarily fish for grouper, and we catch red snapper as usually bycatch. I'm a little concerned here, right?

So we started out the season with a hundred pounds of gag allocation, which we already harvested in one trip, and we are throwing back, on average, 300 to 600 pounds of gag grouper, and so a little bit of knowledge there, and I don't know if our shortage of gags is so much that we really think it is here.

The other thing is that I'm concerned about the red grouper. We were averaging, usually, on a ten-day trip, 2,500 pounds of red grouper a trip, and now we're 600 to 800 pounds of red grouper a trip, and so I'm kind of concerned about that, considering that red grouper is 80 percent of our catch, and so we need to pay attention.

The recreational red grouper fishery was just opened for six months, right, and where are we at with the numbers here? We don't

even really even truly know how much red grouper was actually landed by the recreational fishery, right, and so you can go to the IFQ page, right, and you can pull up, and you can see our landings, right, and we need some transparency here, and we need some kind of vessel permit, harvest tags, whatever it takes.

Hopefully this recreational initiative that's about to be coming up here sheds some light on the real issues here, and we come up with some solutions, so that we don't keep losing our quota from the commercial sector and it being shifted over to the recreational sector.

Amendment 53, we lost a whole crapload of red grouper from our fishery, and it drove the cost of lease price way up, and that's another problem, right? Amberjack is closing at the end of the month, right, and so we're not going to be able to catch them. I'm throwing gags back, and pretty soon we won't have anything left, and that's concerning to us.

Regarding this IFQ amendment that we're trying to make changes with, how about this? We had a referendum for the IFQ program to begin with, and maybe we should have a referendum again to decide what is the real solution on this IFQ shift, and how about a quota bank? There's a great idea that I heard Mr. Marino speak of, and I echo what Bob Zales said too, and so, in closing, I want to thank Susan Boggs, Bob Gill, and Dale Diaz for their service, and you all tried your best, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Any questions? I'm not seeing any. Thanks again. Ronald Chicola followed by Steven Vaughan.

MR. RONALD CHICOLA: Good afternoon, council. I'm just gotten up here, and I'm not going to cry today, but I just came up here to congratulate all the new people on the council, and maybe you all will get this ball rolling, and get in gear a little bit, and start doing things a little faster. I know Captain Walker is a great guy, and he's passionate about his fishing, and he knows a lot, and he can teach you all a few things, and he's not very political.

Another thing is you all have done a great job on the sharks, and we are number-one in the country for shark attacks, and so I see Ms. Boggs, and she's been here a long time, and Mr. Bob has been here a long time, and congratulations on your time. You all have a good day.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Any questions? All right. Next, we have Steven Vaughan.

MS. BERNADINE ROY: I apologize, but he's not online.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: He's not online. All right. Then we will go to Benjamin Quarles.

MS. ROY: He's also not on.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. One more online. Adam Major. Adam, are you online?

MS. ROY: Also not online.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Then we'll go in-house. Scott Daggett.

MR. SCOTT DAGGETT: Good afternoon. My name is Scott Daggett, and I'm an owner/operator out of Madeira Beach, and just a comment on the IFQ system. You've pretty much got the floorplan for messing it up. I've been around since the qualifying years, and I was there when it started. When it started off, pretty much -- I can't speak for the west side of the Gulf, and I'm from Florida, and I can only speak for the east coast, and we all pretty much had what fish we caught, and it worked out pretty well.

Then, you know, the quota obviously got reduced, and reduced, and that opened up the leasing market, but there's nobody on our side of the Gulf, and I don't know about the western Gulf, and that's a whole different ball of wax, but, on our side of the Gulf, nobody is whole, and so you have to have leasing. That's the one thing that I do know, because none of us have enough fish to make it. You can't run a business.

Like I've bought 10,000, and I owned another 15,000, and 25,000 -- On the worst trips, that's probably three for me. You know, we average anywhere from 7,000 to 10,000 a trip. We work hard, but we get it done, and, in closing here, you see the mistakes. I mean, when you guys had the graphs up yesterday, and you see the folks that land the fish, that's where the fish should be going, to the people who land it.

You've got -- I think it was 274, and give me a second. It was 662 accounts with shares, and 388 land them, and so there's your problem right there. You've got to get it back to the fishermen. I mean, this whole program -- From what I understand, when they ran it across to me back in the day, it was, oh, to get the fishermen so you would have control over your own business, and, right now, I've got to fish for a fish house, because I don't have the leases.

I don’t have the money to put up the leases, and I don’t have the contacts, and so now we’re beholden to fish houses that have the shares, and, you know, it’s the only way to do business now. Nobody is whole on our side of the Gulf. Nobody gets to say, oh, I’m just going to fish my shares, and that’s it. You can’t afford to own a boat that way, and that’s about all I’ve got.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: Thanks, Scott.

MR. DAGGETT: Yes, sir.

MR. WALKER: I’m curious your opinion on what we discussed about requiring a permit to own shares.

MR. DAGGETT: I think you should have to have a permit, and I think you should have a boat and a VMS. Okay. Think, and you don’t have no VMS, and you have no boat, and you don’t have to pay the 3 percent. Even on leases, I’ve got to pay the 3 percent, and now how does that work out?

If you talk to anybody outside this business, and tell them what you do, they look at your sideways, like you’re crazy, and they’ve never heard of such a thing, but I also think you should have to at least catch 50 percent of it, and that would get the people who don’t want to be in it out of it, you know, and I really do think that’s the sticking point. Just make people land their fish. Make them have the expense. Make them do the VMS, and do your permits. You know, I carry insurance on my boat, and a thousand dollars a month, you know, and, I mean, it’s an expensive business to be in, without somebody taking a third of your profit, or sometimes 75 percent, or 60 percent, you know, and so that’s all. Thank you.

MR. WALKER: That’s very helpful. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Next, we have Jason Cox.

MS. ROY: Mr. Cox, you will have to enter your audio PIN. We can move on to Sonja, if you would like.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Yes, we’ll then go in-house to Randy Lauser.

MR. RANDY LAUSER: Good afternoon, council. Randy Lauser, owner/operator. Whenever the IFQ system, the red grouper IFQ system, first went into effect, it was great. You know, everybody

qualified pretty good for it, and we all had enough fish to where we could all make a living with it, and then it just started getting taken and taken and taken, and that's why I'm fishing for Charlie Renier now, because, after Amendment 53 went into effect -- We told the council what was going to happen.

The prices of quota went sky high, and you can't find it. If you don't know anybody, you're not getting it, and it's just tough, and, last year, we went out, at the end of the year, and you could find it for a quarter a pound, just everybody sharecropping, holding onto it, and it should be brought back to the fishermen who are catching the fish, and it should -- The fishermen should be in control of the fish.

After it went public, it just ruined the whole IFQ system for the red groupers, and I can't talk about the snapper guys, and it's a totally different fishery, and so I think we should try to get it back to the fishermen who are catching the fish. You should have to have a fish house, or a fishing boat, and you should have to land your shares, have share landings, vessel permits and all that, like it used to be back in the day, when we qualified for the IFQ shares. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a couple of hands up. Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you for being here today, Randy. I think I misunderstood. You said, after Amendment 53 went into effect, the price of red grouper skyrocketed.

MR. LAUSER: The lease price skyrocketed.

MS. BOGGS: The lease price, but then you were only able to sell it for a quarter? Something about the quarter I didn't understand.

MR. LAUSER: Well, we told you all, when Amendment 53 -- When you all took that much red grouper from us, when we lost all that fish, it like devastated us, and then everybody who owned shares -- I was getting it for thirty-cents a pound the year before that, and then now, if you're lucky, you can find it for two-bucks, if you're lucky.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Randy. I will ask you -- I think I already know the answer to my first question, but I would say your views on requiring a permit to hold shares.

MR. LAUSER: It sound be back the way it was when it first started,

you know, the qualifying years. A vessel, a permit, and you should have to show landings, and you should have to land 50 percent of your fish.

MR. WALKER: Okay, and that my next question, is, if you were required to prove some percentage, or catch some percentage, of shares that you're issued, or allocation you're issued, at the first of the year -- You know, I thought about that, and there's a lot of different ways you could look at the percentage that proves you participated in the fishery, and, now, if you hold -- You could have an off year, and 75 percent is on our list, and you could fish full-time and maybe not --

MR. LAUSER: I would shoot for 75, to be honest with you. I mean, you should have to catch your own fish. If you do break down, you've got that little bit of leeway, where you can lease it to somebody, if needed. Like, this year, my boat has been broke down for three-and-a-half months, all computerized, and I haven't fished for three-and-a-half months, and so that's a lot of fish that I have missed out on, and so you should be able to have some percentage where, if you have that problem, where you could lease that part of that fish.

MR. WALKER: Right, and, also, if you hold multiple species, and you have one in your account that you don't fish for that often, and it's just in case you catch one -- You know, some of the ways we're doing this here, you might inadvertently lose that, because you didn't catch it, and this whole idea is to move it where people do catch it.

MR. LAUSER: Absolutely.

MR. WALKER: We've got to be careful with that, I think, and so that's why I was interested in seeing what percentage you would support to prove that you're a -- You know, that you have to catch to show that you catch your own shares.

MR. LAUSER: Right. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Sonja Fordham.

MS. SONJA FORDHAM: Good afternoon.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Good afternoon.

MS. FORDHAM: Thank you, Chair. My name is Sonja Fordham, and I represent a conservation NGO called Shark Advocates International, and I am also a member of the National Marine Fisheries Service

recovery team for the smalltooth sawfish. I appreciate this opportunity to once again address the council regarding the protection of this critically-endangered species.

As you're likely aware, sawfish, more than any other Gulf of Mexico marine species, are becoming disoriented and dying at a truly alarming rate from an unknown affliction continuing off of western Florida, and, for your information, if you missed it, the latest turn in this emergency is detailed in an article in yesterday's *Tampa Bay Times*. At last count, more than fifty sawfish deaths have been documented as part of this strange mortality event.

Those deaths, in addition to the ones that have gone unreported, clearly pose a serious threat to such a small and vulnerable population, and so, in light of this crisis, I wanted to take the opportunity to reiterate the sawfish conservation community's request that the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, and the council as a whole, elevate the priority of ensuring this survival of smalltooth sawfish and take immediate action to better safeguard the sawfish that remain.

Among the clearest, and most important, steps are significantly increasing the observer coverage for shrimp fisheries operating off of west Florida and closing areas of high bycatch to this gear. These recommendations, and the underlying analysis, have been detailed by Gulf of Mexico-based sawfish experts in a peer-reviewed article published in the journal *Aquatic Conservation* in 2022 and reviewed previously for the council members.

My colleagues and I, as I mentioned in January, are also eager for the release of the new shrimp fishery biological opinion that we hope will spark a more realistic and cautious approach to sawfish protection, including significantly lower levels of allowable take. We ask that the National Marine Fisheries Service consider improving sawfish protections by emergency action.

To close, I will just stress the urgency of these measures, as we all work to understand and abate this devastating new threat to one of America's most endangered marine species. Thank you for your time and consideration.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. We have a question for you from Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: You said that, in the actions you would like to see -- The first one was to significantly increase observers on shark fishing boats, and I was curious how that is a -- Did you mean shark or shrimp boats, ma'am?

MS. FORDHAM: Knowing me, I might have said "shark", but I meant shrimp.

MR. WALKER: Okay. If you said shrimp, I understand. I was going to ask how that would be such a benefit on a shark boat.

MS. FORDHAM: The shrimp fishery is currently 1 to 2 percent observer coverage, and my community feels this is wholly inadequate.

MR. WALKER: Very good. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you, Ms. Fordham.

MS. FORDHAM: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Next, we have David Johnson, followed by B.J. Burkett.

MR. DAVID JOHNSON: Good afternoon, council. I'm David Johnson, and I'm owner/operator out of Madeira Beach, Florida, and, like my friends before me, I'm here about the IFQ program. I don't own one pound of IFQ, and I have to lease everything that I catch, all year long. I've been an owner for four years now, and it's tough to make enough profit to buy IFQ when you have to lease snapper at two-thirds of the ex-vessel price.

I believe -- You know, I came here to see the progress made on this amendment, and I'm excited about it, and I think that, in all the actions, the last choice in every one of them is the only thing that would possibly work, and, you know, you have to have a permit, and you have to have a vessel, and you have to land your fish. There is no getting around that. It's hard to go out and try to get ahead when you're having to pay somebody else for the right to go harvest a natural resource.

I do believe that something should be done with the snapper quota in the eastern Gulf. In the qualifying years, we were allowed to keep 200 pounds a trip, if you landed between the first and tenth of the month. We didn't qualify for snapper, you know, and something needs to be done about that. That's about I have to say.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. We have a question for you from Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you for being here today, Mr. Johnson, and so,

just out of curiosity, with the snapper, is it because you're seeing way more snapper in your area than you have?

MR. JOHNSON: Way more snapper.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, sir. All right. Next is B.J. Burkett, followed by Charlie Renier.

MR. B.J. BURKETT: My name is B.J. Burkett, from Panama City Beach, Florida. I have three charter boats and a commercial fishing boat, and I'm dually-permitted on a couple of the charter boats. I'm an IFQ holder, and I have been since the beginning.

I'm going to start out, real quick, on the topics that you have talked about, and, the SEFHIER, we need the program, but, I mean, I agree with Ms. Kelia Paul earlier. Don't screw it up this time. The VMS and all that, it's not going to work again, and so quit trying to come up with a pinger or something like that, and it's just going to fail. I mean, you're going to have to beef up the dockside sampling or something to make that work.

The red snapper season, we are not for a split season if it's going to take you two or three months to get the data, and we're not going to get them until November. We would rather stay through a straight season, starting on June 1. I did kind of like Strelcheck's idea on, if there is any remainder, give them to us the following year in May, and you all really don't need to be giving us any more snapper at all right now, and I'm not going to say there's a decline, but it is definitely not a growing fishery right now, and so you all need to pay real close attention to this, or you're going to have your greatest achievement fail, and so pay real close attention to the red snapper over the next couple of years.

The lane snapper, twelve inches is what size I would go with. Spanish mackerel, we can definitely go down from fifteen, but let's not go drastic, and I've said it before, and let's start with ten, before we go any further.

I do need to mention dolphins and sharks. They're still a problem, and I haven't heard no mention of that, and you all just kind of stay blind to it, but the sharks and dolphin is what is collapsing all these fisheries.

The IFQ, I mean, you all built this to what it is. For the red snapper, you can't change it now. You've done and got us all in debt up to our eyeballs, and so you're going to have to roll with it at this point.

Last, but not least, I do want to spend the rest of my time talking about gag, and so the fifteen-day season in September -- I mean, it's not a busy time of year for us, and we're not going to be able to catch many of them, and god knows how many we've caught all summer, and have been throwing them back, and the main part about the gags that I want to talk about is the commercial side. You all have -- My commercial boat, a four-man crew, a captain and three mates, and I'm blessed to have had a great crew for several years now, and a lot of commercial boats don't have that, but, since you all have reduced the gags so far, and you went so drastic so fast, and I've lost all three crew members. They've had to go find other work.

I barely still have my captain, and he's hanging on by a thread, and that's only because I'm letting him run one of my charter boats, that I normally run, and so I'm losing money by having to pay another captain to run a boat, and we've pretty much shut down commercial fishing, because you took all of what the man has caught his whole life, what --

He's got thirty years of experience catching gags, and you don't just drop your hat and move over and catch other species, with no experience, and so you all pretty much put three guys out of business, and you're about to lose another one, and so I hope you all sleep real good on that, but it's sad, when you all won't listen to the fishermen, and you all always follow the Science Center, and they are all over the place. All we ask is that you all come see what we're seeing. We're throwing back a hundred gags a trip, commercial fishing, but I'm out of time. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Right before you were talking about SEFHIER, do you recall what that was?

MR. BURKETT: Can you say that again, sir?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We lost you for a few seconds before SEFHIER, your comments on SEFHIER, and do you recall what you talked about?

MR. BURKETT: For SEFHIER, I would not recommend any -- I mean, the program is needed, so we can have data, but, if you all try to do any kind of VMS, or pinger system, anything like that, it's going to put it right back to where it's at now, with all the lost data, and so you need to either maybe beef-up the dockside sampling, or send it back to review, to come up with better ideas, but, pingers and VMS, you're going to get it kicked out in court again, and we've wasted another two or three years, and so the data collection is definitely needed, but you all are going to

have to quit beating that dead horse. It's not going to work with the VMS.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you. I am not seeing any questions. Have a good day, sir. All right. Next, we have Charlie Renier, followed by Jason Cox online.

MR. CHARLIE RENIER: Good afternoon. My name is Charlie Renier. I was born and raised in the seafood industry in the Keys. I've done it all. I've mackerel fished, I've king fished, and I've lobstered, and I have crabbed. I've longlined, bandit fished, and I've fished all over the entire state of Florida.

We need management. We needed management, and you all stepped in, and we've been abiding by everything you all have done. Through the years, the fishery -- The fishermen have gotten older. Five years ago, I looked at the average age of my captains at my fish house, twenty longline boats, and the average age was fifty-five years old. Those guys are ready to retire and get out.

The young guys couldn't afford to get into business, because it takes a lot of money to buy a boat, buy permits, buy quota, buy everything. All three of them men that you talked to right there, they all bought boats from an older guy that retired, and they paid for the boats, and they paid for the permits, and the older guys that retired are sitting home on the couch and leasing them their quota, and they're making more money now than these guys are making fishing.

These guys are busting their butt, and we go through it day after day. I lease a lot of quota, and I buy a lot of quota, and I sell a lot of fish. I handle a lot of fish.

When you all started this, you all were talking about getting the fish to the fishermen that catch it. Now I hear you talking about giving it to everybody that has got shares. If you want to give it to the fishermen that catch it, look at the permits that don't own any quota, or own very little, but lease tons. These guys all lease 60,000 or 70,000 pounds a year, snapper quota and grouper quota, and we never had any snapper in Madeira Beach.

You all did that whole count, and, like Scott said, we were allowed the first ten days of the month, which, if you longlined, and you were out fourteen days, you couldn't even sell them, and so nobody kept them, and we got zero. Five years ago, I started leasing snapper quota, that I go lease from the Panhandle, Louisiana, and Texas, that those guys should be fishing. I lease it and take it back for these guys to catch.

We probably catch a million pounds or more in the eastern Gulf, and so please, when you all do your new counts, think about us, that there was no fish there, and we never got counted, and them fish need to be counted, and the fishermen that are catching them now need to get them. That definitely needs to happen.

The whole gag debacle, I've stood up here and I've told you all exactly what happened. I've told you time and time again. The girls came to the fish house, and they measured the fish, and they never picked up a thirty-pound fish. If I would have known that was going to happen, I would have put a guy out there, so they weighed them.

Last year, the girls came down and weighed some of the fish, and they were coming up with 8 to 12 percent males, which you all say there's 2 percent. We know the numbers are messed up, but you all still took 800,000 pounds from us. That's a lot of fish that we catch, and that really hurts, and you have got bad science, and you all keep saying best available science.

Well, bad science is not best available. That's terrible. I mean, you all have been doing this for twenty years, and you've got all of our paperwork, and you see it all. If you want to do a study on gags, you bring your scientists to my fish house, and I'll put one on every boat, and they can go out there and catch gags, and we'll show you what's out there. It's unbelievable.

I heard a guy earlier talk about no red grouper, and we've had one of the best five months of red grouper that we've seen. It's been incredible. I mean, I've had my guys on limits, that we've caught so many red grouper.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Renier, you have to wrap it up.

MR. RENIER: Absolutely amazing, isn't it? I would love to explain a lot of stuff to you, but I've got no time, and, on kingfish, I can tell you exactly what's going on with all that, because I know.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. You're a popular guy today. We'll start here with Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: I will handle king and Spanish.

MR. RENIER: What do you want to know?

MS. BOGGS: I want to know about king and Spanish mackerel.

MR. RENIER: Okay, and so, growing up in the Keys, there is two bunches of king mackerel. You guys know it, and you all are the ones that told us. There's an Atlantic stock and a Gulf stock. They come down, and they mix off of Key West. They all mix, and have their eggs, and the Atlantic stock goes back up the Atlantic, and the Gulf stock goes back around.

Some years, if the water is too warm, they go out in 800 or 900 feet of water, and we see miles of them out there, a hundred feet thick, and we think -- All the charter boats and everybody are saying there's no kingfish, but they're way offshore. We have seen them in the Gulf at different times, way out in the middle of the Gulf, doing the same thing. Different water temperatures, different bait, whatever it is. Those fish, they don't -- They're not gone, but they're just in different places. We've got airplanes that look at them, and, I mean, we catch them, and they move around.

We don't catch Spanish mackerel anymore, because, when they come across, they don't come into state waters anymore, and 99 percent of Spanish mackerel was caught with gillnets. We can't fish in state waters, and that's a whole entire industry that is gone forever, because we can't catch them fish. We could feed millions of people off of them fish, but we're not allowed to catch them.

They made exceptions, and you all made exceptions for people to catch bait with nets, a mile off the beach, and think about the gillnets. That would put a whole new industry back down there.

I know you all don't have anything to do with the sharks, but let me tell you that we caught millions of pounds of sharks years ago, and sandbars is our biggest sharks. It eats all of our snappers, and our groupers, and they're terrible. Years ago, when we caught sandbar sharks, the cores averaged fifty pounds. The sharks these boys are telling me that they're turning loose now are 250 pounds. That's a 125-pound core. That's twice as big as we have ever seen them in our industry, because there's nothing to kill them. They're just eating machines.

If you all can do anything to help that, and we could put four or five boats shark fishing. If we get snappers back, and if we get some quota for snappers down there, that takes a little bit off of the grouper side of it, and you know what I mean? There's a lot of stuff that you all could do to help, and I think now it sounds like you all are trying to do that. A lot of fish dealers --

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Renier, we've kind of gotten off topic.

MR. RENIER: Okay. I'm sorry.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Charlie answered my question.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Dr. Sweetman.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thanks for the testimony, Charlie, and so you kind of got cut off there as you were talking about red grouper, and we've got an assessment going on right now, and so I'm curious what your guys have been seeing out on the water.

MR. RENIER: As far as red grouper, let me tell you that I have -- Usually I like to carry over 20,000 pounds of red grouper every week in my holding room. My holding room holds about 80,000 or 90,000 pounds. For seven weeks, and I'm talking about up until a week ago -- For seven weeks, my holding room was full, the entire seven weeks, of red grouper, because these guys caught so many red grouper. I mean, they were biting off the hook.

I had boats that never caught 10,000 pounds of red grouper in their life, and all they catch is 5,000, and they were bringing in 10,000 a trip, and we're like, holy crap, and where are they coming from, and, I mean, monster fish, medium fish, little fish, all kinds of fish, and it's unbelievable.

The other thing you've got to remember is they all move with water temperature, and we're having some hot water. We fish further offshore than most of these guys, and that's just like the gags. One of my boats caught gag in 650 feet, and I've never heard of that. I mean, to me, that's incredible, and so now, you know, you've got fish moving around in different places, and you've got dirtier water, and you've got warmer water, and so they're doing their thing.

The one thing that I wanted to say there was a lot of us fish buyers, like me, and there's plenty of other fish houses, and we have to -- When quota comes up for sale, we buy it, because I've got about I think twenty-six to thirty longline boats, and not one boat, including mine, have enough quota to fish all year.

I lease a million to two-million pounds of quota a year from other people. We have to have the leasing. We've got to have it, and so that's why you guys have got a fine thing to juggle about, you know, what people can catch, and what they can't, because we still need the leasing to survive, because, otherwise, you know, we're not going to be able to survive, and I'm always here. Anytime

somebody has got a question, and I want to help.

I mean, I want -- My daughter is now running my business. I've been in it, and my dad was it, my whole entire life, and I'm fifty-eight years old. I want my daughter to be in it until she's fifty-eight, and so please help us out, and let's keep this industry alive.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Charlie, I think we have maybe one more question. Captain Walker, did you have a question?

MR. WALKER: I have a couple, and so you touched on something that I was thinking of here, and, if you require a guy to have a permit, and fish a large percentage of his quota, it may dry -- If he decides to just go ahead and catch it, instead of cashing out, it may dry up some of the allocation market, would it not?

MR. RENIER: Well, let me tell you, and I thought about that, and, actually, we all talked about that today. You've got somebody that retired out of the industry, and he's home on the couch, and he's seventy years old. He's got to go buy a boat, a permit, and he's got the quota. Then he's got to find a captain and crew. There are no captains and crews.

Let me tell you. We've got some damn good captains and crews, because these guys catch fish, and they're drug free. I would hate to think that I had to go buy a boat and go try to catch the quota, but, as far as the percentage, I think that percentage needs to be 50/50, because, that way, it could still be leased, and keep everybody going, and, you know, one of the reasons this all came up -- You all remember five or six years ago, and Casey Streeter was here, and he bought five boats, a fish house, and a retail store, and he couldn't buy any quota. He didn't have any, and that's what started this whole ball rolling, and so let's take care of the guys that are in it, and keep them rolling. Thanks.

MR. WALKER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. All right. Is Jason Cox on the line?

MR. JASON COX: Jason Cox, and I'm a commercial fisherman. I'm calling in regard to the commercial king mackerel.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Jason, we'll have to come back to you. We're having some technical difficulties. Anthony Colletti.

MR. ANTHONY COLLETTI: Good afternoon. Anthony Colletti, owner/operator and commercial fisherman. I'm going to be repeating

a lot of what I said at the last meeting in Alabama in reference to the king mackerel. The stocks are healthy, and your science shows it.

I am recommending, and suggesting strongly, no action be taken, as far as reducing quotas. I had several 3,000-pound limits in the western Gulf, and the fish have changed their migration pattern. They are not where they have been historically caught. There is several other guys in the room here, that are going to be speaking after me, that we fish right alongside each other, and I don't know how to keep pushing -- You know, the stock is healthy. We've seen big fish, small fish, and they're much farther offshore, where a lot of boats aren't going to see them, and they just simply don't have the range that the bigger boats have.

We went from a fleet of forty-two boats, that were meeting the quotas, year after year after year historically, to twelve or thirteen boats that are left now, and, in the mix of all this, we've had hurricanes that have wiped out working waterfronts, all around the Gulf coast, and I fish from Leesville, Louisiana down to Goodland, Florida, and, you know, with the southern zone especially, you're a few days off of meeting that quota. When 20,000 or 30,000 pounds a day are getting caught, because there is plenty of participation down there, we need a few more days of good weather, and you're not far out of reach. I strongly suggest that no action be taken on the king mackerel.

As far as the amberjacks go, I'm beside myself, and we went from 2,000 pounds a trip to 1,500 pounds a trip to 1,000 pounds a trip, and that was supposed to be rebuilding the stock. I personally took a day, not this trip that I just came off of last night, but the trip before, and went and targeted amberjacks, and it was the same results as normal.

Go drop a live bait, and fifty-pound healthy fish. I stayed inshore, and there were smaller fish, and plenty of them. Go a little bit further offshore, and I had -- It took me longer to catch my bait than it did to catch my seven amberjacks that I'm now allowed. It actually cost me money to go catch them, because I could have went and caught a thousand pounds, or 1,500 pounds, of snapper, but I wanted to be accurate with the information that I brought here today.

There is a lot of habitat that's been removed over the oil rigs, and I'm not sure if there's something going on with the water quality, with the dead zone coming out of the Mississippi River, but there is a lot of change, and a lot of people are not willing to put in the effort and go on an excursion to look for fish. They

want to go to the historical sites where they've been caught, and it's just not the case. You know, they turn the key, and hit the button to go, and I go until I find what I'm looking for, and that's the results you'll have when you put in the effort. You'll have good results.

The sharks are a major issue. At times, we're trying to catch our 3,000 pounds of kingfish, and they're probably pulling 4,500 pounds to get them past the sharks, and they're out of control everywhere, and everybody knows that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Anthony. Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Mr. Colletti, and so do you fish in multiple zones or just the western zone?

MR. COLLETTI: Yes, and, historically, I fish -- I have fished from the east coast of Florida, where a lot of legendary king fishermen come from, and, for years and years, I fished in the southern zone in the wintertime, because the weather is better, and then I would move up the coast, as the weather would break through the spring and summer, and I would fish the western zone.

Since the hurricanes have hit, I've been staying over in the western zone, trying rebuild docks and get a working waterfront back up and going and help out, and I had a lot of damage to my boat, and I did not make it back to the southern zone the past few years, but I will be back that way this year, because there was plenty of fish to be had.

As far as the net boats go, and I know you were looking at how their catch history was usually very rapid and quick, and they get it done overnight, and they took a different approach this year as well. They went with smaller trip limits, and they had better quality of fish, to get more money out of their fish, and so it wasn't that the fish weren't there, but they were being smart about it and trying to get more money out of their fish.

We can't control the weather, and/or participation, and, with that all being said, you know, when you take too much opportunity off the table, and you go cutting quotas, you put pressure on another fishery that might not be able to handle the pressure.

The stone crabbers down in south Florida, if they've having a bad year crabbing, they jump over and catch a few kingfish to make up for it. If you take that opportunity away, where are they going to go? The same thing with the shrimpers in Louisiana. We have a good group of guys that, when the shrimp season is not very well,

they jump in and go catch a few kingfish.

If you start cutting quotas, they're not going to have any fish to catch. That's not the right thing to do, just because the numbers aren't met in black-and-white paper, and, you know, there's a lot of different variables that are affecting the whole industry, and it's not just the numbers on paper.

MR. WALKER: So those variables -- That was my next question, and so tell me about this fish that you found out real deep. How deep?

MR. COLLETTI: Anywhere from 170 to 270 foot, and I've seen them out in 400 feet of water, in places I have never seen them before, and I never expected to see them. I woke up on a certain morning, and there was fish jumping all around the boat, and you couldn't help but throw the lines in, and I work single-handed, and I had a limit in five-and-a-half hours, by myself, 3,000 pounds, and there's other guys in the room that -- You know, we work right alongside each other.

Another point I want to make with all of this is, with all the oil rigs being removed, now you're limited to spots where you're going to catch these fish, because they have to have somewhere where the bait is going to hold, okay, and so, if you did have twenty or thirty boats in the fleet, not everybody is going to get a turn on that spot at that time, and, when the weather is, you know, ticking on you, you won't have the time to catch them, at times, and so there's a lot of different reasons that, you know, we're getting held back at times, and mainly the weather and the working waterfronts.

There is no working waterfront west of Dulac, almost to the Texas coast, and, I mean, it takes me a day to get out there, a day to catch the fish, and a day to get back, and so there was a few trips this year that you didn't have three days. You travel out there in the rough, and you get your calm day to catch your fish, and then you get beat going all the way back, but they were there, and they were thick, and we had a good flurry of fishing at the end of July and August last year, too.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have some more questions for you. Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Thanks for being here, Anthony, and so a couple of questions. Early on, when you were giving your testimony, you indicated that the number of people fishing for mackerel, or the number of boats, had decreased, right?

MR. COLLETTI: Right.

DR. FRAZER: You know, again, thinking about that, and some of the oil rigs have been moved, and you spend a lot of time looking for those fish, and are you looking for those fish as an individual or as a team of boats?

MR. COLLETTI: It used to be a team of boats, and now there is twelve of us, and that's -- There is only four or five of us left in Leesville, and the rest of the fleet is over in Venice, and so have a couple hundred miles of coastline with twelve boats, and we used to have thirty or forty boats, and we used to shut the quota down in the beginning of September, and then we would move to the northern zone, and then you would move right around the coast, but, with the lack of participation, it's a lot harder to find the fish, and, when you don't have the oil rigs that used to hold the fish there for the habitat, it's almost impossible to just point your boat in a direction and say, okay, they're going to be sitting over here.

It's very hard to locate them, at times, where, before, you would have a friend that was forty miles down the way, and, hey, how did you go today, and, okay, good deal, and I will be there, and then we would kind of keep it rolling throughout the season. You know, you stay on the massive pile of fish, and that's not the case anymore. We're almost working alone.

DR. FRAZER: That's great. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you.

MR. COLLETTI: Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Next, we have Rachal Hisler, followed by Jason Cox.

MS. RACHAL HISLER: Good afternoon. I'm Rachel Hisler, and I am from Double Bayou, which is just down the road from here in Houston, and so we're happy to have you here in Texas. Today, I want to talk about how we can really help new entrants into the fishery, and I know that, earlier, Ms. Boggs pointed out that we don't have a clear definition of who a new entrant is, but I would certainly say that people who have been fishing, making landings, have a vessel, have a permit, but do not own quota, would qualify as a new entrant, and that would include someone like myself and my husband, who are currently participating in the fishery.

We have a vessel, we have a permit, but we don't own any shares, and so we lease all of our allocation, and so I do support the

proposal to redistribute the fish shares that have been recovered from inactive IFQ accounts to new entrants, and I just want to point out that, even though those allotments may be small in size, every pound of fish that you can clear completely to you, to pay your crew, to cover expenses, everything that you can get for that is going to help you, and be beneficial, and so, even though it may seem like a small amount, it can help people like myself, who are leasing all of their quota, to have at least some shares to start out with that will be clear.

The one thing that I will say that I would like to see are some guardrails imposed on those shares, to ensure that the recipients will harvest these fish themselves and will not sell the shares, and one idea I have is that those shares could be -- Once that fisherman exists the fishery, those shares could be returned to the program, to be then redistributed to other new entrants who are coming into the program.

As for the permit pool idea that was discussed yesterday, I do not believe that there is a real need for that type of program. There are approximately 300 latent commercial reef fish permits that are ostensibly available for purchase. If someone wants to buy a permit, they can find one for sale.

The real problem that I see for many new entrants is raising capital. NOAA currently administers the Fisheries Finance Program, and I find that the terms, and the rate, can be very agreeable, but the barrier for the applicants is the overburdensome nature of the loan requirements. By requiring a 20 percent down payment, the size of the loan can be severely limited, and overcapitalizing the loan, in addition to the 20 percent down payment, that some projects may require additional collateral, as determined by the FFP, and so that could -- That is going to require an applicant to provide 150 percent collateral for the loan amount, and that is simply overburdening and unacceptable.

At the current market value of fifty-dollars per pound for red snapper quota, a $100,000 down payment will only purchase approximately 10,000 pounds, and, while that is a start, that is certainly not enough quota to provide an income for an owner/operator, and so, if we're being real about making a way for new entrants into this fishery, I believe we have to make that program more meaningful, and accessible, to new entrants to the program, to be able to raise capital in order to enter the fishery.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Any questions? Thank you.

MS. HISLER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, and so we have Jason Cox on the line, followed by Dylan Hubbard.

MR. COX: My name is Jason Cox, and I'm a commercial fisherman, and I participate in the commercial kingfish industry. I just wanted to make a couple of points. As far as the reduction in the amount of quota that has been landed over the couple of years, it seems like more of an anomaly than a trend, and so our fleet traditionally fishes out there, and it's down to probably about 25 percent of what it is traditionally, and it makes it a lot harder to find fish and to stay on fish.

The habitat is being taken away, and the oil rigs are being removed, and sharks are also a huge problem. Any time -- We had numerous times fishing last year where, as soon as you start catching fish, the sharks just take everything, and you have to leave, and so, even when we find fish, we have to move on from them.

Another thing that is a point of note is that the infrastructure was heavily damaged a couple of years ago, as far as fish houses, and so a lot of fishermen just aren't coming back, and that's for multiple reasons. I guess that's all I have to say about that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you. I'm not seeing any questions. Thank you, Jason. Next up, we have Captain Hubbard, followed by Ronnie Moon.

MR. DYLAN HUBBARD: Thank you for the opportunity to speak. The following comments are supported by the Florida Guides Association, Destin Charter Boat Association, and the Charter Fishing Association as well.

As far as amberjack goes, we really, really want to see it open up in September and October. That August 1 opening would be an extreme hardship to the fleet, as so many are planning on, and have already booked, the months of September and October.

Gag grouper, this fifteen-day season announcement, it's good to have a finalized season finally, and we're frustrated at the length, obviously, but we're very interested in seeing updated science. The big, glaring issue that I have, and the fleet has, is we're working on an assessment with a terminal year of data of 2019, and that's five years ago, and we're being constrained to a fifteen-day season based on that.

Red snapper, I would like to move forward with reducing the buffer

and leave the federal for-hire season start date at June 1. Andy's idea in committee was my preferred, and of our associations' as well, and just continue to make the season longer. If we start bumping up against the end of August, start adding them on the frontend and moving it back into May.

SEFHIER, we need to move forward as soon as possible, while keeping validation at an acceptable level, to ensure this data is usable in a stock assessment. In my understanding, VMS was possibly an infringement, right, and, the way that that ruling -- We could still use VMS as a tool, and we could still use the geofence option, and there was a lot of VMS dealers, like Nemo, and that Nemo unit can be used with geofencing pretty easily, and there's a lot of tools left in the toolbox, and I just don't want to see the baby thrown out with the bathwater, and we're seemingly hitting our heads up against the same problems that we've already addressed, and so I would like to see SEFHIER move more quickly and get back on the water as soon as possible.

As far as wahoo is concerned, we're going to hear a presentation tomorrow about the sanctuary issue, and I personally would support a bag limit of two fish per person. I wouldn't support any vessel limits for wahoo, but a fractional limit would be better for multi-passenger vessels.

As far as red grouper are concerned, hopefully we can see those Wave 3 numbers at the August meeting, and hopefully fingers crossed for a fall opening there, but the twenty-fathom closure -- If we remove that, that would definitely help out on the charter fleet, the recreational fishermen, and just alleviate some burden that we face in an already depressed fishery with a shortened season.

Then, yellowtail and lane snapper, definitely -- They're both healthy fisheries that are expanding, and I would encourage the council to do whatever we can to try to curb issues with that. I think the problems we're seeing with lanes -- We're going to see those with yellowtail snapper next, and I've been talking about lanes here for many, many years, and now we're facing these problems, and so I would love to see us take some action on yellowtail as well. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a couple of hands up. Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: You mentioned that all the organizations would like to see a reduction in the buffer. We're looking at reducing it to 5 percent, and just removing it to zero, and what is the preferred for your organization?

MR. HUBBARD: I mean, personally, I think -- I really appreciate Dale bringing that up, and we will miss Dale, and you, Susan, and Bob as well, and we appreciate all your service, but I appreciate Dale bringing that up. I don't think it's going to do a whole lot to improve our access, but I think it's a good sign, and a good move, and, obviously, that buffer is less needed. The predictions have been going really well, and so I would say move it to 5 percent for now, and use that ABC Control Rule. Moving it to zero percent would help out more, but I think 5 percent is a little safer.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Thanks, Dylan, and I was just confused on one of the things that you said, and I know we haven't seen the wahoo presentation yet, but you said that you weren't in favor of a vessel limit, but you would support a fractional bag limit, and that just seems to be inconsistent to me.

MR. HUBBARD: So what I probably didn't do a good job communicating, a lot of times, in fisheries management in general, we think about these six-pack boats, and there's six people on the boat, and that seems to be some sort of default number that people look at when we start talking about vessel limits.

Individual bag limits are easy, because it doesn't matter what boat you're on, but a lot of bigger, multi-passenger boats are out there, right, and so, if you put a vessel limit of ten fish, or something like that, on a six-pack boat, that's a lot of fish. On a multi-passenger fourteen or sixteen-person charter boat, or, god forbid, a partyboat with fifty people, then ten fish becomes a lot smaller, and so a fractional bag limit, and like, if you're shooting for ten fish in a six-pack boat, then make that like whatever that math works out to.

DR. FRAZER: All right. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: General Spraggins, followed by Mr. Gill.

GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir, and I'm just curious. You know, you mentioned the fact that you would like to keep the charter-for-hire start date of 1 June, and how does that not affect -- I mean, I look at it as a situation to where, if we opened the state fishing, as far as recreational, why wouldn't we open -- You know, have the capability of opening the charters at the same time? Why would that hurt you? I don't understand your point of what you're trying to -- Maybe you have a better idea than I do.

MR. HUBBARD: For me personally, that same conversation happened at the AP table, at the Reef Fish AP, and my comment to that was each state is different. In Florida, we open up on June 1 for private rec and for federal for-hire, and, in other states, it's different, and I realize that Texas is open all year, and Louisiana is like April 15, and I don't know what you guys do in Mississippi, but I believe it's like Memorial Day weekend, right, and so I think it would be impossible to make everybody happy, because each state has a different opening date, and so you couldn't match the federal for-hire fleet to each state's opening date, because we only have one.

My reasoning for keeping it June 1 is that's what it has always been, and this council table talked about messing with the season, and it was difficult, and everybody commented about how it's hard to get more than two people to agree, and that's where it's at. I mean, the fleet -- There is a lot of disagreement, and, even with my neighbors ten miles north and ten miles south, we can't agree on when the appropriate red snapper season will be, and so I don't think there's really a good answer, other than leave it alone, and I think Andy's idea was widely accepted.

You've heard, I think, three public comments before mine that supported Andy's idea in committee as well, and so I think that's what we stick with, and that that allows us to remove the buffer, because the conversation around changing the season was, oh, we can't change the season while reducing the buffer, because changing the season adds uncertainty.

Well, you could reduce the buffer, and go with Andy's plan of adjusting the season, because, essentially, it's not adding any uncertainty, until we start adding days beforehand, and that won't be right away.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: What do you think about the possibility of states controlling that?

MR. HUBBARD: I would not support it. My federal permit is my biggest cost, and, if it moved to state management, it would negate that federal permit that I have invested a lot of money in, and I'm happy where we're at right now.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Dylan, for your comments. So I take it, from your wahoo comment, that you support wahoo management by the council, and so my question is related to whether you want it or you're willing to acquiesce to it.

MR. HUBBARD: I personally feel there should be some sort of limit there. The fact that wahoo aren't managed at all in the Gulf, and you look to the South Atlantic, and they have that Wahoo Dolphin FMP, and that's looking pretty good right now. Some of the things that have happened around the banks, the Flower Garden Banks specifically, and in some of our sanctuaries, is, in my opinion, a little out of hand, and so I think there needs to be some sort of control. I don't want to see it go to draconian measures, but I definitely think that being wise with our resource would be a good idea, and I think it's being misused right now.

MR. GILL: Thank you, sir.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Banks.

DR. BANKS: Hi, Dylan. Thanks. I have just a quick question. We keep hearing mixed reviews on VMS and VMS-type validation methods, and what are your -- Maybe you can't speak to your organizations, but, if VMS is off the table, and this is a hypothetical, and I'm not saying it is, and we're not saying it is at the moment, but, if it is off the table, where would you stand on a validation method?

MR. HUBBARD: Me personally, and not speaking for any organization, but, for me personally, I don't think VMS is off the table, and I don't mind it being on the table, but, if it was off the table completely, and that's not an option, I think the trucking industry has a lot of options out there, with an RFID tag, and one of the things that I thought of is you already made a rule that made us permanently affix something to our vessel.

Make us permanently some RFID tag to vessel, and to our port of departure, right, and so, when we pass that, it reads that tag, and it makes that a trip occurred. That validation, that VMS, was only there to validate the trip occurred or did not occur, and so that's very easy to do with an RFID tag. It's 2024.

DR. BANKS: Just a clarification. The port, or are you suggesting the end of the jetties, or your slip, or what port?

MR. HUBBARD: For me, it's a dock, right, and so it's easy to screw something into the boat and screw something into the dock. Every time I back out of that dock, you know that a trip occurred. Other places, and like people -- You've got to think -- I personally try to think about other operators, like the guy who maybe trailers his boat to a ramp, and so, in that case, there might need to be something at the bridge, or something like that, but I think

there's ways that we could do it, and I just personally am not super familiar with the trucking industry, but I think there's ways that we could make that happen.

Maybe, if they trailer their boat, they have something screwed to their trailer, and something screwed to the boat, and so, every time the boat leaves the trailer, a trip occurs, or something like that, and I think there's ways around it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you, Captain Hubbard. I called earlier on Ronnie Moon, and he'll be followed by Neal Adams online.

MR. RONNIE MOON: Hello. My name is Ronnie Moon. I'm from the Port Arthur, Texas area, and I've lived here all my life. I've been in the swamps, and I've been around the water, and I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak to you today.

Fisheries is a big problem, and I thought inland fisheries had problems, but, after listening to what I listened to today, fish have got problems. I'm going to bring you closer to home, because I have spent all my life mostly inland, and I've been offshore, and I've done all the offshore fishing. I got into commercial fishing, and then I got into aquaculture.

Aquaculture is so far behind in the United States that it's not realistic. We are so far behind other countries raising seafood of all types, shrimp, everything, and, if we don't catch up, we're going to still import 80 to 90 percent of our seafood, like we are now, but I would like to mention that I sent a letter to the board, and I've been told it's probably in one of your sections in there, in the computer, and I want to talk to you about how we're destroying our inland fisheries, systematically, and it's been going on since the 1970s.

We first started building what they call saltwater barriers, and why would you want to turn saltwater, that has been saltwater for as long as I can remember, fresh? Think about it.

I leased an area on Pleasure Island that was 2,000 acres, PA Containment Area Number 1, and that's Placement Area Number 1, and I researched with Texas A&M and Lamar University for a solid -- You wouldn't believe what I had to go through to get that lease, and they said, you can't get that, and you can't do that, and that's state waters. That's government water, and, well, I did it.

I had to go through the Attorney General of Texas, and I got it approved, and we starting experimenting with a shrimp farm in a

1,500 to 2,000 acre dredge material containment area. It worked. It's the best nursery area left on the southeast Texas coast, but they're going to destroy it. They're going to fill it full of silt.

I watched the south levee on Pleasure Island, Compartment Number 8, and me and my brother were out there, and I guess we've been out for fifty years now, but we watched them destroy Compartment Number 8 to come in -- All your marine life gets into these compartments by storms, by entrance, whether the effluent ditches releases the water, and it gets in there, and it grows, and it has to get into an estuary somewhere, or we're not going to have any more marine life, and that's all there is to it.

I know the shrimp cycle, which almost is just like the rest of our marine life. If they can't get in there, we've lost, and we're closing all those compartments off and more.

The south levee, what they do is they come in and maintenance dredge, every three to five years, and now they want to deepen the channel eight foot, and so they've got to have some place to put all that silt. I don't know why they don't barge it out like they do in some of the other channels, but the marine life gets in there, and they dredge in there and kill all of it, and you watch it float.

In 2008, it was a pretty big area, and, okay, they leave. Three to five years later, all this marine life has already gotten back into the area, trying to do its normal survival, and they dredge on it again and kill everything in there. We saw it happen three to four times.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Moon, can you wrap up your comments, please?

MR. MOON: Who is that?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: You're going to have to wrap up your comments.

MR. MOON: Okay. We're having the same problem with the Parks and Wildlife. Three minutes, and I don't have three minutes to tell you what we're doing to our environment, but we're closing off our inlets, down here across the canal that feeds the marshes, and we just closed off the biggest one, Rollover Pass, down there in Rollover, and it fed the Galveston Bay system, and it fed the intercoastal, all the way to Port Arthur, where I'm from, with marine life. We blocked it off.

That was three years ago, and already they've had a death in

Galveston Bay from oysters, and you might have seen it on the news last week, and they're shutting down the oyster system, because it's not getting the nutrients, and the flow of saltwater, like I should, and so please --

CHAIRMAN ANSON: You're going to have to wrap it up. You're more than welcome to submit your comments, and you can provide them -- I think you made a comment that you had provided some comments, but you're welcome to submit any additional comments you have.

MR. MOON: Okay. Well, my letter has been submitted into the other thing.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Great. Thank you.

MR. MOON: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Next, we have Neal Adams online, followed by Jason Delacruz.

MR. NEAL ADAMS: My name is Neal Adams, and I am a commercial king fisherman. I fish from the north of Key West all the way to a little west of Port Fourchon, Louisiana, and so I fish all the three zones in the Gulf, but I wanted to look at a couple of things.

You make a statement that it's highly likely that the decline in king mackerel is related to changes in abundance, and I think you're looking at this through a narrow lens, and what I heard earlier is that they're not looking at the CPUE when they're looking at these figures, and they're only looking at landings, and so what I would like to say is, since 2020, we've had a lot of changes in the fishery and the participants.

There are several of these guys, that participated in the past, that are all aging, and they're all approaching their early seventies, or late sixties, that most of the fishermen that participate in that western Gulf are traveling fishermen, that come from Florida and other areas to fish in the summertime and fall, and a lot of these guys have hit the age that they're having more time with their family.

When you start to look at these quotas, and what these men produced on an annual basis for that quota, you're looking at 3 to 5 percent per man, and two of the major ports that I fish out of, we're down fifteen to twenty boats. You know, to echo the same sentiment as Anthony, you're looking at ten to fifteen fishermen that are actually catching the lion's share of what quota has been caught

the last few years.

In my simple math, if you take fifteen of these guys out of that equation, at 30,000 pounds of quota, or what they would catch possibly annually for that season, you're looking at 450,000 pounds, and that's more than what we caught last year, and so I think looking at the effort that's being forth to catch these fish is something very important, and I think you're going to find the CPUE is going to be very similar as it was in years in the past, but I think we should use all the available science we have to try to figure that out.

The other thing is that's just the -- The western zone, the southern zone, and even the northwest zone, you're seeing some of these older guys, that used to participate, that are participating less and less, and these are the guys that have been doing it their whole life, that are extremely successful with what they do, and you're talking about huge numbers allocated to just a handful of individuals that aren't participating.

Also, to echo like Anthony's sentiment, there was -- I've caught kingfish in as deep as 1,500 feet, and I have seen -- I've got charter tuna fishermen, out of Venice, Louisiana, that have told me they've found these kingfish in 5,500 foot of water on these floating submerged oil rigs. Sometimes they're there for a day, and sometimes they're there for a week, and then, all of a sudden, they disappear, and so where do these fish go?

We don't know, and the 2020 year, and some of the subsequent years, we were hit with several hurricanes, that I don't know what has happened, as far as why the fish go into different areas, but it's been a dead zone forever, and I've managed to catch limits after limits after limits, fishing in this quote, unquote, dead zone, but, once those hurricanes stirred up that bottom, I don't know what has changed.

In short, I don't think reducing the quota in any of these zones would be necessary at this time, and I think a serious look should be done at the CPUE, and I guess that's all I need to say.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for your comments. Next, we have Jason Delacruz.

MR. JASON DELACRUZ: First, I want to thank Dale. He was always a really good council member, and he always went out of his way to ask questions, when he didn't understand something, and I really appreciate that. That's important to me, and at least I know you were trying to listen to us.

Bob, I've got to thank you, buddy. You're like a lifer. Nine years, and so I'm sorry to say thank you for your service again, and I wish it was another cycle, but it is what it is. Susan, thank you very much. You are always there, and you two always did a great job giving the perspective from the guy who actually has to earn a living on the water, and that means a lot, and there's not many people that sit at this table that actually do represent us, and that's super important, and so I really appreciate you guys being here.

The twenty-fathom rule for the recreational fishery, when I owned my dock, I got so much crap from charter boat guys about that, and there's this weird thing that happened with that, and I remember being in the room when that rule was made, and it was a discard gag issue, because we were working on red grouper numbers, and we were trying to keep it open, and we had to close gag, because gag was an issue, and they said, well, what are we going to do about the discards of gags if we open red grouper back up, and they said, well, you know, inside of twenty fathoms, the discard numbers aren't bad.

I remember being in the room and hearing that, very distinctively, and they said, well, then let's close it inside of twenty fathoms, and that was the rationale we gave in this room. Well then, apparently somewhere in the last few years, somewhere when that got talked about, that turned into this spawning closure, and so there's been this resistance from some of the guys in the charter industry, and they're mad at the commercial guys, because we fish during that time, but one of the things that I have learned, being in this room as often as we have, is that that spawning closure is a moving target. We don't always hit it where we need to. Fish do what they want, when they want, when they feel like it.

For us as guys that moved into an allocated fishery, it made sense to take off the reins and let us manage ourselves, and that was the whole point of the allocated fishery, and so, from the standpoint of that, I think the closure probably needs to go ahead and go away.

Those guys didn't really ask for it, and it didn't really solve a problem, and the truth of it is that you have a million recreational boats that do what they want, when they want, because they go back to their house, and there is no point in penalizing the charter boat guys, who actually have something to lose, and so just let it go away. It's not really effective and doing anything. It's kind of a bunch of hooey anyway.

Real quick, and my light is flashing, but, as we move forward and talk about the stuff in the IFQ, I really hope that we just think a lot about the things that we're doing. I mean, I don't have any issues with any participation levels. I catch all my own fish, and it's no big deal, but, man, depending on what number you pick, it's going to change the fishery real fast, in a hurry, and it wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing, but it's just going to be a difficult thing, and I hope you guys really think about that, because you're going to have a whole slew of different people here, for several reasons.

First, they're going to be mad at you because now they can't get quota, and then, second, you're going to have a whole group of guys, when you give away those fish, that are going to sign-up and go I want fish too, and so you better be ready for that line, because, whenever you start giving stuff away, people get in line, and so, anyway, thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Jason, we have a question for you. Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: So, if you had to pick a percentage to demonstrate that you patriciate in catching your own quota every year, and not you, but if you were me, what would your suggestion be?

MR. DELACRUZ: From what we have on the table, the 25, obviously, is going to do the least amount of damage. I get it when people say that it needs to be more, and I'm not going to lie to you, and there is a part of me that really is agitating with having to give us much money -- I mean, I'm exactly in the same position as Charlie. I give millions of dollars away, at the first of the year, to be able to get access for the guys that fish for me.

We're a little different than him, and we don't have as many boats, but we have sixty different vessels that fish for us, and so it's really important, and a lot of them have already come to this podium to get access, and so I'm a little worried about the transition. I have always felt like there needed to be a way that we kind of work our way through this, because there are guys that truly are retired fishermen, that count on this to make their living, and it does seem a little unfair, to me, to take it from them, but, in the same token, you're not handing them their hat, and they're going to sell it, and so it's just what happens to the market in the meantime.

There is guys like me that have invested a ton of money in this, and, you know, whatever it is, and everybody says, oh, it's a stock market, and too bad, but it does seem somewhat patently unfair

that there are guys that come to this podium that refuse to be part of the program, that now bitch, and now they're going to get free fish, and people that invested, and do they're supposed to, and try to keep the number lower, and maybe move it up later, if that's what we have to do, but it's going to cause a ripple.

It's going to change all the fish houses. It's going to be a different monster, and it may not be bad at the beginning, or it may be very bad at the beginning, but much better later, and who knows?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Next is -- One more question, Jason. Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Two questions. We've heard kind of mixed response today about red grouper, and so I'm curious about, you know, what your boats are doing with regard to red grouper, and are you seeing good catches, weak catches, average catches right now?

MR. DELACRUZ: We're crushing them.

MR. STRELCHECK: You're crushing them.

MR. DELACRUZ: Yes, and we had so much fish, right up to the closure, and it was kind of a mistake. It was like we had really gone through a lot of fish, and kept them moving, and we're lucky that we didn't get in any bad spots, but we have seen a significant amount of fish, and we could really use that stuff back.

MR. STRELCHECK: Similar with regard to gag, and obviously the quota is low. What are you boats doing with regard to both keeping gag and discarding gag?

MR. DELACRUZ: Well, we see them, and so I'm fortunate that my personal boats have access to more, because I've always -- I really love gag, and so that's one that I would pursue, when I had an opportunity to buy, but my boats are better than most, and they get to keep 100 pounds a trip, and so you've got four longline boats under my personal stuff, and, you know, I feel guilty when I go out and get a hundred pounds of gag spearfishing, because I feel like I'm taking the hundred pounds from my guys, but, you know, I go when I can, and that's my only sanity, and so, I mean, they're getting more than most, and you know what I own, and I've got a lot of gag, and I've still only got a hundred pounds.

I mean, that's the part that really scares me, when we talk about increasing, and giving the increases to the new entrants, and I'm like, man, I haven't got enough now, and you're going to give them

to somebody else, and, you know, I thought we were in a capacity-reduction program, and not a capacity-increasing program, but anyway.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thanks again. Tricia Kimball.

MS. TRICIA KIMBALL: I'm Tricia Kimball, the wife of a third-generation commercial shrimper, and he is going to be the end of his line as a shrimper. The shrimpers are rapidly becoming extinct, because of imported shrimp being dumped onto the U.S. domestic market, in addition to other pressures upon the industry.

When I was reading through the minutes from the April 2024 Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, a couple of things caught my eye, one of which was talking about the LNG and green hydrogen, and I'm quoting directly from Mr. Diaz. It said that larvae get into these systems and don't make it, and I can't remember the numbers, but the numbers were a huge amount of larvae that was impacted by this, and I think this may have the potential for something like that, but we haven't asked the questions.

We have never even heard anything about green hydrogen before, and I had never heard of it until I read these comments, and they're kind of terrifying, to be perfectly honest, because, when you're talking about larvae, you're talking about all sorts of different invertebrates, shrimp, crab, oyster, all sort of little critters, and, up along the coast, that's where your estuaries are, your nurseries.

That is what is going to get bigger, and then hopefully go into the Gulf. If you allow those to be destroyed, with this open-loop system, that's going to potentially destroy our fisheries in our area, and so that's very disturbing.

Of the coast of Port Arthur and Galveston, we have areas of very important fisheries to the economy of Texas and Louisiana and the adjacent coastal communities, and we're just wondering what will be the impacts for these delicate, important areas. You're planning on putting wind turbines in these areas that historically have been used for shrimping, and what about the damage to the fishermen's living, because they're not going to be able to go into those areas anymore and fish?

Also, I read, in the minutes, talking about the Magnuson-Steven Act, that there's a high probability of our very personal information that fishermen are forced to submit to NOAA and sister agencies every year, to be released to the public without our permission, and that is very disturbing, and highly suspect, and

our information should be protected without discussion.

Back to the wind turbines, and you've got underwater cables that are under the ocean floor, and that's going to be a problem when shrimpers are dragging their nets, as they're trawling in the waters, in areas that they have historically fished, and you're asking them to limit further where they can fish, when the industry is already under so much pressure to begin with.

We're also concerned about the impacts of the electrical current on marine life that are in the areas. Oftentimes, storms can uncover these buried cables, and they can then be a hazard to shrimpers and fishermen, and, basically, we're wondering would you then deny us access to our fishing grounds that have historically been used for shrimping? Thank you very much for your time and for hearing all of our concerns.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for being here, Ms. Kimball. Just to kind of let you know, so we have been discussing, you know, wind energy here at the council, and the BOEM representatives, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management representatives, have been coming to the council for some time now, for a year or a year-and-a-half, and providing us updates, and you can certainly go online and look at the previous council materials, on the presentations that they have provided.

We had a presentation today, earlier today, on green energy, and it was kind of the first stab, if you will, at BOEM providing us information about green energy, and so you can look at that presentation, and there was a discussion earlier today about NOAA's Southeast Fisheries Science Center staff are going to be working with the BOEM folks and producing layers, GIS layers, relative to green energy production in the Gulf of Mexico, and it will be a similar process to what's been used to this point on identifying areas that would be most conducive, and least disruptive, is another way of looking at it, to existing industry and uses in the Gulf of Mexico.

That is what they had used to help identify these large areas set aside for wind energy, and they're talking about a similar process to review existing uses, existing industries, on development, or installation, of any future green energy projects, and so you could certainly, if you want, talk to one of the staff members, or myself, here after public testimony, but we are engaged in the process, and we certainly are very concerned ourselves about, you know, the impacts to the stakeholders that we have here, but we appreciate you coming today. Is there any questions for Ms. Kimball? Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: I was just -- I have a comment. I just wanted to thank you for coming. It's nice to see a new face in the crowd, and get another perspective on the shrimpers, because we don't have a lot of shrimp industry folks that come to the podium and give us public comment, and so thank you for being here.

MS. KIMBALL: Unfortunately, a lot of us don't even know that these meetings take place. We just happened to know from our marine agent from Sea Grant that it was taking place, and they asked us to come. I don't know how we can inform the industry, and my husband is the president of the Port Arthur Area Shrimpers Association, and we're trying to keep them abreast, as we find out information, but the information has to filter down to us, also. Otherwise, you know, we have no idea what's going on, what's coming down the pike.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Kimball, if you go to the council's website, you can register online. Emily will talk to you about it, and she'll get you in the queue for all of the announcements, the newsletters and such, that come from the council. There's an email list for that. We did have another question over here. Dr. Walter.

DR. WALTER: Ms. Kimball, thanks, and it's nice to see you after the Baton Rouge meeting where we first met, and so I will second the engagement with the shrimp industry, and how the -- We're hearing about the problems the shrimp industry is facing, and that's one of the reasons that we're embarking on our Shrimp Futures Project and engaging, to try to identify what are the things that could really help the fishery to achieve a better future, and so that's part of the National Seafood Strategy, and that's one of the regional focus projects.

We'll be continuing to engage in that, and probably reaching out get further feedback, as follow-ons from that Baton Rouge meeting, and so we hope that you will stay engaged yourselves, as well as your industry that you're representing, and so thank you.

MS. KIMBALL: There is also the graying of the fleet, which is a big problem. A lot of the captains are my husband's age, in their fifties and sixties, and there is nobody to take their place, because the young people do not see it as a viable occupation anymore. The price of the shrimp has just plummeted, to next to nothing, and, a lot of times, the captains come in, and they have literally made no money. They have lost money while they were out, because the price of the shrimp dropped while they were out on the shrimp boat, and that's just not right, but that's a

different subject entirely, but thank you very much for your time.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for being here and for providing your comments. Thank you. Next, we have Kyle Kimball, followed by David Krebs.

MR. KYLE KIMBALL: Thank you all for hearing from us and everything. I appreciate all of you all's time. Of course, I'm married to her, as you know, or could tell, and, anyhow, I'm -- Like I said, my name is Kyle Kimball, and I'm going to kind of read a little bit here, and I'm a little bit nervous too, but the Port Arthur Area Shrimper's Association president. I've been there for, I don't know, twenty or twenty-five years, and we have 266 members that I'm here representing, and I also have my own boat and fish, and so what we're going through, they're going through, I feel it, and it's not like I'm just representing people and get to walk off, because I'm going through the same thing.

We're having issues, of course, with the sharks. Everybody talks about them. They're getting so abundant, and a lot of people don't know how abundant, but they're really out there aggressively. They're attacking the nets and this of this nature, when they come to the top. We have fish in there, and you get little small trash fish that come out, and they aggressively attack that, and they just go in a frenzy, and, unless you actually see it when you're out there, it's kind of hard to believe.

Anyhow, we're concerned with the imports of the shrimp, and that's not talked about much, but they've imported so much that it has dropped our prices and everything way down low, but the problem is they have a bunch of antibiotics on them, that they're using to try and allow these shrimp to come into the U.S., under, you know, being secure and safe. The problem with that is they're only testing like maybe one-thousandths of a percent of the -- It's very, very minimal.

They will come in, and they will test a container, and most of these containers fail the testing, and so what they do is they ship them out, and they come into another port, with another set of containers, and they only check maybe one or two out of, like I said, a thousand, and so they always work their way back in, but all the other ones are considered to be okay, since they haven't been inspected. We need more inspections, and we need more -- You know, something to be done with this to allow people to know what they're getting, and good food, because it's kind of bad, but, anyhow, I appreciate everything and you all taking time.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for your comments, and thank you for

your testimony. General Spraggins.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Thank you very much, and I agree with you 100 percent on the shrimp industry. You know, we're hurting, and every one of our shrimpers out there are hurting extremely bad. When you're getting seventy-cents a pound, when you get to the dock, and you're out there paying $5.00 a gallon for diesel, it's kind of tough to make a business, and I think that we need to have something in this that we need to do to be able to put more restrictions on people that are bringing anything in here from another country, so that we can have it to where we can at least get it back to some form of semblance of normal, because it's killing us. It's killing you, and it's killing everybody.

MR. KIMBALL: Yes, sir. As it comes in -- Thank you for that. As it comes in, people have no idea on the radio talk. They know, when the shrimp are coming in, what's there, and they will drop prices fifty-cents on top of what's there. My friend up in Louisiana was getting thirty-five-cents, and my brother just got seventy, and I got sixty, here a while back, a pound for shrimp, and that's just -- I can tell you that a lot of people don't know shrimp are running that low to the producer.

We've got expensive -- I am, in particular, pulling a very expensive webbing, and it's in the neighborhood of -- It costs me right at $10,000 worth of equipment on the back deck, okay, and we're fighting, on top of all that, the imports, and, like you said, the fuel, and everything else, is just making it to where nobody wants to go back into that industry, and it's actually a good industry. I love it. It's good, hard work, but that's just, you know, how things go.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: We see it in Mississippi, that we're -- Ten years ago, or fifteen years ago, we had 800-plus boats out on the first day. This year, it was forty-seven. That tells you where the industry is at, and that tells you what is happening, because no one wants to be in it anymore, because they can't make enough money to make it worthwhile, and number two is we have a hard time getting the younger generations to look at it, because it's a whole lot easier to make $100,000 a year sitting in an office than it is out there working hard every day, and so we thank you all for everything that you do, and I hope that we can find a way to help you.

MR. KIMBALL: Yes, sir. One more comment on that. Talking about the fishing fleet going down, in 2001, there was a little under 17,000 licenses. The licenses, in 2021, went below 5,000, and we're talking federal permits, which is offshore fishing, and, in

2023, there was like 1,164, or 1,167, and so we're under a thousand licenses right now, and that's for the whole Gulf. That's not just Texas. Now, that don't include your little small boats that are in your little areas, but we're talking -- Which is a lot of the bringing in, your big commercial fishermen.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Sweetman.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to provide a comment for you, and so I hear what you're saying relative to the FDA testing of imported shrimp and everything along those lines, as it relates to the lack thereof of testing, for antibiotics and everything like that, and I just want to let you know that there is actually kind of a bill moving through the House right now that is looking to address exactly what you're talking about there, to potentially increase the amount of funding that the FDA would have to increase the amount of sampling that they would do, because it is abysmal right now, and I agree with you.

MR. KIMBALL: Yes, sir. We realize that we can't supply all the shrimp, and there's getting less and less fleet, but the main thing that needs to be done is this has to be safe. They have to reject these imports, and, when they reject them, they need to destroy them, and not just put them back on another ship, or another truck, and ship them to another port, and allow them in with another load, in case they don't get caught, and that's what this is. It's getting -- It's a public health hazard, and another thing is you're not allowed to use them, in the State of Texas or Louisiana, to fish with. It's contaminating the fish, and they don't know what's going on with the ecosystem, and the Parks and Wildlife Department, in both areas, and, if you get caught with them, you get fined.

DR. SWEETMAN: Yes, and certainly I agree with you there. What I was just going to say there, relative to that, it's certainly it's moving forward there, but this is -- The inspection process is not part of the Gulf Council's purview, or authority, along those lines. I just wanted to highlight that for you.

MR. KIMBALL: Right, and I realize that, but maybe a little word here or there will get somebody that's listening, and paying attention, and we're just trying to get what's out there and trying to make it. Anything else?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I don't see any other questions.

MR. KIMBALL: Thank you all for your time. Thank you, sir.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for coming. We appreciate it. All

right. David Krebs, followed by Jesse Heiser.

MR. DAVID KREBS: Good afternoon, council. I will start with saying thank you to Ms. Boggs and Mr. Gill and Mr. Diaz for the service that they've put in. I'm going to save my kingfish and Spanish comments for the end, if there's time, or if there's any questions, but I want to talk about the IFQ, talk about the history of the fishery.

I just saw Andy and Peter Hood and Phil Steele's -- What is it called, "The History of Red Snapper Management in the Gulf Council", and has everybody read that? It was done in 2007, and it's pretty phenomenal, because it's a different path. It was a different path than grouper. The history of red snapper, which I lived, and there's fewer and fewer of us that have lived it, from the 1970s, through the 1980s, up to the IFQ, was we had a fishery that collapsed, totally collapse, in the late 1980s, so much that the government shut it down in 1990 and said, hey, let's take a break.

We reopened back up in 1991, and it's all documented here, under a pure derby for the commercial side, that lasted -- I don't know the days it was, fifty-something, or sixty-something, and it wasn't much. They did that for three years, and then that led us into the first LAPP, limited access program, which was Class 1 and Class 2 licenses.

Those boats that demonstrated landings of 5,000 pounds in two of the three years, 1990, 1991, and 1992, could get to qualify for these licenses. With a 5,000-pound qualifier, it let 137 boats into the fishery, 137. That's it for the entire Gulf, and they caught 5,000 pounds two out of three years, and that's what this fishery looked like.

Even with that 137 boats, the derby started -- It started out with two weeks. What do we do with all these fish in two weeks? There was nowhere to go, and so they said, well, let's change it to ten days, and so we went to ten days. We battled, and we battled, and we finally get to the end, and we come up with, well, we need to go to an IFQ, and that's going to change -- With the weather and these problems.

The fishery was never intended to be an investor fishery, and it was never intended to be a leasing fishery, outside of covering bycatch for the grouper industry and other people, and I would strongly ask that this council, Ms. Simmons or Mr. Strelcheck, put you guys in a room with the stakeholders that were on the IFQ development, and what we were promised, and what we were told, and

it will shed some light, and maybe save us some court time.

I know you guys -- Not intentionally, but we seem to get drug into court an awful lot, as an industry, and all we're trying to do is make a living, and so it would all be nice if we could all sit down and talk about it. I was against the IFQ, and Captain Guindon was against the IFQ. A lot of fishermen were against it, but there was concessions made that said this is why you should be for it, and now it's getting destabilized, and, also, the biggest problem is this ACL will not stay at seventeen-million.

As you start adding this fish, and trying to spread it out, and redistribute it, and the quota gets cut back to the historic nine-million, or eight-million, or god knows what it's going to do, and then who has what, and what happens to the infrastructure? Fish houses don't run on 100,000 pounds of fish. They can't make it, and we're going to lose our infrastructure, and so I would really like you all to consider having a group meeting.

The APs -- People get frustrated, because old-timers, that have history, tend to lead the way in an AP, because we've been there and done that, and we've fought for the size limits, where we weren't discarding fish, and we were the guys that tried to make a difference, and now we're trying to share that. It's not popular, but it's the truth, and it would be interesting to see if we could all sit down and make this a better place. I'm over time, and I appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Okay. We have some questions for you, Mr. Krebs. Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you for that. I always enjoy talking to you, and listening to you speak, because you are a wealth of information, and I do appreciate that, but what I would like to ask you about is what you are seeing in the king mackerel fishery these days.

MR. KREBS: So I want to thank the guys that drive all the way over from Leesville, and some from the east coast of Florida, and on the telephone, because they're sharing exactly what I've been saying, that participation is down. The fish, historically -- The first king mackerel that I ever saw purchased was out of Grand Isle in the 1980s. The fishery was developed by Mark Arnold, Kenny Griffith, all east-coast fishermen, and they were -- I mean, there's these old-timers that -- They showed up to get this fishery, because they came from the east coast, and somebody said, hey, there's got to be king mackerel in the Gulf, and sure enough there were.

In the 1980s, that's where the mackerel fishery was. In the 1990s, it was in Cameron. It had shifted all the way from Leesville, Grand Isle, to Cameron, and, I mean, that's, what, 150 miles or something to the west, and the fishery fished there for almost eight years, seven or eight years. Trip limits, I mean, we were filling the quota over there.

Then it came back, in the 1990s, back to Grand Isle, and, during all this time, these same fishermen were the high-liners. They were the ones that you heard me talking about the fifteen people that found the fish, that could catch -- Donnie Waters, and Wayne Werner, and, I mean, we don't have Donnie or Wayne, and, I mean, they were the guys. There was a competition. Captain Sappe is going to get up here in a minute, and he was there. He started in 1992 in the western Gulf.

He can tell the stories, and we talked about it at lunch, because there was this friendship, and rivalry, but they all lived together on these thirty-five-foot boats, with mosquitoes in Louisiana every summer, and, I mean, nobody that has a choice is going to do that, unless you have a love for it, and you're looking forward to fishing with your buddies, and so the fish that we've seen have remained healthy.

There's a broad range of size, the fish doesn't look stressed, and they're not skinny. You know, there's a lot of times that you see a stressed fish, and he gets skinny, and there's a tremendous amount of three to five-pound kingfish this year. We saw it about six or eight years ago in Naples, that those fish went through, and it could have been ten years ago, but we're seeing that again this year.

I think the fishery looks really good, and, from what I'm hearing, and you'll get more testimony on that, it's a 120-mile run back to Ship Shoal off of Morgan City, from Leesville, and there is fish offshore there, and I think Captain Colletti told you about catching his limit in a day, but you have to have the weather, and we have had the worst weather, since last November, that I've ever seen, in the Gulf and on the east coast.

We lost the entire Spanish mackerel fishery, due to weather, and we didn't lose it all, but we produced maybe 30 percent of our historical -- But that's Atlantic stuff, and the same thing happened to Safe Harbor Seafood in Bon Secour, Alabama, one of the few places you can still gillnet Spanish mackerel. There were plenty of Spanish, and no weather. The weather would break every Friday for the weekend, and they're not allowed to gillnet on the

weekends, but the fish were there, and, when they could fish, they caught fish, and that was just this -- That's a spring run of fish.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: Thank you, Mr. Krebs. I would like to hear your thoughts on should you be required to have a permit to hold shares, and also if you need to demonstrate participation in the fishery of the shareholder.

MR. KREBS: So that's a good question, and, again, I was one of the guys on the AP that said it's not an investor fishery. The folks that were pushing it said, oh, this is a great opportunity, but that's not the way the industry saw it. We saw it as heritage and an opportunity to have something. I think it's a good thing to have a permit. There's nothing wrong with being vested in the fishery.

Percentage of landings, these are things that the AP was working on, but it took us four years to get through initial allocation, from 2000 to 2004, to ever agree on -- That was the only thing about the IFQ that, when we really got down to the design process, and it was, okay, who gets what, and that's why we went with a fourteen-year qualifier. It started out that, hey, we want to use the three derby years, 1990 to 1993, and that was so unfair, to so many of the people, that we ran a ten-year best consecutive out of fourteen, and it gave a reasonable average. Nobody got what they wanted, but everybody got something.

You know, the design side of that specific IFQ I thought was the fairest that it could have been, and how do you maintain that? I don't think -- I think it's another thing that you've got to put people in the room, and you just can't have an AP that says, hey, is it meeting its goals and objectives, and the answer was, yes, it met its goals and objectives, but it was never intended to be a leased fishery, that you reintroduced a ton of center consoles that want to go fishing, or the yachts that we want to get a permit and so out and supplement their fuel, because they're on a commercial trip.

That was never the intent, but it's what has happened, because, even at $2.50 a pound, a center console can run out there and make a trip. Is it fair to everybody else that is trying to be vested in the commercial industry? I mean, maybe if you said you've got to be catching other fish already, have quota in the grouper industry, before you lease a fish, and how do you change the dynamic of a fishery that was made up of 137 dedicated boats, and that's what Mr. Strelcheck's paper talks about, and the history,

was the dedicated red snapper fleet.

We don't have a dedicated anything anymore. I mean, as a -- We still have that core group that still sits out there, but it has now gotten -- When you look back at what was the original intent to reduce the capacity -- We've multiplied the capacity by three, because it's an available fish that had a value. All you had to do was find somebody willing to lease it, and, if you throw enough money at somebody, whether they want to lease it or not, they'll be like, yeah.

I tell fishermen -- They say, well, I'm not making money because I have to lease fish. No. There's no retention rules in the Gulf of Mexico, and you don't have to lease anything. You only have to lease it if you want to catch it and sell it, and, if they would just stop leasing for a year, the lease prices would go down, because, all of a sudden, it wouldn't be worth it to the investor anymore, and it's just -- It's a crazy thing, but we, collectively, need to understand it, and it's not just as easy as saying, hey, I want to redistribute this, and take it from this guy and give it to that guy. It's a lot deeper than that, and I appreciate you all even listening to me.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have another question or two. Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Susan asked my question.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Does anyone else have a question? I am not seeing any. Thank you, Mr. Krebs. We appreciate it.

MR. KREBS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Jesse Heiser, followed by Tony Sappe.

MR. JESSE HEISER: Jesse Heiser, commercial king fishermen, and I fish all three zones. I've been doing it for twelve years. It's all I've really ever done. It's mostly an independent fishery. I mean, we're all owner/operators pretty much, 98 percent probably, and a lot has changed in the last ten years, as far as our participation, and the infrastructure that goes with that is a big part.

Like even when you're -- I can't even take my boat home to the east coast. I live on the east coast, and I gave up my slip, and like there's no dockage left anywhere. That's a big part, and you're seeing it more and more everywhere, and all the fisheries are seeing it, and there's less and less. If one place disappears, it's gone, and it's gone forever, just like if we were to stop

fishing. It's not coming back.

That's a big part, and the way we live, and not many people want to do it. As the older guys get out, I think, just like every other fishery, there's not many new guys getting into it, that wants to work like we do, and live like that, and especially the traveling fishermen as well, and it makes it real tough.

There's times in the year that I see -- We'll be fishing, and you will see an amount of fish where you're like, wow, that's a lot of fish, and we'll be talking about it, and, you know, like I think -- You know, I think a lot of them are offshore. I think they move.

For example, like Louisiana, and I don't know if you know, but like, without the rigs there, all that inshore bottom -- There is no bottom. It's mud, and so what's left is the offshore reefs, in 200, 300, 400 foot of water, that are surrounding by 700 or 800 or a thousand foot of water, whatever, and then fish push around out there, jumping from spot to spot.

Even if you find them out there, sometimes they don't bite. For us, anything that stays low in the column, and they move up and down, and they move up, and they bite, and we catch them. It makes it a tough. It's a lot of area, for just a few amount of boats to look over. I think that's most of the questions you keep asking, is about the participation.

Sharks are terrible. Oh my god. Every time you do find them, that seems to be one of the worst problems that we're dealing with, and the porpoise. There's a lot of things that are keeping us from catching them, and so that's all I've got.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Questions? All right. Thank you. Tony Sappe, followed by Scott Hickman.

MR. TONY SAPPE: I'm Tony Sappe, a king mackerel fisherman. I've been coming over here since 1992, to Louisiana, in the summers, and, in 1990, and in 1992, and in 1993, the season lasted forty-five or fifty days, but it was a smaller quota, and it was unlimited, but we were catching them out of Cameron, Louisiana, and my friends that I knew from Grand Isle and the places -- That's where we started the season, because there wasn't the fish, like David was saying, off of Grand Isle at that time of the year anymore.

The cutting these quotas in half, or whatever you all -- All those alternatives is no good for a king mackerel fisherman. I mean,

sure, we haven't been catching the numbers the last four years. The last year we caught them, the last four days of the season, I caught 8,000 pounds, by myself, and they were jumping as far as we could see them.

The next year we come, and we didn't see anything like that. You know, I mean, where did all these fish go that were jumping as far as we could see them, and we were catching our limits every day, for four days, and then we met the quota, and it was closed, and so about the traditional fishermen, the old guys -- You know, on the east coast of Florida, the old guys, if they have snapper grouper permits, they're allowed to catch seventy-five pounds of red snapper, which, to me, is like a joke, but it's enough money for them to go king fishing in the morning, and catch their seventy-five pounds of red snapper, with their few kingfish, and they're making good money.

I don't have a snapper grouper permit over there, or here, and if you cut the quota, we'll never be able to recover from what we've not made these last couple of years. I mean, if we catch fish for a week, there's going to be more fishermen coming, and there is no less permits out there. There is still plenty of boats that would come if we find some fish.

I have never caught no kingfish in a thousand foot of water, and I've never really went out there looking for them. I mean, we have fished from 150 foot into forty foot of water, from here to the Keys, up the east coast of Florida, and that's where we've always caught our kingfish, but I don't know how many oil rigs they took out of that, from Cameron to Grand Isle, but it's -- Every one of our good rigs were, when you went fishing, and you would go out, and just go through the rigs, heading west, and you knew, when you got to that next field, you were going to catch fish on these rigs, and now we don't have that.

I mean, we don't have any of the live rigs that the fish were on, and, like I said, one of my friends that worked with NOAA, and with some sharks, Michael Newman, in Jupiter, Florida, and he told me that he was diving in Texas, on a deepwater rig, and had seen all kinds of kingfish, and I really didn't ask him how many foot of water he was in, but, you know, like I said, that's a -- We're going out, twelve boats now, when there was forty-two of them in 2020, or the last time we caught the quota, and, you know, there was a lot of boats.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Sappe, you need to wrap up your comments.

MR. SAPPE: I'm just saying we can't -- We don't deserve, or need,

any cuts in any quota. If we're not catching the fish, we're not hurting them. Twelve boats are never going to catch that quota.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you, sir. Any questions? We have a question from Dr. Walter.

DR. WALTER: Captain Sappe, thank you for coming here, and I've actually been listening intently to a lot of the conversations on king mackerel, thinking about how we can try to get a better handle on the population, and one of the things that we've struggled with is getting a good index, and what I'm hearing is that there's maybe some potential to take a closer look at the fishery data, and the catch per unit effort data, and, to that, where we would actually use probably fishermen's reports, like logbook reports, and what do you think is the key information that we need to know about, in terms of being able to get a good handle on what the abundance of the population is from like using your data?

MR. SAPPE: Well, as for -- If twelve boats are catching 300,000 pounds -- I mean, if you put thirty more boats out there, I mean, that would be the million pounds, no matter what, where we're fishing.

Like we said, we used to -- We would travel, and boats would be spread out for fifty miles, and, when people found them, we went that way, and, I mean, yes, there was plenty of oil rigs that we would catch fish on, you know, regularly, but all that has been taken out, and those fish don't have that to go to, and so, I mean, like I said, we're still always going -- I mean, I can't afford to go out there and strike out, even though I might go inshore, in all these places I've been fishing, and strike out, but to just go out there into the abyss and look for a kingfish that is in 10,000 foot of water, by myself, or with even five or six boats -- I mean, we're -- It's hard to find a ball of fish like that.

I mean, we don't have airplanes, like the netters, and we don't -- You know, I wish somebody would go out there and fly and tell us where they're at, but, I mean, like I said, I've been hearing reports -- You know, I just got back, and I just got here to start fishing, and I'm going to start fishing in two days, when we get back to Leesville, and we're going to ice up and go fishing, but, you know, a snapper boat we talked to, he said he feels that he was marking some kingfish out there, and, like I said, these people have been telling me about some deeper-water fish, and we're going to have to start going out there and looking.

I mean, that's not where we've ever caught -- You know, we just never caught them like that. I mean, when I was coming from Fort

Myers, years ago, driving back and forth with my boat, I caught some barracuda in 10,000 foot, and so I don't know why you couldn't catch a kingfish, but we never caught none out there, when we were coming over straight across, but we're going to have to start looking out there, from what we are hearing.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Any other questions? All right. Mr. Sappe, thank you.

MR. SAPPE: I would like to say that now -- I'm going to be sixty on August 8, and I'm the old-timer in the fleet.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Congratulations. Scott Hickman, followed by Eric Brazer.

MR. SCOTT HICKMAN: Hello. Hello, ladies and gentlemen of the Gulf Council. My name is Captain Scott Hickman, from beautiful Galveston, Texas. I'm a founding board member of the Charter Fishermen's Association, a dual-permit holder, commercial reef, king mackerel, and also a federal charter-for-hire. I've been in the fishery for over forty years, as a deckhand and as a captain.

First off, I would like to thank Susan, Bob, and Dale for their incredible service and amazing work you've done, all you've done, for our fishery and the stakeholders. Don't be strangers.

I like the option for charter-for-hire to use the new LA Creel app logbook with the new Starlink cellular technology for validation and an algorithm that randomly selects captains for the economic survey. The economic survey is very important.

The Galveston, Texas charter-for-hire wants at least a mid-August run on a red snapper season and a fall season to start in October. Please explore a wahoo regulation to manage and conserve this incredible stock of fish, especially in the sanctuary areas off of Texas and Louisiana. All the commercial IFQ proposals will cause more consolidation, in my view, and not what is intended with the current amendment. The unused, unclaimed shareholder accounts, shares, should be put in a program for veterans that want to get into the commercial fishery. We should be doing something for those folks that have given so much for our country, like the folks that serve on this council.

Move the rest of the charter-for-hire historical catch of reef fish into sector allocation and continue to have the council staff develop the fishery ecosystem plan, with water quality being the most pressing issues. Platforms and shrimp boats are mostly gone in the Gulf, as you've heard, and sharks have found new places to

hang out and eat now, and that is our reef fish complex, and that's why you hear so many charter boats and commercial folks complaining about all these sharks, and I don't think we've got any more sharks. I just think they're living in new places.

The CFA supports offshore wind in the western Gulf of Mexico. Our local fleet supports it, and we've been very much impressed with the spatial planning on these projects, and we look forward to having some platforms back off the Texas coast, and, on that, we look forward to seeing everybody at happy hour.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Scott. Any questions for Captain Hickman? I'm not seeing any. Thank you. Eric Brazer, followed by Buddy Guindon.

MR. ERIC BRAZER: All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Eric Brazer, Deputy Director of the Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Shareholders Alliance. Like the others who have come before me have said, Bob, Susan, Dale, if you're out there, thank you guys for your leadership, your service, and, like I said last night, you guys have been an inspiration to those of us in the back of the room, and so we appreciate that. You've driven this council to be better, and to do better, and thank you again.

On Amendments 59 and 60, we're glad to see these conversations moving forward, and we're looking forward to seeing the analysis come out. As you guys are starting to see, this is getting pretty complicated, and there's lot of layers to this onion. It was really helpful to visualize these different business models in the document, in the presentation, so we can start to tease out the impacts of some of these actions on the different types of business models in the Gulf.

We still think that you should have a clear vision on what you want this fishery to look like in the future, as a way to keep you on track as you inevitably get like sucked down into the weeds on all these actions and alternatives. You need something to be able to help you chart your course, and we ask that, as you make these changes, don't just think about tomorrow. Think about five years and ten years down the road.

We have a number of initial recommendations, and you can see those in our letter. I want to highlight three things here. Number one, these two documents, at this point, the presentations actually are basically silent on how allocation banks, or fisheries trusts, would exist in this post-59 and 60 world. You have prioritized these in your goals and objectives, and we really hope that they will be identified in the forthcoming action document. We just

want to make sure that you don't inadvertently shut the door on these options as these documents move forward.

Number two, we have some initial concerns with redistribution of future increases. It seems to add a whole new level of complexity to the conversation, and it introduces a suite of fairness and equity issues that would ultimately need to be addressed.

Number three, we just want to make sure you leave enough time to do this, to have the analysis and the public hearings, and we're glad to see that you're not going to rush through this to go to final by January. That would have been an aggressive timeline, to say the least.

The next few things, briefly, is, Amendment 53, we are disappointed to hear that the council is not going to get a chance to review and discuss this new economic analysis. You took final action on Amendment 53 based on an economic analysis that the court found to be insufficient. You, and us, frankly, the public, should have the opportunity to participate in the process to fix this error.

Commercial electronic logbooks, we want to thank the Science Center for giving us the opportunity to start to get this into the hands of fishermen this fall, ahead of implementation, and that's going to be super helpful for compliance and accuracy. Then the last thing is ecosystem, and we support the committee's request for an extension to the comment deadline to allow the Ecosystem Technical Committee to comment on the draft roadmap, and so thank you for the time.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Eric. Any questions? I am not seeing any. Thank you. Buddy Guindon, followed by Shane Cantrell.

MR. BUDDY GUINDON: Buddy Guindon. I will be speaking on behalf of Buddy Guindon today. I want to thank Dale, Susan Boggs, and Bob Gill for their service to our country and this council. Susan, you're a relentless studier, and you could have been partying, like the rest of these people on the council, but you were up studying, and your outreach to your constituents was second-to-none, and thank you for your service.

Bob, you've spent a lifetime here, and I thank you for that. You've always been a person looking to solve problems, and never any bullshit. You were serious, and your country owes you a gratitude that I can't supply to you, and so thank you for your service. Roy, are you getting some of Joe's Mountain Dew? You've been awake this whole damn time.

I would like to speak about the permit pool that you're trying to put together. I hope that you reserve those permits until we get down to a point of consolidation, and, with the reductions in all the different species that are in the fishery, we certainly need some more reduction, to make our businesses stay profitable, and so, as you move forward with this, please really take into consideration that can these people make a living when you give them a permit.

I want to endorse Ed's twenty-fathom closure issue, and I support him in that, and I think he's working on behalf of the industry, and, when it's unenforceable, and, in my eyes, not needed, let's not do it. There's no reason for it.

When it comes to king mackerel, it's very exciting. The last four years, we haven't caught enough king mackerel to feed you people, but we're seeing some little ones this year, and that's a really good sign, and who knows why?

Maybe they're out way offshore, and I don't know anything about that, and I'm not really a king mackerel fisherman, but I catch them when I'm fishing, and I'm seeing some this year, and they're little fish, and we're seeing a lot of bait, and so those are things that you need to take into consideration before you cut quotas on people that need to catch their fish when they show back up, and apparently they are showing back up, as the juveniles are there, and it's another fishery that maybe will save some businesses that are going to struggle with the continuing drops in quotas.

I want to make a prediction. In the next five years, our red snapper quota is probably going to be 40 to 50 percent reduced, and that's just anecdotal information I get off of my vessels' catch per unit effort, young men that fish hard and work hard, and they have a record of the same type of work, the same type of crews, and, with my numbers on catch per unit effort daily, their numbers are down 30 to 40 percent right now, and so, when the stock assessments catch up, that's where we're going to be. Thanks for your time and your service.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Buddy. All right. Next, I have Shane Cantrell, followed by Adam Brick.

MR. SHANE CANTRELL: Hello. I'm Shane Cantrell. I fish out of Galveston, Texas, and I'm a charter-for-hire owner/operator, and, first, I would like to thank Mr. Bob, Ms. Susan, and Mr. Dale. They've been here longer than I have, and I thank you all for what you've done. You all have done more than you could ever know for

our fisheries. It takes an incredible amount of time and effort to get this done, and you all have provided leadership for this council for many years now.

On amberjack, the season in September does something that I didn't think that I would have the opportunity to do, after working with this council for many, many years, and we have the opportunity to extend a fishing season that red snapper has June and July, and into August, and now we have a keystone species for September and into the fall. We have made huge progress in the management of the charter fishery as a whole, and that has done wonders for the fleet Gulf-wide.

For red snapper, we're simply to a place where process matters far more than results, and my business has the ability to go fishing for red snapper for multiple months in the summertime, but the process for that told me, on May 15, what my season was, and it started on June 1. That's really tough to manage a business, and, if we're going to make a more efficient season for red snapper, and start to do some innovative approaches to use that quota efficiently for permit holders, we need to be able to understand what that season is, and, for my business in October, it makes a huge difference.

That allows a break in that season. Kids go back to school, and I think many people can benefit from that, but a season in October doesn't do me any good, if I don't know when it starts and ends, to be able to market that.

The last thing I wanted to talk about is wahoo. Given technological advances, and efficiencies in the recreational and commercial fisheries, we have the ability to access areas, and impact areas, that we haven't in the past, and we're doing so at a rapid pace, and so you all are going to see a presentation tomorrow from the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, with a lot of information about that, but the key takeaway is we have one species left that is a prized sportfish that undergoes a significant amount of harvest, and we have an incredible amount of access to this fishery, that we haven't had in the past. To think that we have no management in the Gulf seems questionable at this point in time. We have that opportunity, and we would like to see a fishery management for wahoo beginning.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Any questions for Shane? Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: It's good to see you again, Shane.

MR. CANTRELL: Yes, sir.

MR. WALKER: It's been a while. So I would like to hear -- I wasn't sure exactly what you were saying, but I would like to hear your Texas charter boat opinion on what the red snapper season -- What you would like to see in the for-hire sector.

MR. CANTRELL: I know that this isn't the same for every fishery, or every area, but, in Texas, our state-water season has been what it is, and it has continued, and that's consistent. People understand that, and the June 1 opening works really well for my business, if I know -- It's more important for me to know when it starts, and when it ends, then that exact date, but, at least for now, and for the time being that we have had this June 1 opening, and people are accustomed to it, and I don't think it benefits my business specifically, for opening on Memorial Day weekend or something like that, and it's more about knowing what that season is and the ability to get that in front of potential customers and book those fishing trips.

MR. WALKER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Shane, you did hear what Andy said yesterday about amberjack season, did you not?

MR. CANTRELL: I did get a little bit of it.

MS. BOGGS: So, right now, it's going to open August 1, and I just wanted to make sure you were clear on that.

MR. CANTRELL: Yes.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: I want to be clear that I did not say that it was going to open on August 1. I said there was potential that we're going to open on August 1.

MR. CANTRELL: I appreciate understanding that more and more.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you, Shane. It's good to see you. All right. Adam Brick.

MR. ADAM BRICK: How's it going, guys? My name is Adam Brick, and I'm the fish buyer for a company in Austin called Minamoto Foods. We're a wholesaler. I am in the people business. I'm not in the

fish business. I represent people. Some of them are here, like Captain Anthony, and Jason Delacruz, and some are close friends, and some of who are absolute bedrocks of our business.

I sell a million dollars' worth of red snapper a year, and $250,000 of that goes to our fishermen, and that's before expenses, and so I have two things that I would like to talk about. Number one, I'm probably the youngest person in the room. I'm young enough to be stupid, but old enough to listen to people like Jason, or Mr. Casterline, anytime -- Somebody that has been here longer than me, and I listen.

I would say that I have kind of a radical idea on IFQ price and the way that leasing goes, and it's crazy. The lease price cannot exceed the ex-vessel price. Let the free market dictate what the end price is. For example, if the lease price is $3.00, and the ex-vessel price is $3.00, that's the only thing, to me, that make any sense, as far as equity goes. Let the fisherman work. Let him get the best price he can. Let him negotiate the best lease price he can, but at least off the fishermen the opportunity to make the same as an investor, as somebody who rightfully owns a share, whatever it is.

I'm not for an abolition of the entire system, and I understand there are so many different sides, and so many different ways of looking at it, but, really, the only thing that makes sense to me, that's fair and equitable, is to at least make a cap on the price that it cannot exceed, because, right now, I will give $480,000, or more, to somebody who has never fished a day in their life, and so, like I said, I understand both sides of it, but, really, the only thing that makes sense to me, at this point, is some sort of price cap and some sort of way to let the free market kind of control a little bit more.

My other thing that I would like to talk about, and I know it's not under your purview, and I know how HMS works and everything, but we have a very valuable resource in the Gulf of Mexico, and it's bluefin tuna. On the east coast, we have guys that basically do whatever they want, however they want, and they catch bluefin whenever they want, all the time.

All right, and there's a lot of new science about the Slope Sea, a lot of new science about the actual population we have, and ICCAT has been doing a fantastic job managing the stock, and, if there's any way -- Especially you guys with NOAA, and if there's any way to have a little bit more collaboration with our folks on the east coast about some sort of experimental season, or some sort of permitted process of selling bluefin in the Gulf of Mexico, I feel

like it would be great.

I personally have spent up to $10,000 per fish, and I buy three to four fish per week, and I support dozens of fishermen, all across the country, and some guys, for example, were making $3.00 a pound when I met them, and now they're making $15.00 to $16.00 a pound, and so these guys are going to catch these fish in the Gulf, period, and we know this, especially off of Destin, and, to be honest, the fish might as well go in the garbage can.

What are you going to do with a bluefin that you caught for three hours on a PIN 130, when you're not a professional fisherman, when you don't know how to swim the fish, you don't know how to ice the fish, you don't know how to bleed the fish, and you don't know how to ikejime, but, if people like me, who can become a federal dealer, can teach these people how to treat these bluefin, and we can use the heads for science, and we can send the heads off to Dr. Walt at the University of Maine, or to Auburn, or to Texas, and we can use these fish, which are so valuable for science, and I think it's a great resource, and I think we're completely wasting it, and I feel like it's worth tens of millions of dollars. That's it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any questions? Dr. Banks.

DR. BANKS: I'm not going to take up more of this time, but I do recommend, before you leave today, seeing Dr. Walter right here, as he is the bluefin scientist for ICCAT, and I will mention that, if you do happen to catch a bluefin, please feel free to give us a call. I would love to come sample the head.

MR. BRICK: Sure. I just want the opportunity to sell the fish and get as much money for the fishermen as possible.

DR. BANKS: I think he can help you work through some of those management issues there.

DR. WALTER: Thank you, and I'm glad to hear that, and I think the ICCAT story is a pretty good story, about the rebounding of the fish, and I think the word does need to get out that we should eat more bluefin, and I think the domestic consumption of bluefin should really be something we should have more opportunities for, and see it more on the menu. Thanks.

MR. BRICK: I mean, there's just -- There is so little access to these fish to begin with, and how many people are truly going to go out to the shelf, in March and April, to catch these, and so, if you want to go and catch that fish, you've got work really hard

for it, and it's not something that you can just go twenty miles offshore and catch, and so I feel like it's going to be a very limited thing, and it can all be done with tags, and it can be done the exact same way it's done on the east coast, but done on an experimental level. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. All right. Richard Fischer.

MR. RICHARD FISCHER: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the council. You like that beard, huh, Bob? I thought about shaving today, but I just ran out of time, but I appreciate the compliment.

Richard Fischer, representing the Louisiana Charter Boat Association. Thank you all for the time here this afternoon. I will begin my time here with electronic reporting. In the document that we looked over the other day, as it pertains to the random sample for economic data, we would prefer the Option d, which is 20 percent.

We would prefer a smaller percentage than that, and I heard 10 percent mentioned by Captain Walker, and we, as the Charter Boat Association in Louisiana, we're currently commissioning an economic study of our industry, and, if we got to 10 percent of trips that happened, we would feel pretty good about the results, and so we think 10 percent would be fine. If 20 percent is the lowest that's available, we'll go ahead and support 20 percent.

Moving on now to red snapper, we would favor an earlier opening for the season. In Louisiana, for our private recreational and state charter boat season, we saw an April 15 opening, and I've got to admit that I severely underestimated the unintended consequences that would have for our federal fleet, because, in the months of April and May, I heard that some of our guys were struggling to fill up their calendars for June, for red snapper trips, and that was unheard of in Louisiana, and, I mean, if you think about it, if you're a customer in the months of April or May, and I can either hop on a state charter boat this weekend, or I can wait longer to pay more to catch fewer, and so it really kind of was not really a fair and equitable situation for our federally-permitted charter guys.

As I continually tell them, that's more of an argument, and not less of an argument, for state management, which, of course, we come up here and talk about every time we have the opportunity to, and so, as it pertains to what's in that document, we would support the earlier start in Louisiana.

November, if it were to reopen in November, that really wouldn't do anything for us, because we're kind of May through October, April through October, fishery, but, if there were a way to finagle it, where it could reopen in October, that would be something that we would support.

Since I have a few more minutes, or a few more seconds, and I know I'm the only thing between you guys and happy hour, I did want to mention something about this very fine hotel that we're staying in here in Houston. We just saw a presentation on the first ever agenda that the Gulf Council had in Kenner, and I actually live about a mile away from Kenner, and so I'm very familiar with it, and there are not too many hotels like this in Kenner.

It's, you know, two-hundred-and-fifty-bucks a night, and you've got to pay for parking, and you've got to pay for breakfast, and you've even got to pay for Wi-Fi in the rooms, and there's nothing wrong with that, but I would just ask the council, and those who make decisions on where we hold these meetings, to maybe ask yourselves if that fosters the most fishermen participation. It's 4:30, and we're about done with public comments, and that's not usual, and so I just kind of wanted to get that out there, and I appreciate everybody, and thanks to our outgoing council members as well. We've had some rigorous debates over the years, and I'm going to miss those, and so thanks, everybody, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Schieble.

MR. SCHIEBLE: Thank you, Richard, for coming over here at the expensive hotel and for participating in the meeting. Can you speak to any information or feedback that you're getting from your captains regarding king mackerel in Louisiana?

MR. FISCHER: I can't say that I've received much, as it pertains to king mackerel, and so I'm sorry, Chris, and I can't really answer that. That's not a conversation piece that I've had positive, negative, or indifferent.

MR. SCHIEBLE: I will hit you with another one then. We're going to see a presentation on wahoo tomorrow, and it has some landing estimates in there that they're using regarding an increase in landings coming from Louisiana, and have you heard anything as far as dockside increase in landings from your charter captains?

MR. FISCHER: That's another thing they're not talking about, or at least not to me, and so it's not something that I'm hearing quite a bit about. Those are two species that we don't hear much

about landings, and we don't see very many landings on social media.

MR. SCHIEBLE: Thank you. I appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I didn't quite catch everything that you were referring to on the hotel, and so let's get together offline, but, if you were in our group rate, you should have got it for $122 per night, plus taxes, and let's talk offline, and so maybe you missed that window.

MR. FISCHER: I looked for the group rate, and that's not what I saw last week, and maybe I waited too long.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Correct. You waited too long.

MR. FISCHER: Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Any other questions for Mr. Fischer? Seeing none, thank you.

MR. FISCHER: All right. You all have a great evening. Thanks, everybody.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. That wraps up our public testimony, and so we are at 4:30. Let's go ahead and take a break, and then we'll have a decision. Sepp, welcome. Just to let you know, you might be holding up some bathroom breaks, but go ahead.

MR. SEPP HAUKEBO: Thank you, Chair and council for hearing us today. My name is Sepp Haukebo. I'm a Texas resident, a private angler for over thirty years, and I want to start by saying thank you, Ms. Boggs, thank you, Mr. Diaz, and thank you, Mr. Gill, for your service, and not just on the council, but also all the hours that you all put in on APs, on steering committees, on all the things that you work on. We all see how hard you work, and we appreciate it.

I am here speaking on behalf of the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council. The advisory council is a group of volunteers, sixteen appointed members, representing seats that range from recreational fishing, commercial fishing, conservation, oil and gas, research, diving, and education. We've heard a little bit about wahoo today, and we'll hear a lot more about it tomorrow. This is an issue that's dear to my heart, and, again, representing that sanctuary advisory council with these comments.

I'm here to ask the council, and the council staff, to consider developing a regional management plan for wahoo. If you look at where we are in the twenty-first-century, and a lot us believe that we need to ensure that we're managing important and charismatic species like wahoo. When you talk to somebody, and you mention that there's no management in the Gulf for wahoo outside of Florida, a lot of folks' minds are blown.

We originally heard from this by a couple of charter captains that fish wahoo tournaments, and have fished for over twenty years, and they're concerned with the level of take.

I want to say that this isn't about completely restricting access. This is about maintaining access for the current generation and future generations, but we've seen some pictures of ten to twelve boats on a single bank. Anybody that knows these banks knows how small some of the sanctuary banks are, and we're seeing ten to twelve boats maneuvering around a single bank, and seeing up to forty or fifty wahoo per boat in pictures, and then ten to twenty lost to sharks, and that's a heavy day, when you're fishing an aggregation, and so the SAC supports continued access to this fishery in the region, but, also, in the sanctuary, and, yes, there's a lot of fishing that is allowed in the sanctuary, but we want to see some form of management.

I know the council has a lot on their plate, and so this is a hard thing to ask, but there's a lot of low-hanging fruit, in terms of considering management. I will wrap up right now, Chair. Considering management actions even in data-poor stocks, such as wahoo.

Lastly, I want to echo what Richard Fischer said. It was a heck of a long way to drive to get from the coast, and it's a pretty swanky part of Houston, and so it would be great to think about some options that are a little bit closer to where fishermen are based, and, even if you don't get in at the group rate, you don't have to stay at the Best Western down the road. Thank you, council.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Sepp. Any questions? All right. Thank you. Go ahead and have your break, I guess, and come on back, and let's try to do it in ten minutes.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: If council members can make their way back to their seats, we're going to finish up with the Admin/Budget Committee Report. If you can take your conversations outside,

we're going to go ahead and start with our first committee report. That would be the Admin/Budget Report. General Spraggins.

COMMITTEE REPORTS
ADMINISTRATIVE/BUDGET COMMITTEE REPORT

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With the Admin/Budget Committee report, June 24, 2024, the committee adopted the agenda, Tab G, Number 1, as written. The minutes, Tab G, Number 2, of the January 2024 committee meeting were approved with amendment on page 5, line 16, correcting "Bog" instead of "Bob", and so we can call Bob "Bog" now, right?

Discussion of Proposed Modifications to the Statement of Organization Practices and Procedures, the SOPPs, Tab G, Number 4, in reviewing the proposed verbiage to update Section 2.5.3, council and committee members inquired about the language differences between meetings of SSCs and volunteers of the Southeast Data Assessment and Review, the SEDAR, process. Staff clarified that the proposed verbiage states a thirty-day advance notification requirement for attendance changes of SEDAR participants, because those meetings require significant external coordination.

The fourteen-day advance notice for confirmation of attendance at SSC meetings allows the council to ensure that we remain in compliance with the attrition requirements in contracted hotel rooms and the opportunity to obtain better rates for travel and lodging. Staff noted that the language includes a statement that the council will work with members who encounter extenuating circumstances, if you have extenuating circumstances. Overall, the goal in this section is to provide clarification of the preferred policies, as several committees are being repopulated at this meeting.

NOAA General Counsel staff noted that the proposed language seemed to be prescriptive, but acknowledged the intention that the council is to balance the desire for in-person participation with the ability to make exceptions in certain circumstances. A member suggested softening the statements by altering "will" and "must" to "should". Staff will confer with NOAA General Counsel staff and bring the revised draft language for Sections 2.5.3 and 2.6.3 for review during the Full Council.

The three points to be addressed are recording the current practice in the policies, confirming the idea that holding in-person meetings is a priority for the council, and clarifying that there is an optimal defined timeline for advanced notification needed for meeting planning purposes. Please review the proposed updates

to Sections 2.5.3 and 2.6.3 for the council's discussion. If we could, if we could bring those up, the proposed changes.

If you can look at it, and it's in the bold, which is what we're looking at, which is kind of hard to see, but, basically, under 2.5.3, Administrative Provisions, there was a change, in the third paragraph, to where it said, "for the SSC unless the member has extenuating circumstances, in which case they should notify the Executive Director". That was a change, if you can see that, and then the other change was that "the SEDAR process should notify the council staff lead for the SSC at least thirty days in advance if they cannot attend unless the member has an extenuating circumstance, in which case they should notify the Executive Director." I will open that up, at this point, to Dr. Simmons, if there's any questions on those changes.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any questions?

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Yes, sir, Dakus.

MR. GEESLIN: Thank you, General. I support staff with this, and I think this gets to kind of common courtesy, giving folks advance notice. We just talked about the cost of hotels, and, in the event that somebody doesn't cancel, the cost is borne by the council, and so I'm fully supportive of this.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: General, my only comment would be that, after "Director", each instance, that you would add "as soon as possible".

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: I'm sorry. Could you say that again?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: After "Director", in each instance, in both instances where it's provided in the paragraph, to just say "as soon as possible", just to reinforce that it needs to be done as soon as they find out.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Okay. I have no problem with that. Could we add that to that? Let's see if the staff can make that modification.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Can you add "as soon as possible", after "notify the Executive Director", each time, please?

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Okay. Any other questions on that? If not, we'll move on to the next one.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: General, we do have one other thing. Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: I think, if you just go down, just to point out that we kind of mirrored the language in the first part, on the advance notice, and so we could just add that in as well, for the APs and the technical committees, if that's okay. If you go down, Bernie. There we go, and so you can see if we just mirror that same language there for the AP and the technical committees.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Right. I was thinking that we would add that to the --

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: If there's no other changes, it would be good to have a motion.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Okay, and so we have the two changes there in 2.5.3, and then, if we scroll down to 2.6.3, if we can scroll down just a little bit, and you can see the changes there, and it's basically saying the same thing, and it's stating that they will -- Unless the member has extenuating circumstances, in which case they should notify the Executive Director as soon as possible. Yes, Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe we need a motion to approve this, do we not?

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Yes, we will.

MR. GILL: I would like to make a motion to approve the changes to Sections 2.5.3 and 2.6.3.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Okay. Do we have a second? We have a second by Tom. Is there any further discussion? **Does anyone object to this motion? If not, then the motion carries.**

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Continue on, General Spraggins.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: All right. The next section discussed was the addition of language in Section 3.8, as requested by NOAA to comply with federal regulations. **The committee recommends, and I so move, that the Council accept the proposed changes to the SOPPs in Section 3.8, Council Member Compensation, which states, in accordance with 50 CFR 600.245(c), the Executive Director of the council must submit to the Regional Office annually a report, approved by the council chair, of council member compensation authorized. This report shall identify, for each member, amount paid, dates, and location and purpose of meetings attended.** The

motion carried with no opposition. I will send that to you sir, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, and so we have a committee motion. Is there any discussion on the motion? **Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** General Spraggins.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: All right. Next, discussion continued on proposed changes to Section 4.8.1 under the Anti-Harassment policy. A member asked if the policy is intended to prevent the appointment of members who do not complete the training. Staff stated that the only change proposed was to include technical committee members for completeness.

It was stated by a member that the intention appears to be to integrate the training during the onboarding of new committee members. Staff confirmed that the current process is to ensure that members complete training by the first time they attend a meeting.

The committee recommends, and I so move, that the council accept the proposed addition to Training in Section 4.8.1 of the SOPPs. Anti-Harassment Training should be completed at the time of appointment or reappointment of council members, SSC members, and AP members, and technical committee members. State directors, and their designees, should complete anti-harassment training every three years and at the time of appointment. The motion carried with no opposition. Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a committee motion. Is there any discussion on the motion? **Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.**

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: All right. Then the Status Update on Inflation Reduction Act Funding for the Regional Fishery Management Councils. Staff provided an informational update on the current position of this proposal. Clarifications and responses to specific questions on the phase two activities were submitted to NOAA Fisheries in June of 2024. Dr. Verena Wang was hired to fill the role of Ecosystem Analyst. She is currently serving as a temporary fishery biologist until the council receives funding for phase one of the project. Mr. Chairman, this concludes my report.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, General Spraggins. I appreciate it, and so that brings us to essentially the end of today's activities, our time that we allotted for them, and so we'll go ahead and break and come back tomorrow morning at 8:30, and we'll have the two presentations, and the social, again, is 6:00 to 8:00 this evening,

at the café here just off the lobby, and so I hope to see everybody there. Thank you.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed on June 26, 2024.)

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June 27, 2024

THURSDAY MORNING SESSION

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The Full Council of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council reconvened at The Omni Hotel in Houston, Texas on Thursday morning, June 27, 2024, and was called to order by Chairman Kevin Anson.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Okay, everyone. We're going to get started here. We'll reconvene Full Council. Just to conclude -- We did receive some written comments related to yesterday's public testimony, and those are available for council members, and the public, to review on the council's website. Emily is going to be forwarding the link to that section on the website, if you would like to go and read them, and so please do.

First up for this morning, we have the Flower Garden Banks presentation on management considerations for wahoo, Tab A, Number 9, and Dr. Michelle Johnston with the Flower Garden Banks is here, and she will be giving the presentation. Good morning.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION
FLOWER GARDEN BANKS PRESENTATION ON MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR WAHOO

DR. MICHELLE JOHNSTON: Good morning, everybody. Thank you so much for having me. I am Michelle Johnston, and I am the superintendent at Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, which is the only national marine sanctuary in the Gulf of Mexico that protects 160 square miles of important coral reef habitat.

I am here today on behalf of the Flower Garden Banks Sanctuary Advisory Council and our shared stakeholders, primarily from the recreational fishing community, who have come to me expressing their concern about the take of wahoo in the sanctuary and across the broader Gulf of Mexico.

While my primary goal today is to inform you of the concerns raised by our shared stakeholders, I'm also hoping to pique your interest

in taking action to manage wahoo under the authorities of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act.

First, just a little bit of background on national marine sanctuaries. The Flower Garden Banks is one of sixteen national marine sanctuaries that make up the national marine sanctuary system, which is a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 620,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes habitat from Washington State to Lake Huron, from the Florida Keys to American Samoa, and our mission is to promote the use and enjoyment of these special places, very similar to national parks, and, along those lines, make sure that these uses, and their primary goals, provide long-term conservation and protection of these nationally-significant places.

Don't let the name "sanctuary" mislead you. Well-managed fishing is not only allowed in sanctuaries, but it is promoted, as these are places for recreational and enjoyment, and fishing currently occurs across 98 percent of the sanctuary system.

Specifically, in our neck of the woods, the Flower Garden Banks encompasses the healthiest coral reefs in the Gulf and Caribbean region, and it was expanded from fifty-six square miles to 160 square miles in 2021, protecting additional critical habitat in the Gulf of Mexico, and so this means the sanctuary is now made up of seventeen reefs and banks, with nineteen separate boundaries, and this place, in my personal opinion, is the treasure of the Gulf of Mexico, and these additional protections, done in collaboration with fishers, and the oil and gas industry, and conservationists alike, is a place that every Gulf resident should be extremely proud of.

The Flower Garden Banks supports a variety of wildlife, from sea turtles to manta rays to threatened corals and pelagic fish species, such as wahoo, which is why I'm here today. While these fish are present year-round, throughout the Gulf and Caribbean, wahoo seasonally have high abundance in the sanctuary from winter to late spring. They tend to prefer the warm waters, between sixty-eight to eighty-six degrees, and they aggregate around many of the banks in the sanctuary, including East Bank, West Bank, Geyer Bank, Sonnier Bank, and Bright Bank, which are pointed out on the map.

Concerns from charter boat captains, and local fishers, have been raised to us about the increasing popularity of wahoo tournaments in winter months, coupled with increasing pressures from a changing climate, and so evidence for this was recently published in the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary's Climate

Vulnerability Assessment, where wahoo were listed as a key species of concern.

This table comes from our climate assessment that was published last year, with over thirty subject matter experts and key experts, who helped us evaluate the vulnerability of key species in the sanctuary with regard to climate stresses, and the main takeaway from this table is that wahoo are almost certain to be impacted by rising ocean temperatures, which is depicted by the bright colors there in the second column, putting increased stress on this species, especially when combined with fishing pressure.

All of this kind of came together in February of last year, when both charter boat captains and local fishers in the Gulf community came to a Flower Garden Banks Sanctuary Advisory Council meeting, addressing their concerns about the lack of wahoo management within the boundaries of the sanctuary and the broader Gulf of Mexico, and the fishers asked us for help, during public comment of our meeting, and their concern about the potential for overfishing, and their personal experience of catching smaller and smaller wahoo over their lifetime garnered some attention at our meeting.

Therefore, the advisory council voted to form a working group to explore and understand wahoo interaction and aggregation within the sanctuary. The working group consisted of both sanctuary staff, of advisory council members and local fishers, with their main concern being that this is a highly-prized sportfish without management in the Gulf, and I think it's important to mention that both the South Atlantic and Caribbean regions already have management plans for wahoo, where, for example, the Atlantic limit is two wahoo per person per day.

The advisory council working group members started to do some research, and look into wahoo data, and they found that the state data doesn't necessarily reflect the true landings for wahoo. For example, the reported landings in Texas, for most years, show close to zero, but photos, and eyewitness accounts, result in much larger landings, and, based on interviews with fishers in past years, there would only be one to two vessels fishing for wahoo in the sanctuary during wahoo season, and now, in recent years, up to fifteen vessels for wahoo can be reported in the sanctuary at a single bank in one day during good-weather days.

Ultimately, I think a picture is worth a thousand words, and the wahoo in these photos are confirmed to be from the Flower Garden Banks within a two-month period earlier this year, and these photos are from one to two-day trips, resulting in many more wahoo than the reported data on the previous slide.

For example, in the large photo, the fourteen people with 109 wahoo in that photo equals about eight wahoo per person from a single trip, and, while this is an extreme example, based on the photos from the past two years alone, we can estimate approximately a hundred wahoo caught in the sanctuary, by roughly five boats, in just a single day.

The main conclusion from our wahoo working group is that the lack of wahoo management in the Gulf may leave this species vulnerable, when aggregations are targeted, and this may not be sustainable for future wahoo stocks, with a changing climate. It should be mentioned that an amazing acoustic telemetry project is currently underway at the Flower Garden Banks, in partnership with Texas A&M Galveston, Louisiana State University, and NOAA NCCOS, where several wahoo are being studied, and have been tagged for tracking, but we're still pretty data limited when it comes to wahoo.

After digesting all this information from our stakeholders, and from our advisory council working group, it appears that there may be a precedent for management of wahoo in the Gulf, and it's important to note, again, that the Gulf region is the only region without a management plan for wahoo, and both the Atlantic and the Caribbean plans -- Those details will be gone over in the next presentation.

I believe that the collective experience of the councils, and the Fisheries Service, in managing wahoo in other areas of the country has demonstrated a commitment for us to take a balanced approach to the long-term sustainability of this iconic species. I also believe that the council process, which is known and trusted by Gulf fishers, is a strong tool to act on this issue, along with the science and data provided by the National Marine Fisheries Service and us at the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, along with our academic partners. Next slide.

I don't think that was the next one. Maybe it got deleted, but I did have a slide at the end, but I will just talk through it, and so if we can just go back. I did have a slide that kind of outlined management for wahoo in two different ways, and so fishing in national marine sanctuaries are managed in two ways.

The first is the overwhelming majority of the sanctuary system is managed under existing fishery management actions implemented by the councils and the National Marine Fisheries Service under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation Act, which you all know this, and we have several instances in sanctuaries where the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries has approached a council to propose

taking action on an issue where it makes sense for that to happen.

For example, on the west coast, with the krill ban, they were able to work with the council, fishers, local stakeholders, and the Monterrey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, to come to a conclusion that benefitted everyone, and so there are times, however, when stakeholders come to us seeking action from NOAA on matters of fishing, as fishing within national marine sanctuaries can be regulated under our legislation, the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, under Section 304(a)(5), and, while fishing regulations under the sanctuaries act are not necessarily common, we do have a number of national marine sanctuaries where this has taken place.

In all cases, any time we consider taking action under the sanctuaries act, and propose new regulations, we come to the council first, before doing anything new, and so Section 304(a)(5) essentially provides the council the first right of refusal regarding any new fishing regulations in a sanctuary, and, in these cases, the council can choose to act, can defer to the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, or to do nothing, and so I think it's really important, just to make clear, that I am not here today under the 304(a)(5) process.

I am here principally to raise concerns from our shared stakeholders, and bring wahoo to your attention, and to gauge your interest in taking action on wahoo to meet your mission goals, as well as ours, and, essentially, and this is the important part, we have two pathways where we could act, where the council could implement a Gulf-wide management plan for wahoo, under your authorities, or NOAA could pursue regulations under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, which would be within sanctuary boundaries only.

In summary, again, I'm here on behalf of our shared stakeholders, who have concerns about increased fishing of wahoo as we move into an uncertain future, with more threats and pressures on these iconic fish, and so, instead of like what you see here in this picture, what our shared stakeholders have communicated to us is something more like what you see in the next picture on the next slide, is a management plan for wahoo that supports fishing efforts for future generations to enjoy, and so I think we're in this together, to ensure that wahoo are sustained in a changing Gulf ecosystem, and we want to work collaboratively, which is why I'm here today, as we look out for wahoo and the concerns of our stakeholders.

My last slide is, if you would like further information on the 304(a)(5) process, I can try my best to answer those questions

today, but I'm also happy to return to another council meeting, along with other colleagues within the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, who do this type of policy all the time, and walk through that with you, but we stand by ready to support any science and data needs that you have, with the hope of working together on this issue, and so thank you so much for your attention. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to you. Thanks so much.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for the presentation, Dr. Johnston. We have some questions. Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: Thank you. Great presentation, and I'm intrigued with the acoustic telemetry study you guys have going. Do you guys have buoys out there on these sanctuaries?

DR. JOHNSTON: Do we have buoys? Yes. We have mooring buoys at three of the banks, with plans to put in more deeper moorings. That will hopefully be happening later this year, in the expanded banks, but that's a lot more effect, that involves technical diving, deeper than what we can dive at the sanctuary, but those plans are in place.

MR. WALKER: The reason I ask is I wondered where your receivers are for the telemetry tags. Are they on the buoys, or are they on the bottom?

DR. JOHNSTON: The receivers are not on the buoys. Those have been placed throughout all of the banks. If you have more questions about that, the fine lady heading up that study is here, and that's Marissa Nuttall. I know, right now, they have a handful of wahoo tagged, satellite tags and acoustic tags, and Mike Dance, from LSU, is leading up that portion of the study.

MR. WALKER: I think that's fascinating. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Sweetman.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you for the presentation. It was interesting, and for bringing this to our attention, quite frankly. Just one point from the presentation, and there are no size limits, even in Florida, or the South Atlantic, and so I just wanted to kind of point that out there. There are bag limits, but there is no size limits, but my question for you is so I see that, you know, these seem to be targeted during the wintertime, and that seems to be consistent with what I see down in the Keys too, but I'm curious of any other seasonality. Like are these targeted year-round over there? I am particularly wondering relative to their spawning season in the summer, and do you have any information along those

lines, or is it just people are targeting them over the wintertime?

DR. JOHNSTON: Again, we're pretty data-limited, but, from our experience, they're targeted in the wintertime.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Schieble.

MR. SCHIEBLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Dr. Johnston, for your presentation. It was very informative. I don't really have a question, but I have a point of clarity, when it comes to the landings data that's in the presentation, and I sent the table to Bernie, if you could pull it up and put it on the screen, and it's just the LA Creel landings data for wahoo, and I wanted to kind of explain it a little bit better, because I think it illustrates a little different picture than the generalized landings.

In your presentation, the landings data you had is state-wide LA Creel landings data, in that graph, and it's not specific to regions of the state, where this table is, and so these are wahoo landings by year, divided out by our different basins, our sampling basins, and so CSA 3 equates to Coastal Study Area 3, which is the Barataria Basin, and so you can see that the bulk of our wahoo landings in Louisiana are coming from, most likely, Venice, Venice or Grand Isle, and not so far to the west, which would be CSA 7, and that would be the Cameron area, Lake Charles, and there happened to only be five of them in one year that came from there in our dockside sampling.

I just wanted people to realize, when they look at the data, it is -- It's regional, and the landings, obviously, are coming from different basins in our state, and not across the entire state, and I highly suspect that anglers are probably not running from Venice all the way to the Flower Gardens to land these fish, and these are probably coming off the mouth of the river, and so I just wanted to make that point of clarity, and, if you guys have any other questions, or you need some data from Louisiana, please send me an email, and we do email requests with LA Creel data.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Banks.

DR. BANKS: Dakus can also speak to this, but the Flower Gardens are actually a pretty far run from Texas, and it's --At least where you're pulling the Dolphin Docks picture, that's an anomaly for headboats there, and I'm not saying the picture is not a bad picture, but I'm just saying he's the anomaly for the fishery in Texas, and no other boats -- They would have to run up to Galveston, refuel, and then run back out, headboat-wise. Some of the charter

six-packs could probably make it to the Flower Gardens pretty regularly, with fuel bladders, but this boat here is the anomaly, and none of the rest of our -- None of the headboats could do that.

DR. JOHNSTON: I did mention that that was an extreme example, but, again, that did happen, and that really garnered a lot of attention, when that picture surfaced.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Geeslin.

MR. GEESLIN: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks, Dr. Johnston, for being here and highlighting the importance of wahoo. I certainly don't disagree that those pictures can be alarming, but I think you hit it in that last statement. We just don't know how frequent those type of trips are occurring, right, and we just simply don't know what we don't know.

A data-poor species, and I see our landings here, both in commercial and rec landings, and it's very little to no intercepts in given years, and the numbers -- The numbers I have here in our intercepts -- We simply don't see those intercepts, the number of wahoo, enough to have a reasonable confidence in the expansion of those fish, just because we don't see them all that often, and I see, to Chris's point in the Texas line there, in one year, you've got 500, and I'm just kind of curious where those expanded numbers came from.

DR. JOHNSTON: For the take? Is that what you're saying?

MR. GEESLIN: Yes. In that graph, if you will go back to the graph, we've got a red line there, and, in one year, it looks like, in 2019, and I do show some prior intercepts there in 2019, based on our creel landings, but those numbers -- I've got, you know, something substantially smaller, but, there in 2019, we've got almost -- A little over 500 for number of fish, and I'm just curious as to where those --

DR. JOHNSTON: This is the information that was available online to us when we searched for the data, and so I feel like I can't answer, and that's just what was available when we looked for data.

MR. GEESLIN: Understood, and, to Chris's offer, and I know you've been in contact with Hannah, in our staff, and we're happy to, you know, continue providing that data, and kind of, you know, qualify what we feel are reasonable expansions, or not, based on those creel intercepts and the frequency of those catches.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other questions? Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: This question is for Chris, and I was not paying as close attention as I was wanting to, but so, the numbers that you showed, were those actually just the intercepted fish, or were those extrapolated values?

MR. SCHIEBLE: Those are the actual dockside intercept numbers, and so that's numbers of fish, and I think the X-axis on that graph is also numbers of fish, but maybe they extrapolated it with effort, and I don't know where that came from, and that's not our graph.

DR. FRAZER: Thanks. I was just trying to figure out where the inconsistency came from.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. I'm not seeing any other hands. Thank you, Dr. Johnston. We have one more from Dr. Walter.

DR. WALTER: Thanks for this, and I just wanted to point out that, at least from the perspective of other regions, like the South Atlantic, and particularly wahoo is a concern of the South Atlantic Council, as well as dolphin is, and the South Atlantic Council has a dolphin management strategy evaluation that they're embarking upon.

It's something that I think maybe this council can pay attention to, as that process might play out in the future, with regard to how these really challenging species to provide quantitative stock assessment advice might -- How we might be able to provide advice for them, but I think it's definitely something that is -- It's going to take a little while to be able to provide quantitative advice on what sustainable catch levels are. Thanks.

DR. JOHNSTON: All right. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Next, we have a presentation titled "Overview of Regulatory Options for Management of Wahoo", Tab A, Number 10, and that will be given by Dr. Jack McGovern. Jack, welcome.

OVERVIEW OF REGULATORY OPTIONS FOR MANAGEMENT OF WAHOO

DR. JACK MCGOVERN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a brief presentation that is a follow-on to what Dr. Johnston just presented. This presentation has an overview of the life history, a short overview of the life history, some information on management of wahoo in the Atlantic and the U.S. Caribbean, and it goes over management options for wahoo.

Wahoo is a member of the family Scombridae, and this is the same family that includes king mackerel and Spanish mackerel. They're found in tropical and subtropical waters throughout the world, and they do enter temperate waters seasonally, and there is -- We've found several genetic studies of wahoo, and it looks like there is probably one genetic stock in the Atlantic, Gulf, and the Caribbean.

The stock is unassessed, and my opinion is that probably an assessment is difficult for wahoo. This is a species that is very pelagic, and it moves great distances in a short period of time, and tagging data indicates that it can move thousands of miles in a short period of time, in months, and is probably caught by other countries, and so it might be that it's hard to assess.

It's a very fast-growing species, and it attains sizes as great as eight feet, and 158 pounds, and I think most of the Atlantic wahoo are between three and five feet. It's a very short-lived species, and it only lives for five or six years. It spawns at young ages, at age-one, around three feet, for males and females, and it spawns during the summertime, and it spawns multiple times during the summertime.

It's mostly a solitary species, but, as Dr. Johnston indicated, it does aggregate in productive feeding areas, and cues for aggregations are physical structure of the bottom, water temperature breaks, and bait.

These are landings of wahoo, in pounds whole weight, that were assembled by Dr. Mike Larkin, and he's online, if you have questions about the landings. The recreational landings are from MRIP-FES, LA Creel, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and they also include headboat landings, and it shows that most of the landings were from the west coast of Florida. The landings are variable, and Mike told me that the MRIP-FES data do have high PSEs, and the commercial landings are small, and they're dominated by landings from the west coast of Florida as well. The cells that are highlighted in yellow are confidential data.

Wahoo is managed along the east coast of the United States right now, from east Florida to New York, through the Dolphin Wahoo FMP. This FMP was developed by the South Atlantic Council, the Mid-Atlantic Council, and the New England Council, and it was approved in 2003, and implemented in 2004, and it originally did include the Gulf of Mexico and the U.S. Caribbean, but they were dropped out of it for concerns that additional analysis would be needed for bycatch at the time.

Currently, there are ACLs and AMs in place for wahoo. The FMP considered a size limit for wahoo, but the council elected not to approve one. There is a two-fish-per-person bag limit in place, and a trip limit in place for wahoo, and these regulations have been in place since 2004. A note there that the Florida is the only Gulf state with a two-fish bag limit, and that's likely because Florida adopted the regulations when the Dolphin Wahoo FMP was implemented.

In the Caribbean, wahoo is new to management there. The Caribbean Council recently went from four species-based FMPs to three island-based FMPs for each of Puerto Rico, St. Croix, and St. Thomas/St. John, and, when they did that, that added wahoo to each of those FMPs and put ACLs and AMs in place. Recently, in April, the council approved amendments to these three FMPs that would specify minimum size limits for wahoo, and bag and vessel limits for wahoo, and that's undergoing rulemaking now, and it was approved in April.

These are some options for management, and Dr. Johnston talked about this some, and so some things that could be done is a new FMP could be created for a Gulf stock of wahoo by the Gulf Council, or the Gulf stock could be added to an existing FMP, or the South Atlantic could amend their Dolphin Wahoo FMP to redefine the geographic scope of wahoo, to include the Gulf. The sanctuary could put in regulations within their sanctuary, and there could be a combination too.

I think the FMP -- To do that, it's going to take time. It's going to take, you know, two to three years to do that, with options papers, scoping, public hearings, and that sort of thing, and so, if the regulations can be put into place more quickly in the sanctuary, and the sanctuary could put in regulations, and then the council could follow-up with an FMP, and, also, the states could put in regulations, but, if wahoo is added to an FMP, or created an FMP, then we need to determine if wahoo is in need of conservation and management, based on regulations at 600.305.

These are the list of factors, the non-exhaustive list of factors, that need to be considered when determining if a species is in need of conservation and management, and I won't go over all of these, because the council recently did go through all these, when considering whether wenchman was in need of conservation and management.

The next slide is my last slide, and these are just options that the council could consider for next steps. They could ask staff to gather more information and report back to the council about

wahoo at a future meeting. They could direct staff to consider if there is a Gulf stock in need of conservation and management. They could write a letter to the South Atlantic Council to consider redefining wahoo management to include the Gulf, or write a letter to the sanctuary and ask them to pursue regulations under the National Marine Sanctuary Act.

They could request the sanctuary to pursue regulations and also consider management of wahoo under an FMP. They could write a letter to the states, requesting they put in regulations for wahoo, and also the last option could be just to thank the sanctuary for the presentation and indicate that you do not wish to take action at this time, and so that's my final slide, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you. Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Jack. That was very helpful for me, because I know next to nothing about wahoo. You mentioned that there is AMs in place in both the Atlantic and the Caribbean, and I didn't see them on there, and could you -- One, what are they, and, two, are they the same for both?

DR. MCGOVERN: So the answer is, in the South Atlantic, it's an in-season closure if the ACL is met, and I believe that's the same for the recreational. I would have to go back and look at the Caribbean, and determine what that is, and I don't recall that offhand. Andy may remember. He says that he doesn't.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I have Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: How would you set an OFL on such a data-poor species?

DR. MCGOVERN: I'm having problems hearing you.

MR. WALKER: I'm sorry. How would you set an OFL, an ACL, on such a data-poor species? I mean, looking at just the data we have here on Gulf wahoo, and the Texas landings, for the year, are less than there was on the deck of that one boat, and so I -- I have heard a lot of support for, you know, a reasonable two-fish limit, but most of the people I've spoken with are very concerned about placing a cap, which you have to do, under an FMP, and so how would you set such a limit?

DR. MCGOVERN: So there are a data-limited species that have ABCs and OFLs, and they're set based on historical landings, and the SSC would be involved in doing that, but we have lots of data-limited species in the Gulf, and the South Atlantic and Caribbean, that have those parameters.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. I have Mr. Geeslin, followed by Ms. Boggs.

MR. GEESLIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Jack, one, it's good to see you up and behind the podium. We haven't had this pleasure in a while. If we will go back to that landings slide, real quick, and I've got a couple of questions there, and I believe it's Slide 3. Bernie, if you could go back to Slide 3, please. There we go.

C.J., I believe you -- I heard you indicate that Florida does have a bag limit, and that is two? Okay. Just looking at these landings, and I do -- I'm not going to get into it now, but I do have questions about how these recreational landings data were extrapolated or not, and I won't get into that right now, and so we've got a bag limit of two in Florida, and we're seeing some pretty high landings in Alabama, and Louisiana, and it looks like Louisiana and Texas definitely have some, you know, lower landings than Florida, and we're talking about the Flower Garden Banks here in Texas, with, you know, at the highest, we had 2019 landings of 15,000 pounds. All the other -- If I'm looking across the columns, I'm seeing a lot higher landings in areas in different states where the Flower Gardens don't extend.

DR. MCGOVERN: So what is the question?

MR. GEESLIN: Maybe just an observation, Jack.

DR. MCGOVERN: Okay.

MR. GEESLIN: Maybe just an observation that we're focused on the Flower Gardens today, yet we're seeing landings, across the Gulf, that pale in comparison to those Texas landings.

DR. MCGOVERN: Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, looking at the rec landings too, in 2020, for Alabama, it seems extremely high, and I think I've seen maybe five wahoo come to the dock in the last ten years, I mean, and I used to fish a lot, and I will say this was probably 2004, or 2005, when I was fishing more so on the overnights, and we would catch six, eight, ten, twelve wahoo a trip, and now, like I said, we're not seeing the wahoo coming to the dock, and so, I mean, I don't know. I would like to throw a motion out there, if I may, and tell me when you're ready.

To direct the council staff to consider if there is a Gulf stock of wahoo in need of conservation and management. If I get a second, I'll give a little explanation.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a motion on the board. Is there a second to the motion?

DR. SWEETMAN: I will second it for discussion.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: It's seconded for discussion.

DR. SWEETMAN: So the words "a Gulf stock" there, I think we need to be a little cautious, just with setting those boundaries there, because it's thought to be one genetic stock between the South Atlantic, the Gulf, and the Caribbean, and so I just wanted to point that out, Susan.

MS. BOGGS: Well, maybe we just say if there is a -- Consider if there is a -- If there is wahoo in the Gulf of Mexico in need of conservation and management?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Susan, dan you restate that.

MS. BOGGS: Yes, sir. **If there is a wahoo in the Gulf of Mexico -- If wahoo in the Gulf of Mexico is in need of management and -- Conservation and management. To consider if wahoo -- Take out "there are". To consider if wahoo -- Take out "are" -- If wahoo in the Gulf of Mexico are in need, and so take out "stock of wahoo".** There you go.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Is that your motion, Susan?

MS. BOGGS: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: C.J., do you still agree? Okay. All right. So we have a motion on the board. I don't want to leave Jack standing at the podium for much longer. You might have to come back, Jack. Sorry about that. All right, and so we have a motion on the board. Is there any discussion on the motion? Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: A few comments, and some are related to the motion and some aren't. Just to be clear, staff will evaluate this, and it's ultimately the council that needs to, obviously, make that determination. With regard to the landings, there was a lot said about the landings, and I pulled up the MRIP data query, and, for those that can see my screen, it's all red, which means the PSEs are above 50 percent, right, and so a lot of uncertainty in the landings data.

It's absolutely no surprise that Texas landings are much lower. They're usually an order of magnitude lower than the rest of the Gulf, typically, with our other species, right, and so I don't think that's a good metric as well to evaluate whether landings are high or low, based on the state data.

I think we can all -- I would hope we would all agree that fishing on an aggregation of fish is not something we really would want to support, from a conservation and management perspective, and so whether the council ultimately manages the wahoo, or the sanctuary puts in regulations, to me, I think it's something that we really want to think about going forward, in terms of protecting aggregations of fish, and the mechanism for doing that is still to be determined.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: So I understand, Andy, what you're saying, but I don't think, right here, right now, we can sit here and go through these ten conservation and management questions, and so that was kind of to direct staff to kind of go through this, and bring it back to us, like we did with tripletail and African pompano, but it's just we've got to get started somewhere.

I have said, for many, many years, and not just wahoo, but -- I'm not going to go there today, but dolphin, and dolphinfish, I mean, also needs to be considered, because I've talked to several tournaments in our area, and across the Gulf, and a lot of them aren't even getting a weighable fish for their tournaments, and that's been going on for many, many years, and I talked to one of the tournament directors, and he said that absolutely we need to look at some type of conservation and management efforts, and so that's why I'm bringing the motion today. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker and then Mr. Gill.

MR. WALKER: I will speak in favor of the motion, just because I think we need to look at it a little deeper, to see if there is a problem. Like I mentioned before, I have concerns about, you know, the need to set a cap, and I think that leads to a concern that we might end up having to close wahoo, if we put such a cap on it, with such limited data, and so I support the motion.

Also, to Mr. Strelcheck's discussion on, you know, protecting fish where they aggregate, I would say, as a fisherman, that's -- We kind of look for places where there's a lot of fish, and so I'm going to disagree that any place the fish get together that we

should protect them from the fishermen, and that's kind of our job entirely. A reasonable bag limit, yes, but kicking the fishermen out, just because there's a bunch of fish there, I don't support.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't think that it needs to be part of the motion, but I think it's implicit, or at least it is to me, that this assumes that, as part of what comes back to the council, it will be some, if you will, the first of what Jack was saying, which is more information, and that would help define the issue, the species, and the characteristics, et cetera, to help with the evaluation of the conservation and management needs.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I think that's the intent of the motion, is to do that thing, is to gather the information for the council to kind of make that determination. Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just back in response to Ed, so my comments aren't misunderstood, right, and I'm not suggesting necessarily closed areas to protect the spawning aggregations, but I'm just suggesting that it is, to me, not a good thing to be pounding a stock of fish, when they're aggregating, over and over, without some sort of regulations to help limit that harvest.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Frazer and then Mr. Schieble.

DR. FRAZER: I think I'm going to be in support of the motion. I'm pretty sensitive to the fact that we've, you know, increasingly posed a number of regulations on these fisheries, and, you know, I don't want to unnecessarily do that again, right, but I also recognize that, you know, there is lots of times, and we hear, in public testimony, where people bring concerns to the council, and we get criticized for not being responsive, and this is really a first step in saying, okay, we acknowledge that there is a concern here, and let's at least start the process of looking at it. I think that's a better look for the council, moving forward.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Schieble.

MR. SCHIEBLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with Dr. Frazer, and I also -- I agree with this motion, and I think it's just to look at this, and get some more landings data, and get a better handle on this. I mean, we kind of went through the same exercise with wenchman, and, in the end, we found that it was a localized depletion that was no longer in place, right, but this may lead to where we have sanctuary regulations, as opposed to Gulf-wide, or it may be where we end up with Gulf-wide, but we won't know unless

we do the exercise, right, and so, at this step, I support it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Froeschke.

DR. JOHN FROESCHKE: Just a question, so I understand for the -- In Jack's presentation, about the states putting in regulations, and, since the Flower Gardens seems like it spans both Texas and Louisiana, if one state put in a regulation, but not the other, then it's possible that there would be different regulations throughout the sanctuary, and is that correct?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: It will be a possession, and so it would --

DR. FROESCHKE: I guess we would just -- I was thinking about the conversation where an ACL might be pretty difficult to determine, because of the data, but the states could put in a bag limit, for example, without an ACL, but, once they did, or one had a two and a four, and you're kind of split, and it seems like it would require cooperation.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Broussard.

MR. BROUSSARD: C.J., could you say -- How did Florida come to the two-fish limit?

DR. SWEETMAN: To that point, so it was -- Jack was right there, and that was relative to when the South Atlantic FMP for dolphin wahoo was being initiated there, considering that clearly, even in the landings, you can see that, yes, we catch wahoo off the west coast of Florida there, and so it was just an implementation for what was going on in the South Atlantic, and we extended those regulations throughout the entire state.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other conversation, or discussion, related to the motion? **Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** All right. Is there any other questions related to the presentation that Dr. McGovern had given? Is there any other comments on the issue, or the topic, of wahoo?

All right. Seeing none, we'll move on then to our committee reports. Yesterday, we completed the Administrative/Budget, and so that will take us into our next committee report, and that's Data Collection, Tab F, and Ms. Boggs.

COMMITTEE REPORTS (CONTINUED)
DATA COLLECTION COMMITTEE REPORT

MS. BOGGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Data Collection Committee

met on June 24, 2024, and the committee adopted the agenda, Tab F, Number 1, and approved the minutes, Tab F, Number 2, of the April 2024 meeting.

Discussion on For-Hire Data Collection Program, Tab F, Numbers 4(a) through (c), Discussion of the Draft Document, council staff reviewed the latest version of the amendment, highlighting recent additions to the introduction and management measures. The committee requested staff select appropriate terminology and retain that consistent wording when referencing the headboat and charter components of the for-hire sector throughout the document, including the purpose and need.

Specific to the need statement, the committee provided recommended language to be incorporated in the next revision of the document. **The committee recommends, and I so move, the need for this action is to improve management and monitoring of the federally-permitted for-hire and headboat component of the recreational sector of Gulf reef fish and CMP fisheries to prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continual basis, the optimal yield.**

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. We have a committee motion. Is there any discussion on the motion? **Seeing none, is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.**

MS. BOGGS: Mr. Chair, I would like to pause there, and I had wanted to try to maybe, just to move the document along, pick preferreds for those couple of actions, but, if we're going to be amending the language -- Okay, and I was asking that more of a question. Okay. So we'll move forward.

Council and Southeast Science Center (SEFSC) staff provided an overview of Action 4, which considers methods for collecting economic data within the program. In Action 4, options under Alternative 3 were developed, discussed, and reviewed by a subset of the Interdisciplinary Planning Team (IPT) with expertise in survey design related to collection of fisheries economic data. Staff reminded the committee that, as proportion of for-hire trips sampled increases, the uncertainty about the estimates decreases.

A committee member inquired if a minimum percentage of sampled trips could be identified and implemented. SEFSC staff answered that minimum value was variable, depending on research objectives. For example, since most for-hire vessels in the Gulf target red snapper during the season, a relatively lower percentage of sampling would be warranted. However, if the council was interested in economic estimates on a less targeted species, such as gray triggerfish, a relatively larger sample size would be

needed to generate those estimates with a comparable level of confidence.

SEFSC staff stated that, for most purposes, a sampling of up to 20 percent would suffice for most management objectives, but reiterated that more rarely-targeted species would likely suffer from the less precise economic information. Southeast Regional Office (SERO) staff cautioned against considering levels of sampling within the document and stressed the importance of flexibility to the SEFSC when developing survey approaches.

A committee member advised avoiding past pitfalls from the previous for-hire data collection program. He continued that many program participants expressed frustration with being asked financial questions when they were not aware those data were going to be collected when the original program was developed.

Several committee members expressed the desire to keep the program simple for the participants, while also collecting the level of data required to meet management needs, understanding that rarely-targeted species may continue to be data-limited.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Susan, hold on. Excuse me. Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just wanted to pause, and I don't know, Lisa, if you could just maybe share a little bit, and I know that you and Rich, on my team, kind of met and discussed kind of the next steps for the document, but I just wanted to make sure there's kind of clarity, in terms of how we're proceeding with future council meetings and the actions and alternatives.

DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD: Sure thing, and so, yes, we've had a little bit of discussion. What I was thinking, perhaps for the next version of the document, is it seems like at least the skeletal elements for some of the economic action had been laid out, certainly, but those questions will be asked, which was omitted from the first version, and so now it's in there, and so thinking a little bit about perhaps another action that would speak to a little bit of the effort validation is something that I think the IPT could sit down and come up with and bring something at a future meeting.

Depending on how that goes, I'm not sure if that would be the August meeting or the November meeting. I have some ideas, certainly, but I would want to run those by the IPT. I think we've gotten some other information from some IPT members, and so I think Rich and I -- The plan is to sit down, look through all of those, and then develop what we would want to do for that IPT meeting,

and see if we can't get an action looking at some of that information.

In my mind, it would be helpful, at least for an inflection point of the council, to make some decision, in terms of effort validation, whether it would be an electronic approach, mechanism, some sort of hardware affixed to a boat, or if there would be some other levels of something else, like did-not-fish reports, trip declarations, something about calling in when you're coming into your port, what time you might be there, such that an intercept is more likely to happen, to get a validation, something like that, that wouldn't require an affixed electronic piece of equipment.

If that is something that is feasible, that people feel like stakeholders would be willing to do, as well as get the information that, you know, we need to move forward with management and stock assessments, and, if that's possible, I think that that would be an interesting decision point for the council to make, in terms of moving forward, and then I think the IPT would have better clarity and would be a lot clearer to move through after that. That was my initial thoughts, after kind of sitting down and talking, but certainly we would want to take that to the IPT and get their feedback.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thank you for that, and, you know, I am really supportive of providing the IPT with some flexibility here, as you kind of work through -- Whether it's consolidating and reorganizing some of the actions and alternatives, but I do agree that it's important that we include new actions and alternatives, for that validation component in particular.

You know, listening to public testimony, there's not a lot of sentiment supporting VMS, right, but I did hear a little bit of support for the idea of like a geofence, and so I feel like that's a reasonable thing to at least consider right now, and I would hate to take that off the table, and so I'm just going to lean in and say that's something that I would be interested in, obviously, at least taking a look at, but the other things that you mentioned, like no-fishing reports, and declarations, and hail-ins, to me, should also be included, obviously, as validation components for consideration.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I have two hands up. Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: I agree with Mr. Strelcheck. I think -- I don't think we're at a place where we can actually select which of those technical options, because we don't really know which one is going to work, but I'm fairly certain that we can scratch VMS off the

list, if it will make it a little smaller, and some of the others we definitely would like a little more information on.

You know, I know that, myself, some kind of a geofence that would work from a phone would be the best solution, the most favorable, the easiest sell, but I don't even know if that technology is there yet, and so it's hard to say that's what I want, if I don't even know it's there, and so we could perhaps look into tightening up the feasibility of those measures.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Froeschke, followed by Ms. Boggs.

DR. FROESCHKE: I'm just trying to think, in my head, what we would discuss at the IPT meeting, and it seems like exactly those things that get conflated, and so I will give you two examples here. In terms of what we've discussed in the IPT, a geofence and the VMS are the same, for all intents and purposes, because that device has to be on, tracking position all the time, and then it just -- The filtering would occur on what information is transmitted, but that still has to be on, and so, for all intents and purposes, that is a VMS.

In my view, if you don't want a VMS, then a geofence is not an option, and that's not my saying that, and I'm just trying to structure the discussion so that we can move forward.

The other thing that was discussed in the presentation was this idea of the passive versus active validation, meaning do you hit a button when you turn stuff on, and, you know, the guidance in there was that the active, you know, where you have to do something, is not a best practice, and so, you know, those are the things that we would distill this into, and so, if you say, yes, it needs to be passive, or it needs to not be, that would be helpful to us, because I don't see how we could do a geofence in an app kind of a thing that fits in there.

Maybe that technology is there, and we're happy to look into it, but I don't know what we would do to develop the action, and so that's -- You know, I guess the guidance that I would like is, yes, I could see that we would develop an option for a hail-in and hail-out, or hail-out and hail-in, kind of thing, with dockside validation. Do you want us to explore something technology, like in addition to that bigger consideration, or not?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: So, to me, when we started talking about this, I don't think that I understood that a geofence meant that you still had

to be tracked the whole time, and so that brings us back a few steps, in my mind, and apparently there is no way around that, right, under the rules here, and so, yes, I believe we'll have to look elsewhere, because, like you said, that's a VMS, and that's what people didn't want, and that's what lost the lawsuit, is fulltime tracking, but it's definitely something we should continue to discussing.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. I have a few folks. Ms. Boggs, followed by Dr. Sweetman, and then Dr. Frazer.

MS. BOGGS: So I'm going to address the VMS and geofencing issue, and that's not what I wanted to comment about, but, I mean, if you take a cellphone on a boat -- My understanding is that now, if you take a picture on a boat while you're out there, it locks in your GPS location, and so, I mean, I don't understand.

I'm having a hard time grasping why this is so complicated, because you're tracked everywhere you go. If you've got one of these, you're being tracked, and so I don't understand why this is such a big deal.

That being said, is there any compromise, I suppose, to at least to get this ball rolling, and to have some kind of a declaration, a no-fishing report, which is what we did before, and if there's any way to take some of the funding that hasn't been used, that's sitting aside, to help beef-up dockside intercepts, but some kind of compromise that can push this along?

The agency -- Would the agency be willing to compromise, to do some kind of I guess soft rollout of a data collection system program, as we work out this VMS and non-VMS issue? I don't like doing things like that, and I don't like parsing things up, but it's very important, for the charter fleet as a whole, to have some kind of a data collection system.

My other question is, as far as with the software, if the software can help us in any way, what can we do with Bluefin and eTRIPS, that would help maybe move this along? Do they have any way of helping us with this, and how would it channel down into the agency, where we could, again, get -- I'm looking, and I'm trying to think outside the box, and what are some of our options, Andy?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Sorry. Mara and I were having a huddle there. I mean, I have thought about the idea of separating out the electronic component of the monitoring, or validation, from this

amendment, right, and just trying to proceed forward with getting a logbook program stood up, and then, if we could come up with that, you know, new approach, that's going to be even a further improvement, in terms of helping with validation, we could do that in some sort of separate action.

What Mara and I were talking about was with the lawsuit, right, and so there is two key components, right, and we would have to explain why VMS, or some other mechanism for validation, is needed, right, and so essentially we lost on the account that we didn't do an adequate job of explaining the need, and then, also, addressing privacy considerations, and so I think, with the idea of a geofence, and I appreciate the comments that John made about VMS, right, but the thought there is that we're trying to avoid the twenty-four-seven tracking, right, the privacy considerations, while ultimately getting us information on did a trip occur, or didn't it occur, and, if it occurred, right, then we have a yes, and we can know that then we're going to have a logbook that needs to be submitted, and we can follow-up if a logbook is not submitted, right, but how we actually figure out kind of that trigger, and the technology, is still, to me, the difficulty, and, whether that requires a VMS or something else, I think we need to continue to explore some technological solutions.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: To that point, Ms. Boggs?

MS. BOGGS: Well, I mean, we kind of did this with SEFHIER, and, I mean, it was in the document about the VMS, but we did roll it out independently. We started with the data collection portion of it, and then we moved into the VMS, and so I guess I kind of see this as the same way, but something else I wanted to touch on is the economic data. Is the agency -- Is 20 percent going to be something that you all can live with, because it sounded like some consensus yesterday, or do we do it on a random basis for sampling?

MR. STRELCHECK: I think the document says up to 20 percent, right, and, from what I've heard from our economists, that would be sufficient. My bigger concern, right, and this is also, you know, going back to the technological solution, is, by doing some sort of subsampling of the fleet, whether it's a portion of the vessels or a portion of the trips, in taking it outside of the electronic logbook program, you have now increased the administrative burden on the agency.

We're going to have to come up with a new tool to collect that data, and someone is going to have to administer it, and so there's going to be costs then to the agency that need to be considered, and factored into this amendment, and, if we can come up with some

technological solutions that reduce that burden, that, to me, is the key, because we're not getting lots of additional resources and funding right now. It just -- It's going to add to, obviously, the burden on staff, and others, in order to even go out and collect that data.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Well, I may be making a request to add more burden on the staff. It sounds like, because now we're in this conundrum again, and I may be overstepping, and it may be wrong, but I'm wondering if we need to get our data collection ad hoc back together, and I think our Data Collection AP together, because that's more minds in a room, having a conversation, or doing some kind of outreach, because we can't keep having this conversation for the next year. We need to come down to some resolutions, and we need to get some ideas.

You know, June is a terrible time to try to get fishermen to stand at that podium, to give you input, and now you're saying you probably won't see the document in August, and it's going to be November, and I can see, in June of next year, we're going to still be talking about this, and I'm going to be on that side of the table screaming and yelling at everybody, and so we need to do something, and so, if it's getting those AP and ad hoc together, and getting the minds at NMFS and everyone in the room, that's what we need to do. We need to get this thing moving.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Okay. I have Dr. Sweetman, followed by Dr. Frazer and Captain Walker.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and so, kind of going back to some of the things that John was talking about there, I mean, from my perspective, I mean, at a bare minimum, you know, we need -- I don't think we want to go in the direction of having too little validation, where the data is not actually useable, and so I think there's kind of a line that, maybe at least me personally, is not willing to cross, as it relates to going with too little validation, and so, at a bare minimum -- I think, in Dr. Masse's presentation, that medium-level there was the no-fish reports, the increased dockside intercepts, and a hail-in and hail-out.

I appreciate what Andy was highlighting relative to the lawsuit, as it relates to VMS, or geofencing, however you want to describe it, if it's essentially the same thing, but adequately describing what the need is here -- Like I'm not saying -- Like I understand the concerns about twenty-four-hour tracking, and maybe there's something we can do there, where it's not constantly twenty-four

hours, or something that's a little bit more palatable to the general public, where they fear that their privacy is being, you know, impinged upon there.

I don't want to completely rule that out, because it is a very valuable tool, as it relates to this validation for everything we're trying to accomplish here, and actually get usable data, but maybe we would just need to dive into that a little bit more further, with adequately explaining the need, and then trying to figure out kind of what that sweet spot is there, relative to the amount of tracking that actually occurs, and that was just my thought there.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Frazer, hold on a second. Andy had raised his hand after Susan concluded her comments earlier. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, like Susan was indicating, right, I don't -- We've been working on this for a while, and I would love to, obviously, continue to make progress on this, and, you know, I would leave it up to the IPT, and maybe not bring back a full document, but is there some pieces of this conversation that you would want to bring back in August, like the action and alternative for the validation, and further discussion around the technology, so we can make a decision of are we going to keep the technology in, or are we going to take it out, and is there an opportunity that maybe we do some pilot testing with some of the fishers, and try to build buy-in, and support, and that could be a follow-on amendment.

I think there is some opportunity there, where maybe we can make some progress in August, but not have the IPT bring us back the full document, but we want to leave it with the IPT to help, obviously, determine if that's timely.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Okay, and so I just was going to follow-up with C.J. with regard to the technology, and it kind of relates to what Andy said too, and, you know, we heard, in public testimony, from Mike Colby, obviously, that Woods Hole is developing a phone app that was capable of doing the geofencing, right, and I'm pretty confident that the technology actually exists, although people are not sure if it does or not, but I'm also fairly confident that, with proper programming and coding, right, that you could protect the privacy.

I would like to see, moving forward, perhaps if the IPT just brings back some discussion about that technological capability, right,

so people can feel a little more comfortable with what those options are.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Captain Walker, then followed by Ms. Boggs.

MR. WALKER: So clearly we're hung up on the technology part, but I agree with Andy that we should try not to let that hold the whole program up, and so, if we could pause that, and let the IPT work on the technology part, because we really can't make any decisions on that without understanding what the technology is.

What we could do is prioritize, or make a list, of the things that we need from the technology, so you could find it better, and I'm not sure that I have all of those clearly -- Not fulltime tracking would be one, and satisfy the hail-in and hail-out, or the geofence line, or whatever that is, and, you know, others are welcome to chime-in here, but, if we prioritize what's acceptable, and what is not, and hand you that list, it might make it easier for the IPT to find the options that we could consider.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: I think, on one hand, the IPT has a pretty good idea of what you all might want. What would be more helpful for us is a list of things that you absolutely cannot accept, and so, in the management, it's like you have the bottom, where it's like we don't know where we want to be exactly, as far as the goal, but we know we don't want to be over here, and so, to the extent that you can tell us that we don't want that, hard stop, that would be helpful, because, I mean, that's one of the things that I know we'll talk about at the IPT level, is all of these technologies -- I mean, tracking is tracking, and you're either being tracked or you're not, and so I'm not sure how we would get around that, and we're happy to explore the technology, to see what options there are, but, I mean, on a base level, that seems like that's going to be a cut.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: To that point, Captain Walker?

MR. WALKER: So maybe, and I think what we're looking at here is something in between you're either being tracked and you're not. We're looking for you're being tracked to the line, or you're being tracked to the extent that will satisfy the need here, but not all the time, and I don't know what that is, but I think that's what we're looking for, but I also think that we should continue this.

I don't think that we should convene an AP and stuff, because that

takes a long time, and, you know, an AP of charter boat guys isn't going to know the technology, or, well, they might, but technologically speaking, that's something that you kind of have to dig into, and not just an idea from a group of fishermen, I think, and so I think we should keep moving, and I think convening APs would slow the process down, but I think we need to work on that and continue progress on the rest of what we're working on in the SEFHIER.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: So I've got a lot of things going on, but the main thing that I wanted to talk about, to touch on, is what Dr. Sweetman said, and that is the too little evaluation. If you don't have enough data, then you might as well just stop on the document, and not even move forward, because what we put together is something that's not going to satisfy what we can get output from that will help the fishery, and there's no need in going down this road.

If we start dicing it up, and basically we just want to report the fishing, and they say that's not enough, then -- Because there was a pilot study in the Gulf of Mexico, many years ago, and everybody was onboard that we're going to do this, and it resulted in absolutely nothing, and the fishermen were mad, and, if you want to get them mad, don't worry about the VMS. Do something and then not get any output from it.

So there's going to have to be some give-and-take, and I understand what you said, Dr. Froeschke, about, you know, what do you absolutely not want, and, well, they absolutely don't want economic data collection, and they absolutely don't want VMS tracking, and so then what do we have? We have nothing.

So there's going to have to be some compromise, and I think the agency has compromised on this 20 percent for the economic collection of data, but now we're back in this VMS, and everybody doesn't want to be tracked, and they don't want to give us this information, and so you either do or you don't. You can't be in halfway, because, if you're in halfway, then we have nothing at the end result.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I have Dr. Walter, followed by Mr. Strelcheck.

DR. WALTER: Just it seemed like the public comment gave a couple of good ideas, and I think it would just say that, for the IPT, make sure you're looking at some of those ideas that were provided by a number of people, like Mike Colby, and Dylan gave some ideas, and I think Scott also, as well as a number of other ones, and I

think the idea of like a Sunpass, or a fast toll, where it seemed like that was one of those things that might have some acceptability, where you go through somewhere, and you're not tracked all the time, but you're just tracked when you go through that pass, or wherever you are on your way out, and, if that was something that could be technologically feasible, and maybe done with your phone, so that you go past something, and it just pings back that, you know, we just left that inlet, and then you come back in, and you're back in the inlet, but it doesn't provide any other information, and that seems, John, from what I am condensing the palatability, that might be something that would be palatable. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: So this has been a great discussion. I didn't expect it to last this long, and so we're not going to solve this today, right, but I think this has been informative, and helpful, and, you know, what I guess I'm taking away is that it will be good for council staff and my team to sit down and kind of talk about some of these technological ideas.

I like how Ed approached it, in terms of kind of what we want or don't want out of that, and I keep hearing, right, the agency compromising, right, and this isn't -- This is a collective decision around this table. Yes, we have to approve the rulemaking, and we have to deal with the legal decision, and make sure the record is adequate, but, at the end of the day, what we really need to be focusing on is does this achieve what we're trying to achieve with the purpose and need with this action, and is it improving the data for the charter-for-hire community, and will it help us better manage the fisheries.

The last thing that I want to do is stand up a program and not be able to use the data, or find out after the fact that the data is not usable, and then I think the main thing, the difference, and what we've learned since the previous program, is how we need to build some trust with the industry, right, and so there is certainly some in the industry that are supportive of VMS, and even providing the economic questions or not, right, and so how do we look at solutions to that, that are going to build that trust, and still accomplish the goals and objectives that we have, and so there's work to be done, but I think, you know, at this point, unless people have other thoughts, I think we can proceed with some additional ideas and come back to the council either in August or November.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for the comments, Andy. With that,

we'll go ahead, Ms. Boggs, and if you can continue on with the committee report.

MS. BOGGS: Discussion of Highly Migratory Species Economic Data Collection, the Office of Atlantic HMS is also developing an electronic reporting program for their fisheries and are similarly considering alternatives for collecting economic information. One-stop reporting has been suggested as an approach to avoid duplicative reporting for stakeholders that own federal permits across multiple fisheries.

When developing data collection programs across regions simultaneously, there is a question of what would happen should different sampling approaches be selected. Dr. Banks reported that, during the most recent HMS Advisory Panel (AP), it was also unclear how a potential conflict would be resolved. The HMS AP is scheduled to meet again in September, and the topic of electronic reporting will be discussed. Council staff indicated that HMS staff do participate on the for-hire data collection IPT, and so HMS is aware of how the council's program is being developed.

Presentation on Options for Effort Validation, SERO staff provided a presentation outlining potential effort validation methods for reducing the uncertainty for quantifying nonreporting. A few committee members emphasized the need for trip validation in a Gulf program. They reminded the committee that the South Atlantic does not have this component in their program, and this omission contributes to the determination that the program is not appropriate to inform management or stock assessments.

A committee member advocated for the removal of Automatic Identification System (AIS) as a potential validation method, since that information is publicly available. Another committee member reiterated the sentiment, from earlier discussions on collection of economic data, that effort validation approaches should be as agreeable to participants as practicable, while reducing uncertainty in estimations of effort.

Discussion of NOAA Fisheries Guidance on MRIP-FES Transition Document, Tab F, Number 5, staff from NOAA Office of Science and Technology (OST) indicated that the year-long study examining question order and timeframe on the effort mail survey was ongoing. To date, the side-by-side surveys were being returned at a similar rate, and the surveys had been completed through Waves 1 and 2. OST staff indicated that it was premature to report out those results, with only two waves of data received.

Update on Status of the Commercial ELB Document, SEFSC staff

reported that implementation of commercial electronic reporting was still pending until the permits database is fixed. The SEFSC is looking to solicit a group for voluntary reporting sometime in late 2024, with the goal of required reporting by mid-year 2025.

SEFSC staff indicated that a list of potential volunteers had been created, based on past participation in voluntary programs, but stated that, if anyone was interested in being considered for this group, they should contact the SEFSC. Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you. Any other discussion to be included in Data Collection? All right. Thank you. We have reached a point where we would be up against a break, and let's go ahead and do that now, and then we'll come back in fifteen minutes.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. There might be a version out there that you're looking at that has Reef Fish next, but, unfortunately, Sustainable Fisheries was not on the list, and, taking the order of committees, we're up at the Sustainable Fisheries report, and so Dr. Sweetman.

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES COMMITTEE REPORT

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. Sustainable Fisheries Committee report, the committed added an item, under Other Business, to discuss the ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM) roadmap, adopted the agenda, Tab E, Number 1, as modified, and approved the minutes, Tab E, Number 2, of the January 2024 meeting.

SSC Recommendations from May 2024 Meeting, Tab E, Number 4, Dr. Jim Nance, the Scientific and Statistical Committee chair, reviewed the proceedings of the SSC's May 2024 webinar meeting. The SSC reviewed and approved terms of reference for the upcoming SEDAR 98 assessment of red snapper, an independent management strategy evaluation (MSE) exercise by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center; evaluated a study by the National Academies of Sciences on equity in fisheries management benefits; evaluated the NMFS southeastern U.S. region equity and environmental justice plan; discussed modifications to the SEDAR process and alternative assessment methods for Gulf stocks; reviewed the council's planned restructuring for the SSC; and heard public comment on both days.

Dr. Nance clarified, for the committee, that the purpose of the independent MSE exercise by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center

was to establish a base for future work and to engage the SSC in further work on this MSE exercise. I want to hit a little bit of a pause here. I think that there was some discussion, relative to the SSC, that maybe we want to talk about at Full Council here, relative to the desktop MSE.

The one that was produced for the SSC was a desktop MSE on cod, and I think one of the primary concerns, from the SSC, was that some of the assumptions that were presented in that desktop MSE were not necessarily valid for Gulf stocks, and so I think there was some discussion on the table to maybe further have some thoughts about that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Yes, and C.J. and I did just talk about this a little bit before, and so, if it's all right, I would actually like to motion here, and I sent it to Bernie over there. All right, and so I will just read that.

The motion is to request the Southeast Fisheries Science Center conduct a desk management strategy evaluation on Spanish mackerel to examine the impacts that the unknown magnitude of recreational landings data may have on management performance of Spanish mackerel. This evaluation should consider, but not be limited to, differences in historical calibrations of landings in the eastern Gulf, as well as uncertainties in these calibrations for state and federal landings that may contribute to additional management uncertainty. The evaluation could also consider the performance of decreasing the recreational bag limit. If there is a second, I'll give some rationale.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: It's seconded by Captain Walker. All right, DR. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: I debated whether to bring that in the Sustainable Fisheries Committee or in the Mackerel Committee, and we had a lot of discussion about these in both places, and I just think, you know, to C.J.'s point, you know, it might be good to work with the Science Center, in this particular case, to bring back a more relevant MSE, one that we can wrap our heads around, and I think that it would be probably a good start.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other discussion on the motion? Dr. Walter.

DR. WALTER: Well, seeing as how the motion is a request for the Southeast Center, I will just comment on that. One, I appreciate the heads-up that we got on it, and so I did chat with our staff

on it, and I think that we can commit to doing that, and so it was something that we think -- The reason we presented the MSE, and it was just an example one, to the SSC, is I think that basically demonstrated a proof-of-concept, that, yes, indeed we could apply something like this, and you've got to start small, in general, before you get specific and detailed, and, here, I think this is a good one for us to embark upon, because it's not got everything all at once wrapped up into it, and it's one of those ones that I think we can bite off a manageable bite.

I can't commit exactly to the time limit, and I need to consult with our staff, as to workload and what this might entail, in terms of when we would get it back before the SSC, but I think one of the benefits of this is that we're seeing these desk MSEs as really the flight simulators for management, and it allows the council then to be able to get information as to how well does this management option perform, in light of many of the uncertainties, and it goes above and beyond just sensitivities, because it's actually the flight simulator and saying, if this kind of thing happens, can we manage our way through it.

Then it's going to be able to show us, in terms of which one of those recreational bag limits, best achieves the goals, and I think provides exactly the kind of information that this council will need to select the alternatives, and so we're happy to embark upon this, and we support this. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for the comment. Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: I speak in favor of the motion. I think it's a good idea to evaluate historical calibrations and landings, and, also, I think it's important to have that information when we're discussing decreasing bag limits on something like Spanish mackerel.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Geeslin.

MR. GEESLIN: I also speak in support of the motion. I kind of wish that this was also brought up in the Mackerel Committee, and maybe we can revisit this at that point today.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Any other comments? **I am not seeing any, and is there any opposition to this motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Dr. Sweetman.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. Continuing on, regarding the National Academies of Sciences study on equity in fisheries management benefits, Dr. Nance added that the SSC's

motion on the subject was meant to help ensure that the recommendation in the study, stated in the SSC's motion, is acted upon and the continued research occurs. The committee concurred with the SSC.

The committee also questioned if the mechanism and applicability of the Southeast equity and environmental justice plans being implemented by NOAA Fisheries would include the recommendations of the NAS study.

The committee recommends, and I so move, to recommend that the council request that NOAA Fisheries recommend that the National Academies of Sciences follow up on "Assessing Equity in the Distribution of Fisheries Management Benefits" with a second consensus Study Report that, as noted in the current report, "would build on this contribution by evaluating equity in select, illustrative fisheries using the information available. The motion carried without opposition. Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. We have a committee motion. Is there any discussion on the motion? **Not seeing any hands, is there any opposition to this motion? Not seeing any, the motion carries.**

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. May 2024 SEDAR Steering Committee Meeting Report, Tab B, Number 5, **c**ouncil staff briefly reviewed the SEDAR Steering Committee's May 2024 webinar regarding changes to the SEDAR process and assessment of key stocks. These changes are being discussed by the council staff and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, and they will be reviewed further by the Steering Committee and the council's SSC in July.

A committee member asked whether these changes could affect throughput. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center replied that the main idea was to provide focus on the most important stocks to a region within a predictable timetable, while providing for bandwidth to consider other species assessments and analyses to inform fisheries management decisions.

Another committee member asked about analyzing the five key stocks every three years and whether interim analyses would be used for providing catch advice or only as health checks. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center replied that the interim analyses could, and have, been used to revise catch advice, so long as they can use a reliable index of relative abundance that is representative of the fishery for that species.

Other Business, a committee member brought up the NOAA Fisheries request for comments on the modified ecosystem-based fisheries

management (EBFM) roadmap. It was noted that the comment deadline is July 31, 2024. The committee member recommended convening the council's Ecosystem Technical Committee to provide comments on the roadmap, noting a request for an extension on the comment period was likely necessary. Council staff noted that other councils have also asked for an extension for providing comment.

The committee recommends, and I so move, to direct staff to write a letter to ask for an extension to the ecosystem-based fishery management roadmap request comment deadline of July 31, 2024, to allow the ETC to meet and provide their input prior to submission. This motion carried without opposition. Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a committee motion. Any discussion on the motion? **Is there any opposition to this motion? Not seeing any, the motion carries.**

DR. SWEETMAN: Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

FULL COUNCIL CLOSED SESSION REPORT

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Any other business for Sustainable Fisheries? All right. That will take us to the next committee report, which is the closed session, and not Reef Fish. The Full Council closed session report occurred -- The committee met on June 24, 2023, in the afternoon, to appoint the Ad Hoc Commercial Red Snapper and Grouper-Tilefish Individual Fishing Quota, Reef Fish, and Shrimp Advisory Panel members. The council also appointed Standing and Special Statistical Committee members.

Selection of Ad Hoc Commercial Red Snapper and Grouper-Tilefish Individual Fishing Quota Advisory Panel members, the council made the following appointments to the Ad Hoc Commercial Red Snapper and Grouper-Tilefish Individual Fishing Quota Advisory Panel: Kenneth Beverin, Jane Black-Lee, Ron Chicola, John Cosgrove, Keith "Buddy" Guindon, Costa Kouzounis, Brian Lewis, Kelia Paul, Randy Sobieraj, David Walker, Amy Wirtz, and Jim Zurbrick.

Selection of Reef Fish Advisory Panel Members, the council made the following appointments to the Reef Fish Advisory Panel: Jane Black-Lee, Doug Boyd, Bill Campbell, Josh Ellender, Troy Frady, Rachal Hisler, Dylan Hubbard, Gary Jarvis, Mike Jennings, William Langley, John Marquez, Jr., Alexander McIngvale, Greg Mercurio, Steve Papen, Alicia Paul, Clarence Seymour, Rudy Valenciano, and Bob Zales.

Selection of Shrimp Advisory Panel Members, the council made the following appointments to the Shrimp Advisory Panel: Kristen

Baumer, Leann Bosarge, Steve Bosarge, Edward Cuevas, Jr., Glenn Delaney, Haley Gambill, Alan Gibson, Gary Graham, Dennis Henderson, Chris Londrie, Randy Pearce, Laura Picariello, Justin Versaggi, and Bob Zales.

Selection of Standing and Special Statistical Committee Members, the council made the following appointments to the Standing SSC: Jason Adriance, Mike Allen, Luiz Barbieri, Harry Blanchet, Dave Chagaris, David Griffith, Tiffany Hopper, Jack Isaacs, John Mareska, Paul Mickle, Trevor Moncrief, Jim Nance, Will Patterson, Daniel Petrolia, Sean Powers, Andrew Ropicki, Steven Saul, Steven Scyphers, and Ralph Townsend.

The council made the following appointments to the Special Mackerel SSC: Matthew Streich, Chris Stallings, Jie Cao. The following special SSCs will be repopulated at a later date: Special Coral, Special Red Drum, Special Spiny Lobster. The Special Shrimp SSC will be readvertised and then repopulated during the August council meeting, the Special Shrimp. This concludes my report. Any questions? Not seeing any, then that will take us to Reef Fish. Dr. Frazer.

REEF FISH COMMITTEE REPORT

DR. FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Reef Fish Committee report, the committee adopted the agenda, Tab B, Number 1, after adding an item under Other Business to discuss the greater amberjack recreational fishing season. The minutes, Tab B, Number 2, from the April 2024 meeting were approved as written.

Discussion: Reef Fish Amendment 60: Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Programmatic Distributional Issues, Tab B, Number 4, a committee member stated that the committee should discuss its vision for the IFQ program and offered a motion. While the committee acknowledged the merit of the motion, it was decided to table further discussion until Full Council.

The committee recommends and I so move, to establish a vision for the red snapper and grouper-tilefish IFQ programs. The vision, fishery vision: a cohesive commercial fishery - including a diverse range of profitable small, medium and large businesses, and fishery trusts - that maximizes access to and use of available IFQ shares. Process vision: a simple, automated, and transparent process that ensures IFQ shares and allocation are equitably distributed by NMFS to a defined user group, the impacts of which are measurable and evaluated over time. The motion to table carried without opposition. Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. We have a committee motion. Any discussion on the motion? Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think this would be an appropriate time for discussion on this motion. We tabled it until Full Council, and I recognize that it's a large ask, but I think we should attempt to make progress on revising this, as necessary and desired, and I've had a number of comments made on wordsmithing, and perhaps greater than that, and I would hope that council members would do so at this time, and see if we can get this to a better place for further council decision. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, and, to that, I guess I just offer, for some discussion, a question on whether or not "profitable" should be used to describe the small, medium, and larger businesses. I know, obviously, for optimum yield and that, maximum benefits to the nation, that type of context, but, I mean, we don't have a mechanism for checking to make sure that any of the businesses or entities, stakeholders, that we manage are profitable, and so I just wonder if we just should remove that. Yes, Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would argue that, as part of the vision, we certainly want profitable businesses, and, if they're not profitable, they would not be in existence, and, yes, we don't control that, but, as part of the vision of a healthy fishery, it includes profitable businesses utilizing the IFQ system.

A comment was made, in committee, about what small, medium, and large are, and suggested that perhaps we should define that. I think the question is a fair one, and a way to approach that would be to replace "small, medium, and large" with "diverse mix of", so that you don't get into this prescriptive, because the position should not be numbers, and not viable, and all that kind of thing, and so that's a suggestion, and I'm happy to approve that part, but I believe that "profitable" is very much a part of what our vision needs to be.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you for that, Mr. Gill, because I was going to bring up, again, you know, small, medium, and large, and what does that mean. Diverse, I guess then you've got to figure out what does that mean, but I feel better if it doesn't have "small, medium, and large", unless somewhere we have that clearly defined.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. McDermott.

MR. MCDERMOTT: I was just going to agree with Mr. Anson about removing "profitable". You know, I've heard a lot of comments, both around the table and at public comment about, you know, overcapacity, and different capacity issues, and I've done some research on it, and maybe -- I'm not sure how great the research is, but I just feel some pressure to drive profitability for a lot of these operators, you know, pressure on the council to do that, and I don't think that that's really a big -- That's not our goal here, and so I want to see plenty of different sized businesses, but I'm not sure that we've got a lot to do with profitability sitting at this table, and so I would support removing that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Based on the discussion, do you -- Of course, I don't want to get too broad, but a cohesive commercial fishery that maximizes access to the use of available IFQ shares, because you're being pretty prescriptive, which that could be a good thing, and it could be a bad thing, but, if you say "a cohesive commercial fishery", to me, you're already talking about diverse, because you're going to use what you currently have in that fishery, and it sounds to me, like you're just trying to bring the entire fishery together, and work together, to maximize the access and use of the IFQ shares, and so I think you need to take everything between the hyphens out.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Relative to the discussion on profitability, certainly the council does not drive businesses to profitability, but we certainly can drive them to unprofitability. We can make it impossible for a business to achieve a profit and remain in existence, and we don't want that, or at least I hope we don't want that, and so I still believe that very much belongs in the vision, even though we don't make it happen, and we don't want the opposite.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: After hearing your comments, going back and thinking about it, as part of a vision, we could probably include that, and I wouldn't have a problem with it. Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: I support the motion, and I'm not clear on what a vision means to us as a council, but there's nothing wrong with it. To me, pretty much all of this is already understood, but putting it in writing is fine with me.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Bob, I was just going to make maybe some friendly amendments here, to help us along. Before you actually made them, I will just read them, and I was thinking maybe say "a cohesive commercial fishery that includes a diverse suite of successful businesses and fishery trusts", and that's the first part of it, right, that, again, optimizes access to and use of available IFQ shares.

There's a couple of reasons that I took out "profitability", right, in listening to the conversation around the table, but "successful" depends on who you are, right, and so some people may just break even, but that's what they love to do, and, you know, who knows what that is really, and I don't know.

MR. GILL: Mr. Chairman, this is a committee motion, and so it's up to the council to decide whether to accept it, and not me.

DR. FRAZER: All right, and so do you want me to go ahead and -- If people are generally good with that, then I'll go ahead and make the edits, as a friendly --

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I think go ahead and make edits, just so we have it on the board, so everyone is clear.

DR. FRAZER: Okay. **So I would say the fishery vision is a cohesive commercial fishery that includes a diverse suite, instead of "range", and replace "range" with "suite" "of successful businesses", and you can get rid of "small, medium, and large" and fishery trusts, and you can get rid of the hyphen too, that optimizes access to and use of available IFQ shares.**

MR. GILL: Seconded.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Staff, if we can change this to a substitute motion, since we are kind of -- It's more than just a little wordsmith, I guess, and so, Dr. Frazer, that's the motion, your substitute motion?

DR. FRAZER: Yes, it is. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Gill, did you second?

MR. GILL: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Okay, and so we have a second. Is there any other -- Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm okay with, obviously, the suggested changes, and I never like wordsmithing things like on the fly like this, and I know we've had time, since Monday or Tuesday, when this came up, but I feel like we're going to miss some things, just wordsmithing today, and maybe that's okay, and we can always come back to it.

I did want to comment on the process vision, and I feel like it's very narrow, right, and so there is a lot of process related to the IFQ program that goes well beyond what we're talking about here, and, to me, we probably need to give some more thought, if that's going to be our process vision, as to how we expand out on that. For example, you know, it's not solely just the equitable distribution of shares, and it's the access, how people access those shares, the transparency of the marketplace, right, and some other things that kind of relate to, obviously, how people participate in the fishery, or even engage in the fishery, and how we can make that as transparent as possible.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Andy, I understand, and I don't disagree with your comments, and perhaps a path forward would be to leave it as it is, and bring it back at the August meeting, for further consideration at that time, and I would therefore like to move to table the substitute motion until the August meeting.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Well, if you want to discuss the motion, it's probably better to postpone to like a time certain, which is what you're basically saying, and then it would be debatable.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Well, I think, Ms. Levy, what you're suggesting is a motion to postpone, versus the motion to table, correct? Yes. It might be easier, a little bit, process-wise, to go through a motion to postpone, but Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Before we do that, because we can't discuss it once we do that, I want to quickly go back to the fishery vision. The fishery trusts, it was my understanding that's going to be like a quota bank, or something as such, and that's correct? Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: That's my understanding, yes. Mr. Gill? No? Okay.

MR. GILL: Relative to Ms. Levy's suggestion?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Yes, and do you have any thoughts on that?

MR. GILL: I fail to see it, other than a distinction without a difference.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Okay, and so it depends on whether we're going to follow Roberts Rules and be sticklers, which sometimes we want to be and sometimes we don't. Technically, a motion to table is used when you want to discuss something that's going to impact that motion, and it's not debatable. A motion to postpone to a time certain, or indefinitely, is debatable, and so you don't have to stop discussion on it, and it's for a situation like this, where you want to stop until something else occurs, and that's the reason that I suggested it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, and Dr. Simmons is telling me, just for discussion purposes on the timeline aspect of what we have been discussing, is that August is a little too soon, in that we would have to wait until probably November, because that's when the next time we are planning to see the documents again, 59 and 60. Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: To that point, Mr. Chairman, I would argue that the vision does not necessarily need to be tied to the next discussion of the document, because it's a higher level than the documents are, and, in that sense, it can stand alone, and, as difficult as coming up with this thing would be, my suggestion is making multiple stabs at it would give you a better chance at getting to a successful conclusion, and so I think it could be done in August easily, without talking about 59 or 60, and it may even be better, because that -- Once that's set, that helps define the discussion of 59 and 60 and gives you time to absorb the impact, if any.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. What's the desire of the council? Is there a motion, a particular kind of motion? Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: I'm happy to postpone my own motion, and so I would like to make a motion to postpone discussion of this motion until August, if the schedule allows, and I will give staff some flexibility.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: This would be a second substitute motion then.

MS. BOGGS: I will second.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, and so we have a second substitute motion to postpone discussion of the substitute motion until the August 2024 council meeting. It's been seconded by Ms. Boggs. Is there any discussion on this motion? I am not seeing any. **Is there any opposition to the motion? Not seeing any, the motion carries.** Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: All right. Council staff gave a presentation of Reef Fish Amendment 60, which addresses the distribution of shares held by NMFS from Reef Fish Amendment 36A recovered from inactive shareholders accounts or from the divestment by shareholders who do not meet requirements that would be set in Reef Fish Amendment 59 and annual allocation collected from future quota increases.

In the need statement, the committee suggested replacing the word "barriers" using a phrase such as "addressing inequities of access". Inactive accounts were defined as having no allocation transfers or landings within a year. Staff discussed alternatives to reclaim shares from inactive accounts, including two, three, and four consecutive years of inactivity.

Committee members inquired whether inactivity was determined based on aggregate shareholdings or based on individual share categories. The committee noted that a shareholder may not elect to utilize their allocation in a particular share category, due to market conditions, but would use them as the markets improve. Staff replied that analyses provided to illustrate previous levels of inactivity were performed by share category and indicated that alternatives evaluating inactivity across all share categories will be developed.

Staff discussed alternative methods to distribute shares reclaimed from inactive accounts and shares held by NMFS, including distribution based on shareholders' share percentages, inverse share percentages, as well as equal distribution. Committee members noted that the fairness and equity implications of distribution methods should be considered and noted that shares will not be distributed to anyone at the share cap.

The committee indicated that the Interdisciplinary Planning Team, or the IPT, should discuss how shareholder accounts without shares would be included when distributing shares based on inverse share percentages. The committee suggested that the share distribution of a particular share category might consider shareholders that have landings in that share category.

The committee asked whether the process of share distributions

would be an ongoing process by NMFS. Staff replied that distributions will be on a rolling basis. A committee member asked whether NMFS would sell the reclaimed shares. NMFS staff replied that shares would be redistributed at no cost.

Staff discussed options to set aside future quota increases and alternatives to distribute annual allocations from said quota increases, noting that shares cannot be distributed because quotas fluctuate over time. A committee member noted that any consideration of new entrants as recipients of some of the quota increases would require that a definition of "new entrants". Staff noted that, for each share category, a baseline quota would be required to quantify future quota increases.

A committee member stated that, if a quota decrease is followed by an increase, setting aside the increase for redistribution would adversely impact shareholders. The committee suggested that setting baselines would require more discussion and indicated that the intent is not to negatively impact current shareholders.

A committee member noted that the baseline for gag grouper should account for the fact that it is on a rebuilding plan. NOAA General Counsel suggested that stocks undergoing rebuilding could be treated differently and noted that baselines could account for the fact that species landings, in cases of a rebuilding plan, are well under historical quotas.

A committee member asked whether the timing of the distributions has been determined. Staff replied that the IPT has not yet discussed the issue in detail. A committee member asked about the timing of quota increases and shareholding status. Southeast Regional Office, or SERO, staff indicated that, if a quota increase happens during the year, it is distributed based on the shareholdings at that time.

A committee member suggested that some issues needed to be discussed during Full Council, including restructuring Amendment 60 by first aggregating what would be distributed and then determining distribution methods. The impact of the alternatives presented on quota banks should also be discussed.

The committee noted that the action schedule shows that Amendments 59 and 60 are both planned to be brought back to the council in August and inquired whether a more achievable timeline should be considered. Staff replied that, to give the IPT sufficient time to further develop the amendments, one amendment will be scheduled for the November council meeting and the second at the January council meeting.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Sorry, Dr. Frazer. There's a hand. Sorry. Thank you. Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think, before we leave Amendment 60, we ought to discuss some of the issues regarding it that are alluded to in that last paragraph that I suggested in committee.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Go ahead, sir, if you have some thoughts on that now.

MR. GILL: Thank you, sir. Yes, I have a number, and so the first one that I suggested was that the structure of 60 takes the individual distribution approaches and distributes the little bit that is there. My argument is that what we ought to do is determine what shares would be made available for distribution, aggregate them, and then determine distribution, and the main reason for that is that, as has been noted, there aren't many shares available, and, for example, those held by the agency, and, in the aggregate, you have a bigger pie to consider and deal with, and it should be considered there.

In addition, the way the amendment is currently structured, it doesn't address a number of the objectives of Goals 1 and 2. For example, we call them allocation banks, but I prefer the "fishery trust" definition. If you go ahead and distribute, as the amendment is currently written, there is no discussion of an allocation bank, or fishery trust, because there's no shares left, and so that would argue, in my sense, of figure out -- Let the council figure out what shares would be considered for distribution, and, once you do that, then you can determine the distribution facets, whatever they happen to be, consistent with Goal 1 and Goal 2, and so I think the structure needs to be revised going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Assane.

DR. ASSANE DIAGNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Gill, the IPT did consider the approach that you talked about, meaning aggregating, you know, the sources of quota, if you would, but that would not be practicable, for several reasons.

The first one is that, in some instances, we are only distributing annual allocation, and, in other instances, we are distributing shares, and so, obviously, we couldn't put those together, and so that would justify putting the distribution from quota increases separate, and so, when it comes to shares, the reason why we did

not aggregate those is because, as of today, right now, the only shares that we have on hand to distribute would the shares held by the agency through 36A. That is the only thing we have, and presumably those could be distributed as soon as the amendment goes final.

Everything else we have in the amendment is looking forward, because we have grace periods of two, three, and four years, and so, if you were to aggregate that, that would essentially prevent us from distributing the shares held by the agency, right when this amendment is implemented, and, for those reasons, we separated them out, and we discussed a distribution method for each one of them.

One last point, and, I mean, looking at the two amendments, including the one that will be discussed later, after 60, about the issue of quota banks, the way in which we consider this is to make sure that we don't do anything that would preclude the establishment of quota banks, and that is within, I guess, your purview, by choosing the preferred alternative that would make space for quota banks, but perhaps, if the council also directs us to do so, in the distribution methods, we could add an alternative that would say to distribute to quota banks, and just leave it there, and there is an underlined question there of is the agency considering, for example, establishing, and running, a quota bank to oversee this whole thing, or are we just making space, quote, unquote, for private quota banks, and so that is something that the council also needs to consider. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I appreciate Mr. Gill's comments, because, you know, it relates to the vision, and we were talking about, you know, the vision including fishery trusts, and what are we talking about there, with regard to, you know, the future of the fishery, and is that private fishery trusts, or is that, you know, government-managed fishery trusts, but I also agree with Assane's comments, in terms of kind of the line of thinking, in terms of how we structure the amendments, and, you know, it will ultimately be a council decision whether we preclude or include, you know, space for those fishery trusts.

I did want to, I guess, comment on the timeline here, and I recognize we have a pretty short timeframe between now and the August meeting, just because of how late the June council meeting is being held, and we've been alternating back and forth these amendments, but I really hate the fact that we would wait essentially seven months to bring one of these amendments back,

and we heard public testimony, at the last several meetings, about uncertainty to businesses, and people are, you know, wanting to know kind of how we're proceeding on these amendments, and I feel like we owe them more than just a lengthy delay.

I recognize that the staff has a lot of workload, but maybe there is ways that we can bring back components of these amendments, and continue to make progress, rather than waiting until January before we see one of these amendments again.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Diagne.

DR. DIAGNE: Thank you. Absolutely, and, I mean, between now and November, at the earliest, and then January, it is a long time, but the fundamental issue, or at least roadblock, is not staff time, at this point, and, essentially, what would, I guess, drive this delay is the availability, perhaps, of needed data and supporting analysis.

We could bring back alternatives, as we did at this council meeting, but what we won't be able to bring, it seems to me, between now and August, would include updated, for example, permit analysis and updated evaluation of related accounts and updated -- - You know, those sort of things, and that is the main challenge here, and the challenge is not staff time to make progress.

MR. STRELCHECK: To that point, I fully understand that, and I -- I think, oftentimes, right, the analysis, data, information is used as a reason to not bring something back, but we're still wrestling with these actions and alternatives, and we're still trying to figure out kind of the best path forward, and, if we skip a meeting, and we aren't talking about the actions and alternatives, and making those refinements, to me, it's a disservice to the IPT, because that's going to then put you further behind, when you actually can do the data and analysis, and ultimately complete the work that is related specifically to those actions and alternatives.

DR. DIAGNE: To the extent that the expectations of the council are to just further discuss the actions and alternatives, you know, restructure and take advantage of the suggestions that are made here, that is totally fine, and we could consider bringing back at least one of them in August, but we couldn't expect to bring supporting analysis to be able, for example, to talk about the distribution of share quotas that may or may not be affected by a typical action, and so that is at your discretion. We can continue the discussion on the structure, but we won't have access to the data, and the analysis, that we need to support the points that

you are making.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Andy, I appreciate you bringing that up, because I talked to a couple of the commercial fishermen too, and it's like, right, wrong, or indifferent, let's move forward with this, because they can't make business decisions, and, you know, they don't know what direction to go, and, as some of them said, they're retiring, and they're getting older, and they're just kind of holding on and trying to figure out can their family get this, or what can they do with it, and so I really encourage the council that, yes, even if you just bring back one alternative, and finish discussing it, and maybe that's what it takes, but then -- So thank you, Andy, for doing that, for bringing this up, because I think it's important to keep this moving forward. It's been talked about for many, many years.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: So I just briefly talked with Dr. Simmons, that they will do that, but I feel like one of the amendments can be brought forward, with the kind of extra work that would be needed, and that would be a step forward, if you will, for keeping the conversation going, and she just asked if one could be identified, as to which one it would be, and so, Mr. Gill, you had your hand up?

MR. GILL: Yes, sir, to somewhat of a different aspect of this topic, and so, if there's other considerations relative to the question you asked, I would like to defer and come back to me.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Dr. Frazer, you had your hand up?

DR. FRAZER: Yes, and maybe I will read through Amendment 59, and say which one we prefer, and I think -- Let's wait.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: I agree with that, Tom, but I think, whatever you do, is you've got to figure out the order, because you don't want to do something, like I said yesterday, and come back like, oh, we can't do that, because we did this, and that may be difficult to do, but try to do it in some kind of an order, so you're kind of -- You know the path you want to go down.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: I think, if we're trying to keep this moving, which I fully support, I think, and I may have mentioned this earlier,

but I think we need to kind of split up the distributing shares currently held by NMFS, versus distributing allocation that might be gained from increases, because that's going to be a big, controversial issue. We haven't actually defined what an increase will be, based on the history of the species and stuff, and so I see that part of it taking a little longer than people want. I don't know if it can be completely separated, but, if it could, I think the rest of this would go a lot smoother and faster.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: So I tell you what. Your suggestion that you just made, Dr. Frazer, is maybe we go ahead and read through the committee report on the discussions that were held during the Reef Fish Committee, and then we'll come back to this. How is that?

DR. FRAZER: Sounds good. All right. Draft Options: Reef Fish Amendment 59: Requirements for Participation in Individual Fishing Quota Programs, Tab B, Number 5, Dr. Jessica Stephen, from SERO, discussed the various entities holding shareholders accounts in the red snapper and grouper-tilefish IFQ programs and the business models adopted by participants in the programs. Business models presented included simple ownership (i.e., a single fisherman with one shareholder account), and business entities with multiple shareholder accounts. She also provided numerical examples to illustrate how share caps are calculated.

A committee member asked why anyone would open a shareholder account without shares. Staff replied that some participants open multiple accounts for business liability purposes, while others have accounts without shares because they are planning to acquire shares later. In addition, some of the accounts without shares are opened by dealers who purchase IFQ annual allocation.

Staff presented actions and alternatives included in Reef Fish Amendment 59. The amendment considers permit requirements to open or maintain shareholder accounts, to obtain or maintain shares, and to obtain or maintain annual allocation. The amendment also includes active participation requirements and divestment measures for noncompliant entities.

While discussing permit requirements for shareholder accounts, a committee member expressed support for removing Alternative 3, because it would require considering alternative time periods between obtaining a shareholder account and getting a commercial permit. The committee also noted that, based on the same rationale, Alternative 3 should also be removed from Actions 3 and 4.

A committee member asked about the number of commercial reef fish

permits terminated each year and whether they could be utilized by new entrants. Staff suggested that a permit pool could be created to collect permits that would have expired.

The committee recommends and I so move, to direct staff to explore the possibility of establishing a permit pool from terminated commercial reef fish permits for future use, including use by new entrants. That motion carried fifteen to one with one abstention. Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a committee motion, and it's on the board. Is there any discussion on the motion? Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think Kesley made the motion, and it would be good, I think, if we talk about intent, for staff, when say "explore", and what are we meaning? Are we wanting them to bring back a presentation, a white paper, data? I'm just curious, so we can make sure we meet the needs of the motion.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Banks.

DR. BANKS: I think, at this stage, I'm looking more for like a presentation on the possibilities, maybe with a little analysis, but I don't know that we have to jump straight to a white paper.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: So a couple of things that might come up with this exploring would be -- I think we have to say how many years back in permits we're going to add to this pool. You know, there's probably been 150 sacrificed since the beginning of the program, and are we going to bring them all back, or are we going to do them each year forward, and so that would -- You know, maybe this motion could list out, you know, the options there, and we would make some decisions on that, but it's also going to increase the number of fishermen sharing allocations, and that's just something to keep in mind.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Diagne, to that point?

DR. DIAGNE: Thank you. In my understanding, I mean, the motion is not backward-looking, and it seems, to me, that, you know, it's looking forward, meaning, if this were to be implemented, from that point on, permits that would have been terminated would begin to be kept in a pool, but it would not go backward and say, okay, we lost 150 permits in the past.

MR. WALKER: I get that, but I'm not sure it's captured in the

motion though. It says "future use", but it doesn't say permits terminated in the future.

DR. DIAGNE: Yes, that's correct, and perhaps the committee would modify the motion and take some of the text from the report itself, where it says permits that would have been terminated, and so that would be, you know, from a certain point forward, to make sure that this doesn't go back.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so we're talking here about a permit pool, and we've talked about allocation banks, and we've talked about share banks, and so my suggestion would be that, while we're, assuming the motion passes, in this mode of considering how these different sections of the program would work, that you also introduce the idea of fishery trust, which covers all of them, so that you don't do segregated and separate parts, one at a time, but you do it in terms of one cohesive look.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, and so, just going back to the discussion on the phrasing of the motion, and whether or not it needs to be tightened up a little bit to clearly -- Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Well, I mean, just to point out that, once they're terminated, they're gone, and so there's no way to go back, right?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: To Mara's point, and I was thinking about that yesterday, and you can't recapture that, and it's -- You would have to -- I had two -- Well, I have two questions now, with Mara's comment, and so I'm not sure what "including use by new entrants", and I don't know what that means, because you don't know, and, number one, you don't have a definition for "new entrants", and I don't exactly know what that means, and I suppose you could just say establishing a permit pool with -- To exclude expiring permits, and I don't know, because that's what I was thinking yesterday, is, once it's terminated, you can't go back and recapture it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Well, I think the idea is that, when it gets to the point of being terminated, we would have something that indicates that it goes back to NMFS, right, and so, right now, they just don't exist anymore, but, when it gets to that termination date, it goes to NMFS, instead of disappearing.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Strelcheck, followed by Dr. Frazer.

MR. STRELCHECK: Like we've done for shrimp, you know, I think the idea here would be we would set a threshold, and it drops below that threshold, and we come up with a way of retaining those permits, and then you have to come up with a mechanism then for distributing those permits in some sort of pool thereafter.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Or a date certain option could be thrown in, at least at the initial stage of the document, and so Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Just I think the discussion we're having around the table indicates pretty clearly why we're going to come back with an exploration of what this might mean.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs, or Dr. Diagne.

DR. DIAGNE: I just maybe would suggest, instead of the motion as written, if we could consider something like establishing a permit pool from permits that would have expired, and then continue, and so, as Ms. Levy said, when they are to be expired, then you put them in a pool, or terminated, that would have been terminated, and so those are the permits that are kept in a pool, and I guess we'll discuss further during the exploration.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Well, could it be as simple as -- I didn't realize that it existed until Andy just spoke up, but to direct staff to explore the possibility of establishing a permit pool for expired, or expiring, whatever commercial reef fish permits, such as that of the shrimp industry, and, I mean, so you've got something to go model it against, and is that a poor idea, since something already exists?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I don't know, and I don't think we need to be that explicit, and I think we're just -- They're going to explore the possibility, and they're going to come back with some alternatives that we would then flesh out at that time, and so --

MS. BOGGS: So why don't you just direct staff to explore the possibility of establishing a permit pool, and just leave it at -- - For commercial reef fish permits, and leave it at that, and then they can bring you back the option.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Well, I think there needs to be some mention as to where those permits are coming from, because it's a moratorium on those permits, and so -- Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Yes, and I just -- Maybe I should let Dr. Banks speak to that, but I would -- It kinds of ignores the intent of her motion, I think.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Banks.

DR. BANKS: Yes, and so I had intended not to restrict, necessarily, the future use, but, when I initially made the motion, it was to address some of the new entrant problems, and looking at maybe some of this EEJ stuff, and so I'm not opposed to wordsmithing it, and narrowing it down, if that's something we need to do for staff to have a clearer direction, but that was kind of the direction that I had initially gone.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: So I thought it was fairly clear, when the motion was made, as to what -- Staff had a direction, but we've kind of gone off the rail a little bit here in the permit status realm, as to when they would be reissued potentially, and so, if anyone has got -- Dr. Frazer, do you have that?

DR. FRAZER: I think, if it's okay, I'll just use Dr. Diagne's suggestion, and we'll just slightly modify the motion. **I think there's enough direction here, and so if we direct staff to explore the possibility of establishing a permit pool from those permits that will be terminated. Establishing a permit pool from those commercial reef fish permits that will be terminated.** I think I would just put a hard stop after that. I think there's been enough discussion around here to know what's going on.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: As earlier, this will be a substitute motion to the committee motion. I think it has changed significantly enough. All right. Is that your substitute motion, Dr. Frazer?

DR. FRAZER: Yes, it is, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Is there a second to this motion? It's seconded by Captain Walker. Is there any further discussion related to this substitute motion? **Seeing none, is there any opposition to this motion? Not seeing any, the motion carries.** Dr. Frazer. Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: I'm just going to abstain for the vote.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Okay, and so we have sixteen yes and one abstention. Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Committee members noted that active participation

requirements may result in unintended consequences and suggested that lower minimum landings percentages could be considered. A committee member noted that participation requirements should account for potential impacts from hurricanes and asked whether the requirements are by share category and commented that fluctuations in shareholdings during the year should be kept in mind. Staff replied that the participation requirements are based on shareholders' aggregate shareholdings.

In Alternative 4, Actions 3 and 4, the committee recommended to replace "obtain or maintain" with "obtain and maintain". Mr. Chairman, did you want to revisit which one of these you want to prioritize at this point, or after the reef fish report?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Yes, and I'm sorry. I guess let's go ahead and still talk about it now, and it's still fresh in everyone's minds, and so, again, staff had requested, you know, for schedule -- Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I was just talking to Assane, and he's thinking maybe we should, if you will, allow us the flexibility to decide, when we get back with the IPT, which one we think we could turn around, and would be the biggest bang for our buck, as far as trying to discuss and make forward progress, based on the data that can be available, so that we're not just putting things in writing that we don't have any information to back it up with for discussion purposes.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Yes, and I think that's -- I mean, I will always afford staff as much flexibility as we can.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I want to just go back to what you said about data availability and the comments to data analysis to support the actions and alternatives, and I just want to make sure that it's all clear that -- I guess it's the expectation that there may not be any data available, and so, in that case, there would be options to pick then whatever you feel there's enough discussion, or extra knowledge, if you will, based on the discussion that was held here at council, to then flesh out, and so it would still be a flexibility thing for staff to do either 59 or 60, depending upon whether there's data or not, I guess is what I just want to make sure that -- Okay. All right. Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before we leave Amendments 59 and 60, I would like to clarify where we're going, and so, as I read it, 59 and 60 were the first crack at addressing Goal 1 and

Goal 2, and it didn't address Goals 3 through 5, but Goal 1 has, if I remember correctly, five objectives, and Goal 2 has three, and not all of which, and in fact most of which, are not addressed in 59 and 60, and the allocation bank discussion, which is in both goals, is not addressed at all, and yet is part and parcel of distribution discussions, and so my question, I guess to Assane, is how are -- Let me back up a minute, and so Goal 1 and Goal 2, and the objectives, are intended to be accomplished, and that's what they're there for, right?

At the end of the day, they're done, but, since they're not in the amendments, what is the plan for addressing the items in these goals and objectives that are not there going forward, so they can be accomplished?

DR. DIAGNE: Mr. Gill, you are specifically referring to quota banks?

MR. GILL: No, and I'm addressing the objectives that were set a year ago in Goal 1 and Goal 2 that are intended to be accomplished as part of what we're doing, whether it's in 59 or 60 or a separate amendment, and what I don't understand is how are we getting to the endpoint of achieving what we said we were going to achieve?

DR. DIAGNE: I am looking here at the presentation, and I am looking at the objectives attached, for example, to Goal 1, and limit share ownership to accounts harvesting IFQ species, and I'm not going to read the long list, but the one that is not addressed, it seems to me, by 59 and 60, would be the idea of quota banks in general, just broadly, evaluating the merits of limiting share ownership to implementation of alternative mechanisms for equitable distribution, recover and distribute shares held by deceased shareholders, and that is something that we need to make some progress on.

Create an allocation bank, and identify barriers limiting participation, and so, aside from the quota banks, that is really the big one, if you would, that the amendments are not addressing, and, in previous discussion around the table, everyone agreed that quota banks would be such a big topic that it would require an amendment of its own, and that was the consensus here, given all of the intricacies, and so the interpretation is 59 and 60 shouldn't do anything that would preclude the establishment of quota banks down the line.

For example, if you were to have very strict participation requirements for everybody, then that would be problematic to have a quota bank down the line, and, at this time again, depending on

whether this council, and the agency, are considering a public quota bank, run by the agency, and that is one thing, versus having private entities, because, if you have private entities, it is not, I guess, our responsibility to give them any shares, right, and the existing ones have found creative ways of funding their own quota banks, but, if it is run by the agency, then, obviously, we would have to fund that quota bank.

As we mentioned earlier, in the distribution methods, one of the alternatives that we should add is give X percent of these shares to a publicly-managed quota bank, and the big question-mark, again, is are we prepared to go in that direction, and that depends, of course, on, as you know, what the agency can and cannot do.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: In my mind, I mean, that is a more -- It adds more complexity to these particular amendments, and that's not to say that it wouldn't be appropriate, or couldn't be appropriate, but I'm just saying that it does make it more complex. I mean, I look at it as, without -- Once we establish some of these transferability, and divestment, if you will, options -- I mean, the agency is going to serve as a de facto quota bank, as it is right now, with its own set of rules, as far as distribution, and, you know, participation, that we're already talking about, and so this would just be a separate mechanism, that would have its own set of rules, that are separate from what we're creating, in order to feed, or put in, deposit, if you will, into that bank, and so, I mean, I see your point, but I just think, if we have to physically carve out one, and put it in these documents, it could slow it down. Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I don't disagree, and I'm not arguing that they should be included in 59. What I am suggesting is that omission without going forward -- For example, if we go forward and put quota bank considerations, fishery trusts, as I call them, in a separate amendment, then fine, but that necessarily has to go directly parallel with 60, so that you have something to discuss with, and so, if you're not thinking that way, then you take these actions in 59 and 60 and then you say, okay, let's talk about fishery trusts, and, all right, what are we going to do now, coach, and, you know, we basically have to create some more capital, if you will, for that.

Back in June of 2023, when we adopted these goals and objectives, we also had a section in there that said staff would develop an additional objective, under Goal 1, to address the inheritability of shares, and their ownership, in perpetuity, and make a proposal, and that's not addressed either, and so I don't think we should lose sight of the intent of having that objective as part of this

generalized discussion.

My concern is that we're focused on 59 and 60, and we ought not to lose sight of what we said we were going to do a year ago in Goal 1 and Goal 2, and, to that point, I would suggest that we always include Goal 1 and Goal 2, and their objectives, in the discussion in each amendment, to keep that focus.

The further away we get, and I had to go back and look at them, to try and understand what the heck we had agreed to, and I think that's true for most of us, and that focus needs to be there, because that's what we're trying to do, and 59 and 60 are part of that, as we discuss them, and maybe not all, and that's fine, but we said we were going to accomplish these, whatever it is, eight items, eight objectives, and we ought not lose sight of that, and that's my point. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for your comments, Mr. Gill. Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Points well taken, Bob, and I really appreciate the comments. To use one of your favorite phrases, we're taking small bites of the elephant, right, and you can see how challenging it is even to make progress on Amendments 59 and 60, with the goals and objectives that we are addressing, right, but, as you're pointing out, let's not lose sight of that whole suite of goals and objectives, not only for 1 and 2, but the remaining three that we haven't even started on.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: So Assane brought up a good point. I mean, I think one of the first questions that needs to be asked, before you start going down this path of quota banks, fishery trusts, whatever you choose to call them, is, is the agency even interested in managing something like that? I mean, because, if the agency is not interested, then you've got a clear path of where you need to go with it, and it would be private, and so I think that would be a good start on that, because I think that's going to be your number-one question, because you've got to know whether you're going to have to establish that.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Any other discussion on this topic? We all kind of had some head-nodding going on, relative to it will be up to staff to determine, based on IPT discussions, as to which document that they would bring, and hopefully it would be a document that would have the most, you know, updated information and changes, again based on discussion that was had here earlier

this week, and for IPT meetings, and so okay. Very good. Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Presentation and Discussion on the Twenty-Fathom Recreational Seasonal Closure for Shallow-water Grouper, Tab B, Number 6, council staff presented an overview of the management history surrounding the existing twenty-fathom recreational seasonal closure for shallow-water grouper and the rationale for exploring management options to remove the closure.

The shallow-water grouper seasonal recreational closure, seaward of twenty fathoms, from February 1 to March 31 annually, was implemented in 2013, with the aim of conserving species in the shallow-water grouper complex during their spawning period, particularly gag and red grouper.

Since implementation of this rule, each species in the shallow-water grouper complex has been subject to additional management action and harvest, as constrained by annual catch limits and accountability measures.

Committee members discussed concerns about compliance or limited awareness of the twenty-fathom seasonal closure among recreational anglers. Also, the committee discussed that the closure may result in increased regulatory discards, because fishing is not completely closed seaward of twenty fathoms, and discards may also increase when targeting red grouper in waters less than twenty fathoms, where fish are smaller.

Captain Dylan Hubbard, the Reef Fish Advisory Panel chair, provided a summary of the AP's discussion about the twenty-fathom seasonal closure. The AP stated that the recreational seasonal closure has been in place for a long time and was implemented before there were long seasonal closures for gag and red grouper. During the April 2024 Reef Fish AP meeting, a motion to recommend that the council remove the twenty-fathom shallow-water grouper closure for the recreational sector carried unanimously.

In contrast, a committee member thought that the removal of the twenty-fathom closure would not reduce red grouper discards, but simply shift the timing of discards, because the red grouper quota would be met sooner if opened from February 1 to March 31.

Committee members also recommended proceeding with caution when deciding to remove conservation rules for species that are all currently experiencing reductions in allowable harvest and whose management issues have not yet been resolved.

A committee member stated that enforcement difficulties should not be the reason for removing a rule and that outreach may increase awareness about the twenty-fathom closure. A committee member asked whether there are data to evaluate the efficacy of the closure, and council staff responded that the spatially-explicit data necessary to explore this question are largely unavailable. Committee members also asked whether there were other options to consider as conservation measures in place of the twenty-fathom closure.

The committee put forth a motion to direct staff to begin a framework action to remove the twenty-fathom fathom recreational seasonal closure for shallow-water grouper. **The committee recommends, and I so move, to direct staff to begin a framework action to remove the twenty-fathom recreational seasonal closure for shallow-water grouper. That motion carried without opposition.** Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: We have a committee motion. Is there any discussion on the motion? Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: I still support the motion, and I would point out to the council that, in my understanding, there's about twenty comments that have been sent in, in the last couple of days, from recreational red grouper fishermen, in red grouper land down there. I haven't read them all, and I think they just came in in the last day or so, but I'm told that it's nearly all in support of this motion, and so maybe not, but I would point it out, and we can -- You know, council members can maybe take a look at what the people that fish for red grouper have to say on the topic.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Sweetman.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I more or less said most of my piece during the committee here on this, and certainly I'm not opposed to looking at this, to evaluating this framework action, to see basically what the impacts of this might be, and so I would be interested in seeing some analyses along those lines, with whatever data is available. I do feel a little uncomfortable just basing -- Removing a regulation just based on anecdotal information at this time, and so I would be very much so interested to see what could kind of come up there.

One of the issues that I was a little concerned about here is how this could potentially increase catch rate, for some species like red grouper, and I think one of the last things that I would want to do here is inadvertently remove this, and then, all of a sudden,

we have a very short red grouper season that is impacted by that, because I don't think that's what the recreational community would want at all there, and so I'm just kind of thinking out loud, and some of the stuff that maybe I would be interested in looking at a little more closely within the document. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: I would agree with Dr. Sweetman on that. This is just a -- You know, it's a good look at it. I don't think anybody from my region, if this was shown that it was going to cause a month shorter season, would be in support of it. It's hard to say, and most of my folks, and myself, think that it won't, but it's not really clear yet, and so it's something to keep an eye on.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any further discussion on the motion? **Is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: Okay. Discussion: NMFS Letter to Gulf Council on Lane Snapper Overfishing, Tab B, Number 7, the Southeast Regional Office reviewed recent landings and catch limits for lane snapper, which have exceeded the stock ACL in four of the last five years.

Council staff summarized the Reef Fish AP's discussions about lane snapper, reporting increasing length composition, frequency of catch, and expanding spatial distribution of catch. The Reef Fish AP recommended that the council evaluate the minimum size for lane snapper, minimum size limit for lane snapper.

Council staff recalled research which estimated the length at which 50 percent of lane snapper are sexually mature is just over ten inches total length. The Reef Fish AP chair added that the council has an opportunity to stay in front of this healthy fishery and suggested matching the minimum size limits for gray snapper, twelve inches. Currently, the federal minimum size limit for lane snapper is eight inches total length.

A committee member asked about the effects of discards, should the minimum size limit be increased. The Reef Fish AP chair replied that an increase in the minimum size limit to twelve inches may result in an increase in regulatory discards. However, he thought those discards would be occurring in shallower coastal waters, where barotrauma on snapper species is less of a concern.

NOAA General Counsel reviewed the requirement in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act for the council to

address the management of lane snapper to reduce the probability of an overage. Council staff proposed consideration of a change to the fishing year, such that the majority of the landings are not occurring at the tail-end of the fishing year and when estimating accurate projections for a seasonal closure is problematic.

A committee member asked whether it would be preferable to keep the current fishing season, if the landings peak in the summer, or if it would be better to change the fishing season. The Reef Fish chair replied that lane snapper were most important to private vessels in the summer and in the fall for the for-hire fleet. A committee member expressed interest in the average length of the retained lane snapper in any analysis.

The Reef Fish AP requested that the council ask the Southeast Fishery Science Center to conduct an annual interim analysis on lane snapper. NOAA General Counsel noted that the council could use the ACL/Annual Catch Target Control Rule to address the management uncertainty associated with the recent ACL overages.

Council staff suggested examining whether a more in-depth analysis of lane snapper could be explored, given the likely increase in available length and age composition data for the stock. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center added that interim analyses should be scheduled in advance and consider whether stock perception is positive or negative.

A committee member confirmed with NOAA General Counsel that the council is not under a defined time limit for addressing overfishing for lane snapper. However, SERO added that the council should be demonstrably working toward that responsibility.

The committee recommends, and I so move, to request staff to start a document to evaluate minimum size and bag limits and other measures to stay within the ACL for lane snapper. That motion carried without opposition. Mr. Chairman

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. We have a committee motion. Is there any discussion on the motion? **Seeing none, is there any opposition to the motion? Not seeing any, the motion carries.** Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Two comments. One, with the motion that we just passed on the twenty-fathom closure, and I don't know if there's efficiency to combine that with the lane snapper action, but I'm certainly always looking to see where we can maybe be more efficient.

The other, I guess, question would be we have the AP recommendation for an interim analysis, and we had, you know, John's comments during committee, but, you know, is there interest in looking at another interim analysis, and giving that direction to the Science Center?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Sweetman.

DR. SWEETMAN: I will speak up there. Yes, I mean, I certainly would be interested in another interim analysis along those lines, but I don't want to speak for the rest of the council here, but, from my perspective, it seems like the situation on the water is just a little bit different, just based on some of the overages we've had, and given where we're currently at with the ACL, and so I would be interested to see if the dynamics have changed a little bit there. We got a 60,000-pound increase from the last one, but also being cognizant of the fact that, based on Dr. Walter's comments before, you know, an interim analysis can go the other way too, and I just kind of wanted to put that out there for everyone's full thought process.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: I was initially thinking, you know, we don't need it, and let's just roll on here, but then I thought about it again, where we're up against a closure, and it's close, and so, if it can be done, I would speak in favor of an interim analysis.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I would also be in favor of that, if we could get it, yes. Any other comments on that? Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Do we need a motion?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Yes, it would be preferred.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay. **I will make a motion to request the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to conduct an interim analysis for lane snapper.** I am not going to put a time requirement.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. That's seconded by Dr. Sweetman. Any discussion on this motion? **The motion is that the council request the Southeast Fisheries Science Center to conduct an interim analysis for lane snapper.** All right. **Not seeing any discussion, is there any opposition to this motion? Not seeing any, the motion carries.** Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: So I wanted to ask, and make sure I understand. I

mean, I understand what we're doing here, but the interim analysis will be conducted before staff creates this document to incorporate that in?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: There is no time, mention of timeline, of when this would be done, and it would just be done whenever the Southeast Fisheries Science Center has the resources, the staff, to do it.

MS. BOGGS: Right, and so, I mean, I would hate for you to make any changes, just to have to change it back once you get the interim analysis, and am I missing something here?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I think you're correct. I was looking at this relative to my experience in how long it takes, you know, to develop these other documents, that that could be going along, and then hopefully we might have an interim analysis, and, granted, it might delay it a meeting, but I was hoping to kind of have them both at the same time, you know, is what I was thinking. Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and that was my thought process, right, that we're going to proceed with the lane snapper actions. The SSC is going to have to review the interim analysis, and give us scientific advice, but we could integrate it into the amendment at a later date.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to get clear that this is to consider catch level changes, and sometimes we've used these for health checks, and so that is my understanding of this exercise. The other thing is, you know, I would like to work with the Science Center, and our staff, to try to think if there's other, you know, indices we can look at, besides the headboat index, and I think you guys have some new data-limited tools, and so maybe there's some other things we can consider, when we go through this process, to try to better inform maybe what's going on in the water. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Any other comments? Not seeing any, Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: All right. Review: Reef Fish AP Charter For-Hire Buffer and Fishing Season for Red Snapper and Other Business, Tab B, Number 8, council staff reviewed the Reef Fish AP's discussions and motions about changing the charter-for-hire buffer and fishing season for red snapper.

The Reef Fish AP was unanimous in considering these measures, which has not typically been the case regarding measures like fishing seasons. He added that the for-hire members of the AP thought that fishing into August was less desirable than having access to red snapper in the fall.

Southeast Regional office staff thought that a November 1 start date may not be feasible, due to data availability issues, and instances of short notice of season openings makes it difficult for for-hire operations to book those newly-available fishing days. The chair of the Reef Fish AP replied that, while short notice on re-openings is less desirable, it is still preferable to no additional fishing days later in the season.

A committee member suggested moving the start date for the for-hire component earlier into May. Another committee member thought there was confusion between the public and fisheries managers regarding the use of weekend seasons for private anglers and continuous seasons for the for-hire component. They added that they thought the buffer could be decreased, but did not recommend decreasing it below 5 percent. A committee member thought reducing the buffer to 5 percent was appropriate and noted also that many for-hire fishermen want to see the fishing season open for Memorial Day weekend.

Another committee member expressed concern with a fishing season going into September, which is within a Marine Recreational Information Program, or MRIP, wave and would increase uncertainty in season duration projections. Instead, he proposed projecting backwards from August 31st if the fishing season is expected to extend beyond that date, based on a June 1st start.

The committee member responded that projecting backwards from August 31st would create some uncertainty in the season start date. The Southeast Regional Office Regional Administrator retains the authority to reopen any fishery if it is determined that the catch level has not been met. The committee largely agreed with moving the fishing season opening back into May and said that it would be possible to book days for a late fall season with only a couple weeks' notice.

Council staff briefly reviewed the items covered by the Reef Fish AP under Other Business and will further discuss these items at Full Council, as appropriate.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Mr. Rindone.

MR. RYAN RINDONE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It would be helpful for staff to get some direction on this, about what path we're going, with doing a buffer and season, and it may be possible to take Andy's advice and apply that, you know, and apply that to whatever effort we're going to do, whereby there could be an option to reduce, or remove, the buffer, to provide some options for you guys to look at, and then to have a second action that is kind of like an if-else statement regarding the fishing season.

So the fishing starts on June 1, and, if it's projected to go beyond August 31, then, in that event, the fishing season is projected -- It's like hindcasted from August 31, and that might mean that it starts prior to June 1, and so, if that's something that is of interest to the council, that's something that we could try and write up and get some preliminary analysis on for next time, but that might be a way, like Andy talked about, to be able to do both things at once, without really interjecting a lot of extra uncertainty into the season duration projections, by adding in times that we right now don't have any data for, and so -- At least not in the same way.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: I have a question, and I have a motion, but the question is to Ryan. I mean, these would be two separate things, correct, and not together?

MR. RINDONE: They would be two separate actions. However, the second one, about the season, is inherently dependent on the first one, because, right now, if it starts on June 1, it's not projected to go past the end of August, but, if we reduce the buffer, such that it allows additional pounds to be caught, and we also know that the daily catch rates in August are less than they are in June, then it's possible, and, again, this is without having seen the analysis yet, but, I mean, it could be possible that it would project the season closure to be sometime in September, and so, instead of doing that, you start from August 31 and then look backwards, and that would likely result in you having an opening sometime in May, and so, at that point, it's just a matter of trying to notice the season with enough heads-up that people can start booking their trips.

MS. BOGGS: Well, I was just confirming that -- You were putting it all together in the conversation, and so I would like to make a motion. I guess it would be to direct staff to start a framework action, or do we already --

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Mr. Chair, sorry, but, in April, you

did direct us to do a framework action to adjust the red snapper ACT buffer and the season for the federal charter-for-hire component, and so you already passed that motion. The question is, you know, what range do you want to look at, so we get at this, and trying to get going on it, is what we were trying to do at this meeting, since we could not bring a more complete document.

MS. BOGGS: Okay, and so I'm not sure -- What I would like to see is it be reduced to 5 percent, and so I'm not exactly sure how the motion needs to -- I guess I'm confused, because you're asking what range, and what range are you looking for?

MR. RINDONE: So I think, right now, the ranges that we can justify are, you know, no action, which is do nothing, and 5 percent, which is based on the ACL/ACT Control Rule, and we don't need a preferred right now, but just kind of like tacet head-nodding approval that, yes, this is a reasonable path forward, because we write up, you know, Chapters 1 and 2 for this, and I don't think we need a motion of what alternatives to include, but, because this was talked about during committee, is this an idea that you guys think is decent to move forward with, and, you know, even just discussion on that is probably sufficient.

MS. BOGGS: Okay, and so I guess I thought that we had already agreed to all of this, and I'm confused, but, to your second point, I think that's a little more -- It's not as cut-and-dried as everybody thinks it is with the season.

MR. RINDONE: So we won't know, until we do an analysis, what it looks like.

MS. BOGGS: Well, so, if I'm not mistaken, Amendment 27 set the recreational season for red snapper for the charter-for-hire, and so what you're suggesting -- You would have to change what the current regulation is.

MR. RINDONE: Right, and we would be changing what the regulation is anyway, because it would be changing what the buffer is, and so we would change that regulation, by default, and so this would be changing the season one as well, if that's what you guys want to do.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I have a few people with their hands up. I have Mr. Diaz, Dr. Banks, and Dr. Frazer. Dale.

MR. DIAZ: I just wanted to say I think the range of alternatives that's in there now is reasonable, and I think I said this during committee, but, right now, I think the 5 percent is the best way

to go. I do not like the idea of bringing the season into September, with only a few days, and that's starting a new wave, and you all can remember, during the calibration discussions we had, in Mississippi, just opening up for a couple of days in September, it threw some crazy numbers, and that concerns me, that we might just go a few days in September and have some problems with getting realistic numbers for just a short period in that wave, but I do support the document going forward, and I like basically what Ryan had proposed when he was speaking earlier. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Just to remind everyone, the for-hire component, the effort side is calculated through direct contact, for the most part, except for headboats, for the for-hire. It's through direct contact of the captains, to get the trip information, and so it's a little different, but I see your point, and it still would probably have a chance, but just not as great, but Dr. Banks.

DR. BANKS: I have just a quick clarifying question, I guess. So, if we're talking about, and I don't know if this goes to Ryan or Andy, but, if we're talking about changing the season, potentially, and projecting from August 31, and everybody around this table, in public comment, sounded like we're not looking at moving it into September, potentially, and we move -- We change the buffer, and we change the season, and we've gone all the way up to Memorial Day, and the weather is bad in the summer, and we've been talking about staying in the same position we are now, where NMFS can open the season in the fall again, and so this won't adjust anything -- Because September 1, or June 1, is hard open date, right now, but, if we're talking about projecting, and so, instead of moving the end of the season, we're going to move the beginning of the season, so there's not a solid eighty days or whatever, if that question makes sense, Andy.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: We haven't, obviously, settled on a recommended season, but what I was proposing was, right now, we've been inching toward the end of August, right, and, if we hit the end of August, and we estimate that the quota would not have been filled, right, because we always project the season in advance, right, and we announce it, and then we would start adding days to the start of the season, until we estimate the quota has been filled, right, and that would be the season for the year, whatever that date would be in May all the way to August 31.

Then, once we get the landings through August 31, which would be mid-October, if we determine that the quota hasn't been met, I

have authority to reopen the fishery, right, and we haven't done that but a few occasions, because we've done a pretty good job of estimating when that catch target is met.

DR. BANKS: So my follow-up to that then would be would it not make better sense, if we're talking about adjusting the season, to go ahead and have a set date, and just the ending date still move, and so move it to Memorial Day, or whatever we decide, and then have the ending date still keep shifting to the end of August, and then you can go back to -- That way, there's stability for the charter fleet, and we just moved them from one date to the other, but we're not inching forward, and then we get into a position where they know they have a start date, but maybe NMFS has a little bit of -- Like it came out two weeks, and if you remember that public comment, and so that would give you guys a little more time then at the beginning of May, and now they have to open in a week.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, and I think that's the range of alternatives we need to consider, right, and so it's moving backwards into May or just starting earlier, right, whether it's May 1, May 15, the Friday before Memorial Day, and then running the season out from there, and you're exactly right.

One of the concerns that I identified is, if you move back into May, is you don't then have a set start date for the season, and, of course, the charter captains are trying to book trips, and people are going to be asking them are you starting on June 1, or are you starting some other day, and when is that start date.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. I have Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: That conversation covered what I was going to talk about.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: One other thing I will mention is it didn't seem like there was strong support for a split season, and I know that Ryan presented that as an alternative, and I expressed the challenges, obviously, with reopening on November 1. I think, based on this conversation, it sounds like we're all honing-in on kind of either a fixed start date or working back into May as the range of options.

MR. RINDONE: I think we have good direction now, and so I appreciate the discussion.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: In discussion with my peers around the Gulf, charter boat captains, I would say that the split season is a less-popular alternative, and so I've come around on that, not targeting a split season.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Well, one concern that one fleet had, that I spoke with, is doing too much changing until we get a data collection system in place, because they don't want to start on May 15, the Friday before Memorial Day, and then get shut down on July 1, because we've exceeded the quota, and so there's some concern there, without a data collection system, what could that look like, and, I mean, there's that chance that you take.

I mean, so that was a concern, that they would rather have it in June or July, and not risk losing those days into May, and then I had someone else suggest that, and I know this isn't feasible, but I want to put it on the record, because it was a suggestion that was made, is, if you look like you're going to have extra days, open it the second weekend of January, the second week in February, and, if you lose the days because of weather, you just lose the days, and you don't try to move them, but people are looking for flexibility, but I do get the data collection concern, and they want to make sure they protect that summer season.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Any further discussion on this topic? Not seeing any, Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Update and Next Steps on Recreational Initiative, Tab B, Number 9, Dr. Willy Goldsmith and Andrew Loftus, private consultants for the recreational initiative, presented a status report on the work of the recreational steering committee to-date. Captain Walker and Mr. McDermott are the council's representatives on the steering committee, which is expected to meet monthly.

Dr. Goldsmith reviewed the seven initiatives to be addressed by the steering committee in the next year. A technical working group is being assembled to provide context, background, and supporting information to support the efforts of the steering committee.

A committee member asked for clarification as related to the process to appoint individuals to the committee. Council staff verified positions would open to the public immediately following the council meeting, and individuals would be selected during a closed session at a subsequent council meeting.

Another committee stressed the importance of selecting applicants who would dedicate the time and effort to the recreational initiative that it needs. The Southeast Fisheries Science Center added that it would support the initiative and asked for consideration of a recreational definition of optimum yield and synergy with other council fishery ecosystem initiatives.

Other Business, 2024 Recreational Season for Gag, Southeast Regional Office staff indicated that a Fishery Bulletin announcing the 2024 gag recreational fishing season was imminent. The recreational ACT will be approximately 105,000 pounds gutted weight in 2024, and the fishing season will be open from September 1st through September 15th, closing at 12:01 a.m. on September 16th, 2024.

2024 Recreational Season for Greater Amberjack, Southeast Regional Office staff announced that a regulatory action to modify the greater amberjack fishing season was delayed. The Southeast Regional Office is currently responding to public comment, but does not expect the rule to be in place before the current fishing season is scheduled to open August 1st. Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Dr. Frazer. Any other discussion for Reef Fish? Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before we leave Reef Fish, I would like to highlight the gag issue, and I know there's nobody, that I'm aware of, that is happy with the season, but that's what we have, and need at this time, and what I would like to point out is the sensitivity of this season to the reality, and, based on the average landed fish size prior to the short seasons, there is 850 fish a day, roughly, under this season, before you reach the ACT, and you reach the ACL at approximately 1,300 fish per day, and so it's very sensitive, and, in my opinion, is likely to overrun the ACL, given that low catch.

Yes, the ACL roughly doubles next year, but any excess over this level would then take off of it, which says that there isn't much to work on next year either, and so I just want to highlight that issue, and it may not be that bad, in the sense that, if the short season landed fish size is smaller than this, there are more fish available, but, nevertheless, there are not many, and so it's not a good situation, but, for those listening, I wanted to highlight the sensitivity.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so my question, and I just want to make sure we're clear, and we know what to tell fishermen on the recreational 2024 greater amberjack season, and so, since the framework action cannot be implemented in time, we are going to go ahead and notice the August 1st opening, so people can plan their businesses?

MR. STRELCHECK: Not at this time. We are still working to try to come up with a solution that we could open the fishery on September 1, rather than August 1, but, until we can see if the solution will work or not, and proceed on that course, I would not announce the start date for the season.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I have Captain Walker. To that point, Dr. Sweetman?

DR. SWEETMAN: Do you have any idea, Andy, as to when you would make that decision?

MR. STRELCHECK: I don't have an idea when I can actually share that decision. Right now, and we've been working on it the last couple of days, since we've discussed it in the council meeting, right, and there is, I think, a phone call even scheduled for later this afternoon, and, essentially, when we publish a final rule, there's a cooling-off period of thirty days. If we can publish the final rule in the month of July, and waive a portion of that cooling-off period, which is not desirable, right, and we want to give people notice, then we could have the rule effective, and in place, before August 1, or by August 1, to then delay that start date of the season to September 1, and so that's the path we're working on. Waiving that cooling-off period is not an easy task, and it has to come along with, obviously, substantiated rationale.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker, did you have your hand up?

MR. WALKER: Yes, and I, along with Mr. Gill's scary math on the gag there, and I wanted to ask -- It might be a question for Frank, and I'm not sure, but just to clarify that this year our limit, the gag ACT, I guess it is, is 105,000, and that's including a 100,000-pound payback from before, or so, I think, and so, next year, we would be fishing to three-hundred-and-something-thousand, and that's -- What is that number? Is it 330,000?

MR. STRELCHECK: If there's no overage, the ACT is 319,000. Next year, the ACL is 399,000.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: I'm just curious, and maybe this question is for Mara, but I'm just -- You know, has the thirty-day cooling-off period ever resulted in a rule being rescinded?

MS. LEVY: Rescinded?

DR. FRAZER: Or, I mean, what would keep it from moving forward, I guess?

MS. LEVY: I mean, the Administrative Procedure Act requires a thirty-day delay in effectiveness of final rules, unless there is good cause otherwise, right, and there is a standard for that, and so you have to articulate that. So, if you waive the cooling-off period, then you could be challenged, as a potential violation of the APA, right, if you don't substantiate it enough, and you could be challenged if you do substantiate it enough, and have to go to court, right, and so it's a risk.

DR. FRAZER: Yes, and I just wanted to kind of understand how this actually functions in real life, right, and I understand the intent of the cooling-off period. Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other discussion for Reef Fish business? I am not seeing any, and so we are just after noon, and we had a break scheduled from noon to 1:30, for lunch, and we have -- We're just a little ahead of schedule. We have concluded Reef Fish, which was scheduled to go for an hour after lunch, and then we have completed the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission liaison report.

Other than that, we have everything else on the books, and so do you want to -- What's the pleasure of the council? Do you want to take a full lunch break, or do you want to take just a short bathroom break, and come back and try to finish this? What's the consensus here? I guess, by show of hands, who wants to take a full lunch break? All right. Who wants to take just the bathroom break and come back in?

I've got a report that the traffic is bad, and so, if you all have midafternoon flights, or late afternoon, and wanted to finish early, you need to finish early, and so let's take a fifteen-minute break, and then we'll come back here and try to finish this up.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right, everybody. We're going to reconvene

the council meeting, and we're going to continue on with the Mackerel Committee report. Mr. Geeslin.

MACKEREL COMMITTEE REPORT

MR. GEESLIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Mackerel Committee report, the committee adopted the agenda, Tab C, Number 1, and approved the minutes, Tab C, Number 2, of the April 2024 meeting.

Framework 14: Modifications to Spanish Mackerel Catch Limits and Accountability Measures, Tab C, Numbers 4(a) and (b), council staff reviewed the document that considers modifying the catch limits and accountability measures for Spanish mackerel based on the recent SEDAR 81, in 2023, stock assessment and the council's Scientific and Statistical Committee's, the SSC's, recommendations.

This stock assessment transitioned the recreational catch and effort data to the Marine Recreational Information Program's Fishing Effort Survey (MRIP-FES) and determined the stock was not overfished or undergoing overfishing. This version of the document included an additional Action 3 to consider reducing the bag limit for Gulf Spanish Mackerel.

A committee member noted that, from a biological perspective, there is no need to reduce daily bag limits, stating the Spanish mackerel annual catch limit has only been exceeded three times in twenty years. Other committee members agreed, noting the recent decline in Spanish mackerel may be a downturn in a cyclical process, which anecdotal evidence from this year suggests may be trending upwards again.

The committee proposed a motion to consider and reject Action 3. The committee recommends, and I so move, to move Action 3 to Considered but Rejected. Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. We have a committee motion. It's on the board. Is there any discussion on the motion? Dr. Sweetman.

DR. SWEETMAN: Thanks, Mr. Chair. In light of kind of the discussion that we had during the Mackerel Committee about potentially keeping this action in there, so we can get some further feedback, the CMP engagement, the stakeholder engagement, and how that kind of translates directly into the broader amendment that we're working on here, and so, from that perspective, I would like to keep this in there, and so I would not be in favor of this motion.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: I was going to make a similar comment, given the upcoming meetings, as well as the MSE discussion we had earlier today. To me, it seems prudent that we leave this in the document for now, until more information becomes available.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Any other discussion? Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: Are you looking for discussion on this action or the whole document?

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Just specific to this motion.

DR. FROESCHKE: Okay.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: I speak in favor of the motion.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other discussion? **All right, and so the motion is to move Action 3 to Considered but Rejected. Action 3 is modify Gulf Spanish mackerel bag limits. All those in favor of the motion, please signify by raising your hand. Dale, are you in favor?**

MR. DIAZ: No, and I am against the motion.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Against the motion. Okay. **All those against the motion, raise your hand, just for the record.** All right. We spent money on them, and you're right, Susan, and so let's try this again. Everybody power up your clickers. Hold on. Before you do anything, Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I guess, just to remind everybody, we talked about whether we wanted to leave this in the document, before we did the stakeholder engagements or not, and then we would bring that information back in November, or January is probably more likely, when those would be complete, and, if you want to take it out, I guess we would think about another way to maybe get that information, but it just makes it more clear if we have that, in addition to the engagement, and so I just wanted to make sure everybody was aware of that, and then, if this passes, maybe we should talk again about timeline as well. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: I just wanted to -- In the action schedule, I couldn't remember when the public hearing draft for this particular document was scheduled for.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: So this is a framework action, and we usually just do a little video, but this would be -- With the engagements, we have a specific set of questions, with virtual hearings set up, and a tool that we were going to send out, and then we could put a link to this document, and figure out the best way to do that, if we wanted to consider that moving forward.

DR. FRAZER: That's what I was getting at, is we've got a fair amount of flexibility here, to see what we do. Okay. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Okay, and so go ahead then, and we'll -- Again, the motion, that we're voting on with the clickers, is to move Action 3 to Considered but Rejected. Action 3 is modify Gulf Spanish mackerel bag limits, and so go ahead and vote please, using your clickers.

C4. To move Action 3 to Considered but Rejected…				
First Name	**Last Name**			
Kevin	Anson		No	
Susan	Boggs		No	
Billy	Broussard	Yes		
Dale	Diaz		No	
JD	Dugas	Yes	No	
Anthony	Overton	Yes		
Tom	Frazer		No	
Dakus	Geeslin		No	
Bob	Gill			Abstain
Michael	McDermott		No	
Chris	Schieble	Yes		
Rick	Burris	Yes		
Andy	Strelcheck		No	
Kesley	Banks		No	
CJ	Sweetman		No	
Troy	Williamson		No	
Ed	Walker	Yes		
Results - Passed	**Subtotals**	**Yes (6)**	**No (11)**	**Abs (1)**

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Okay. **According to the clicker results, the**

motion failed five to nine and one abstention. Two people haven't clicked in. It's not going to make a difference, but -- Again, if you can press your clickers, your vote that you had indicated earlier. All right. **The motion failed six to ten with one abstention.** Mr. Geeslin.

MR. GEESLIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Dr. Simmons, for the clarifying information. A committee member questioned the timing of this framework action, noting that Spanish mackerel are a tier 3 (medium exposure) species for MRIP-FES and suggested that, by going final with the document at the August 2024 meeting, the council would miss valuable feedback on Spanish mackerel from the CMP (Coastal Migratory Species) virtual workshops and potentially the MRIP-FES pilot.

A committee member asked council staff about the timeline for Spanish mackerel virtual meetings and stakeholder engagement, wondering if it would be best to postpone going final with the document until these engagements have been completed and considered. To this point, council staff replied that these engagements are planned for the fall and will be complete with a summary by January 2025.

SERO staff recommended the council move forward with taking final action on the document, as there is a requirement under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to reduce catch limits based on the current scientific information from the stock assessment and SSC. Thus, waiting for the MRIP-FES pilot study to be completed would not be plausible.

A committee member responded that, while waiting for the MRIP-FES pilot study is not tenable, waiting for the stakeholder engagement could be beneficial.

A committee member noted that stakeholder engagements are unlikely to influence Actions 1 and 2 of the framework amendment, and thus asked what feedback the committee expects to receive. The committee member noted that the sentiment regarding Spanish mackerel is dynamic, and possibly changing, and, for that reason, public comment on the current state of Spanish mackerel would be valuable.

A committee member raised concerns over the use of the terminology "landed weight" in the draft framework amendment and wished to consider its removal from future Spanish mackerel documents, noting it is not used with any species outside of mackerel and there is a need for consistent terminology. Council staff recalled that the rational for using "landed weight" was that some mackerel

are landed whole, others are landed gutted, and there is no conversion. Council staff said this was discussed in the Interdisciplinary Planning Team, and SERO was disinclined to change this, due to existing regulatory language and potential inconsistency with the South Atlantic Council. The committee asked the South Atlantic Council liaison if they have considered these issues, to which he replied they have not.

The committee chair pointed out that these issues are not relevant to the management issues currently being considered and suggested moving on. A committee member agreed and noted that the virtual meetings could be a good time to explore this issue.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Excuse me a second, Mr. Geeslin. We have a question. Dr. Sweetman.

DR. SWEETMAN: Not necessarily a question, and so, in light of kind of what was captured during committee, relative to the timing of all this, and the motion that was just passed, I would like to put forward a motion. Bernie, I will make it very simple for you. **To delay action on Draft Framework Amendment 14 until CMP stakeholder engagement is completed.**

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Dr. Sweetman, is that your motion?

DR. SWEETMAN: Yes, sir, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Is there a second to the motion? It's seconded by Dr. Banks. Any discussion on the motion? Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Well, in light of the requirement in Magnuson, is that going to be acceptable? I mean, will that give you enough time to finish the document? Do you understand my question? I mean, are we --

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Dr. Sweetman.

DR. SWEETMAN: It's my understanding that we don't have a timing issue on this one. The stock is not overfished, or not undergoing overfishing, and the issue at-hand is that we have the SSC recommendations here, and we're not saying that we're not going to act on it, but it's just simply saying we're waiting on that, and so, if you're thinking of it from a timing perspective, I don't think that's a concern here.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other discussion on the motion? **Is there any opposition to the motion? Not seeing any opposition, the motion carries. Mr. Geeslin.**

MR. GEESLIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. King Mackerel Management Measures Draft Options, Tab C, Number 5, council staff reviewed draft options to consider modifications to king mackerel management measures in response to public concern about the stock abundance and an observed recent decline in landings.

The cause of these declines appears to be caused due to environmental influences, rather than fishing mortality. As a result, the committee expressed concern that reducing catch levels may result in seasonal closures, reflecting an improvement in stock health rather than exhibiting an unstainable fishing level.

The committee discussed the fishing dynamics of the commercial sector. Southeast Fisheries Science Center staff commented that king mackerel appear to demonstrate stability in catches, despite population declines, as king mackerel seasonally aggregate in core areas in the southern Gulf.

A committee member responded that, while the southern gillnet zone has landed much of its allotted quota in recent years, it has taken substantially longer to do so. A committee member suggested that the conventional management measures presented may not be the most appropriate approaches to address the concerns for this stock. Instead, he proposed exploring provisions within the post-season accountability measures to allow for dynamic processes in the fishery to be reflected in the management measures.

Council staff also recommended considering changes to the number of permitted vessels prosecuting the fishery, as well as the catch per unit effort by gear and fishing zone over time, to assess any future management decisions. The committee requested staff explore some of these other options and provide a presentation to the committee at the August 2024 meeting. Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Is there any other business for Mackerel? All right. Not seeing any, then that will take us to the Migratory Species Committee Report. Dr. Banks.

MIGRATORY SPECIES COMMITTEE REPORT

DR. BANKS: Thank you, Chair. The committee adopted the agenda, Tab M, Number 1, and approved the minutes, Tab M, Number 2, of the August 2023 meeting.

Scoping Document: Gear Considerations in Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS), Tab M, Number 4(a) and (b), staff from HMS provided

an overview of a scoping document to consider gear modifications for several HMS fisheries.

A committee member reported that, at the most recent HMS advisory panel (AP) meeting, the AP had recommended expanding secondary gears for bait collection, beyond cast and dip nets, to trapping gears for bait. HMS staff replied they had noted those AP comments and were in the process of considering those recommendations.

A committee member seconded the AP's recommendation and requested that commonsense approaches be considered when expanding the allowable gears for baitfish. Several committee members recommended considering recreational spear fishermen as conventional recreational hook-and-line anglers when regulating management measures such as bag limits.

The committee suggested that HMS consult with state fishery agencies when proposing these changes. As an example, the State of Texas classifies sharks as a gamefish and would not prohibit spearfishing in state waters. The committee commented that these potential discrepancies would need to be considered as well.

Several committee members stated that swordfish vessels using buoy gear at night could potentially interact with other swordfish fishermen that fish during the day, which could create gear entanglement issues. They recommended HMS explore these effects during the development of the proposed measures.

A committee member supported the gear modification that would authorize the use of power assistance for buoy gear. A committee member asked if those vessels using buoy gear for targeting HMS species were restricted to operations at night. HMS staff indicated that current regulations do not mandate night fishing for that gear type. Mr. Chair, this concludes my report.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you, Dr. Banks. Dr. Frazer.

DR. FRAZER: I just wanted to make sure the second sentence in that second paragraph is correct. I think, as a gamefish, right, you would prohibit spearfishing in state waters.

MR. GEESLIN: Dr. Frazer, that is correct. Sharks are currently listed as gamefish, and, therefore, would not be allowed to be harvested through spearguns.

DR. FRAZER: So I just want to correct the report. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Good catch, Dr. Frazer. Thank you. Any other

comments? Okay. So that then takes us to our supporting agency updates, and the first one is the South Atlantic Council liaison. Mr. Griner.

SUPPORTING AGENCY UPDATES
SOUTH ATLANTIC COUNCIL LIAISON

MR. GRINER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I want to thank you for all your hospitality this week, and for allowing me the opportunity to participate in your meeting. It's always a pleasure to visit this council. I will keep it brief, but I did want to touch on a few items that may be of interest to this council.

In the South Atlantic, we have really struggled with participation in our for-hire required reporting, and so we have initiated a SEFHIER improvement amendment, using ACCSP's current technical review efforts, as well actions and alternatives being considered here at your council in the Gulf. In addition, we have approved an Ad Hoc For-Hire Reporting Advisory Panel to try to help us out with that.

In another attempt to garner more participation in the for-hire reporting, we began work on a for-hire limited entry amendment, but we have since put that on hold, pending resolution of some issues with the NMFS Southeast permits system. We did, however, finally complete work on our wreckfish amendment, 48, which amended our one and only IFQ program, to bring it into the current century with electronic reporting, in lieu of paper tickets, and it did include a cost recovery program.

We also postponed development of our private recreational permitting amendment, pending changes and improvements to MRIP, and also pending some information we could glean from the Florida Wildlife Commission's new exempted fishing permits for red snapper.

Our gag grouper is under its second year, I guess, of rebuilding, and it's actually going to commercially close next week, with only a two-month season, but it is trending well, and so I think that the recovery is on track, and is going to go well.

In response to changing environmental conditions and fishery dynamics, we are hosting a series of mackerel port meetings, all the way from New England to Florida, very similar to your stakeholder engagement efforts here in the Gulf, and, to-date, they've been very well attended, and very well received, and so that's been a positive thing. It's always a -- We always seem to get a lot of bang for the buck when we have these stakeholder port

engagement-type meetings. They're informal, and the fishermen really seem to take to them.

Finally, I would like to just wish all the best to Dale and Bob and Susan, and thank them for being such effective council members. I've learned a whole lot from them, and, for that, I'm very, very grateful. You know, being raised by a Mississippi mother, being around Dale is kind of like sitting around the dinner table, and so it's always nice to be around him, and, Susan, it takes about thirty seconds of being around Susan to know that you either bring your A-game or go home, and everybody I think knows how sharp Bob's mind is, but I'm here to tell you that his elbows are sharp too, and so be careful around him. Thank you all again, and I enjoyed being here.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for the report, and so next would be the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement report, Tab R, Number 2(a), and we have Enforcement Officer Salinas. Welcome.

NOAA OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

MR. ED SALINAS: Thank you, Mr. Chair and council members. If I don't look familiar to you, it's because this is my first Gulf Council meeting, and so I'm excited to be here. I've told my boss, many times, that I would like to attend one of these, and, now that I have attended it for a week, I'm not so sure that I'm going to volunteer right away, but, no, it's been great, and it's a good experience to see the different ins and outs of everybody's comments and complaints and whatnot.

Before I get started, I will introduce myself, and so I'm the enforcement officer out of the Houston, Texas field office, and, for the past four years, I've been covering the coastal Gulf of Mexico, from Sabine to Matagorda, and then another officer picks up from Matagorda on, and so I've been doing that for the last four years by myself, and, with that being said, I would like to introduce one of my colleagues, Enforcement Officer Demonte Jones, who was recently hired as my partner, and so I'm grateful for that, and now we've got a little bit more boots on the ground, so to speak. With that, I will go ahead and get started on the presentation.

The report was sent, and I hope you've had a chance to kind of get through the report. A quick snapshot of Quarter 2 for us, and so we have 110 open cases, or open incidents, which fifteen of those were referred to General Counsel, and some of those included the sanctuary cases, with our ATBAs out of the Florida Keys, with barges, or vessels, that are over fifty meters in length, and they

can travel to the ATBA, and so a lot of those get referred to General Counsel.

Our observer harassment is another area where we have referred cases to General Counsel, and then, lastly, our IFQ program. As far as summary settlements go, they range from $275 to $2,000, and some of those include retention during the closure, and some are sanctuary related. Overall, a 41 percent no violations, or compliance, rate.

Some of our enforcement highlights that I want to kind of go over is we identified a new port, and I won't say a new port, but a new location to kind of inspect seafood, and that's out of Panama City, Florida, and so we had an operation there with CBP and our state partners, and I was lucky enough to be a part of that operation, and I've kind of built friendships there, and a working relationship, and so, from now on, we can inspect seafood coming through the Port of Panama City, and mostly that's seafood that comes from Mexico, and so that's one of our good things that we had in Quarter 2.

Also, throughout the year, we have several patrols that protect the sanctuaries in the Florida Keys, the SPA patrols, and so that's being done monthly, quarterly, and all the time really, and then we just had an operation in Florida, south Florida, where we held joint with our gear management team, which we did TED inspections for captains, both dockside and at-sea, which is good, because it gives the captain a chance to correct his discrepancies before getting underway, and we all know that the shrimping industry is kind of at a low point, and so we like to do this, to give that captain a chance to be squared away before he gets underway. That way, he's not found with violations at-sea, and so that was a good operation between us and the State of Florida and our gear management team.

Another thing we want to highlight is our MMPA efforts. We recently just had a case where a young man jumped in to -- I'm not sure it was ICW or whatnot, but he was jumping in and feeding the dolphins, and kind of harassing them, and so we have efforts going on there as well.

Some of our enforcement partners, you know, we work with Florida, and all the way to Texas, and some of the cases that we referred, and twelve came from the State of Florida, six from the Coast Guard, two from Alabama, one from Texas Parks, and one thing I want to mention is that we work hand-in-hand with Texas Parks, and, a lot of times, they take us out on their resources, and some of those cases that we capture come straight to us, and they don't

necessarily get referred through Headquarters, and so I just wanted to make that clear, and we appreciate you, Les, and the Texas Parks, for accompanying us, as we have limited resources down here in Texas.

Some targeted operations, we have for-hire charters on the west coast of Florida. Some of the violations included reef fish used as bait, undersized fish, and failure to keep fish intact, and, as I mentioned, we had the seafood import operation out of Panama City, that we got to inspect and train to do samples of seafood, and I just wanted to mention too, on the shrimp aspect, and I know there was a comment made.

Although we don't inspect the quality of the shrimp, we do inspect and take samples to make sure that shrimp is what they say it is, whether it's farm-raised or wild-caught, and so we do hold importers accountable, when it comes to imports of shrimp.

Another targeted operation would be IFQ catch shares, and so that was a month-long operation, where we just kind of tackled the IFQ industry in a way to make sure that they're doing what they're supposed to be doing.

June 1, obviously, was the start of the for-hire season. Some things we've been looking at, especially here in the Gulf, that I wanted to mention is the vessel marking requirements. There is a lot of vessels that are not compliant with that, and I just kind of want to put a reminder out there that that's something we're looking at. We're kind of giving education, at the moment, at least in my AOR, and we're educational, in terms of not writing tickets, and we're just kind of saying, hey, this is the requirement, and here it is in the CFR, and let's get you squared away, and so I've been seeing that a lot lately, and so that's some of the things that we're kind of highlighting when we do board our charter fleet out in the Gulf.

That's kind of a brief highlight there, and I know the report that you got is a little bit more extensive, and I hope you had the opportunity to read it, which highlights a lot more stuff that we're doing, but this was just sort of a snapshot of kind of what we've done in Quarter 2 here in the Gulf, and, Mr. Chair, I will take questions.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Officer Salinas, thank you very much for the presentation, and, in full disclosure, your remarks regarding your willingness, or desire, to come back for a future council meeting have been echoed at least once before by others here, but thank you. Do we have any -- Captain Walker.

MR. WALKER: So the charter -- It's the ID number size, right, and is that the issue?

MR. SALINAS: That's correct.

MR. WALKER: Has that been -- I know it's being discussed, to change it on vessels under thirty-three feet or so, and, Andy, has that been changed yet, or is it still in the discussion phase?

MR. STRELCHECK: Carrie can maybe update the timing, and we were going to have the Law Enforcement Advisory Panel look at this at some point in time, correct?

DR. DIAGNE: Thank you. We tried a first attempt, and we sent out a doodle poll, of course, to have the meeting at the end of May, but, unfortunately, we couldn't have a data suitable for all of the Law Enforcement Technical Committee members, and so we are going to send a second doodle poll and try to have the meeting before the August council meeting.

MR. WALKER: So was that to -- Well, you pointed out, and it made me think of -- I wasn't sure if the regulation had changed or not, but the size of the numbers, I guess, is the -- The smaller boats have been asking for some leniency, myself included, and, instead of having ten-inch numbers, there's some discussion about, if you're under thirty-three feet, you can have eight-inch, or six-inch, numbers, or something like that, and it wasn't necessarily a question for you, and I guess that just made me think of it. While I have the mic, any action on charters running without federal permits?

MR. SALINAS: So some things that I can mention, and some things I can't mention, because, you know, they're currently under investigation, but, yes, there's been multiple I would say operations that are targeting illegal charters here in the Gulf.

MR. WALKER: That's the same answer I got last time, and it's the same answer I -- You know, it's nothing on you, but is this because the illegal action is still being ironed out, because I heard some things, and some guys in my area got caught, but it's never been mentioned again, and I've never gotten any information on it, and it's just kind of vanished, and so I --

MR. SALINAS: What is your area, sir?

MR. WALKER: I'm in west Florida, west-central Florida.

MR. SALINAS: Okay.

MR. WALKER: I was told that there was a detail done down there, and they got some of the guys that we had all been pointing at for a long time, but we've never gotten any, you know, response on what they got caught for, or if they were charged, or anything like that, and it's been quite a while, but I think I was told, at the last meeting, that sometimes the legal end of it takes a while, and maybe that's why it's not been announced.

MR. SALINAS: It does, and then, you know, me being in Texas, I don't -- It's hard for me to speak on the Florida side of it, and what's going on over there, but I can speak to Texas, and it's that we're really taking a hard look, in terms of illegal charters.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: A comment first to Ed, and so there's a report in the briefing book, and, if you go to the back, there will be a table, and so you can take a look and see if there's illegal charter violations that are reported there, once they get through the process.

Thank you for your presentation, and it's been great to have you here this week. You know, one of the things that we talked about, at-length, was changes to the for-hire red snapper season, and I'm just curious, from an enforcement standpoint, and now we have the for-hire season, and we have the private season, and, off of Texas, we close federal waters and have a state-water season, and so are you encountering a lot of challenges with enforcing that, just because of angler confusion, or do people really kind of understand all the various seasons and who can fish when?

MR. SALINAS: I think it's always a challenge, whenever you have state regulations that are different than federal regulations, and, just for instance, we had -- Me and Enforcement Officer Jones just recently completed a cutter patrol with the Coast Guard, and thank you to the Coast Guard. They're a big part of what we do, and I appreciate you all.

During that patrol, you know, we can kind of sniff out like, you know, the, oh, I didn't know, that type of thing, but the biggest confusion that I hear from people is, oh, well, I thought we could retain four, instead of two, you know, and so that's the biggest thing, and so I think, when you have different regulations for a state and the EEZ --

I think sometimes it may cause confusion, and maybe to new anglers,

but people that have been fishing for some time I think are pretty well aware of the difference in bag limits, but just to -- Over our two weekend patrols that we had out in the Gulf of Mexico, and one was seventy miles offshore, and one was probably thirty miles offshore, and we had over forty boats that we boarded, and about ten violations, or ten cases, with all over the limit of red snapper.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other questions for Enforcement Officer Salinas? I'm not seeing any. Thank you, sir, for your efforts, and thanks to Enforcement Officer Jones. It's good to see you this week, and hopefully we'll see you again, but thanks to you and your colleagues. We appreciate the work you do.

MR. SALINAS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Next on the liaison list would be that from the U.S. Coast Guard, Tab R, Number 4, and Lieutenant Fuhs.

U.S. COAST GUARD

LT CARL FUHS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm Carl Fuhs, from Coast Guard District 8, based out of New Orleans. We oversee the entire Gulf. This is a layout of our AOR, and I will draw your notice to our dividing line off the west coast of Florida, with District 8 and District 7, and so I'll touch on some of the joint things we've been doing with District 7 recently when I get to the domestic fisheries side.

For the Exclusive Economic Zone enforcement, and this is our international fisheries counter IUF mission off of Texas, down the maritime boundary line, and, to-date, we've had -- I think we've have a few extra interdictions for Fiscal Year 2024, since I sent this in, and so I think we're sitting at forty-seven right now for this fiscal year, and the amount of red snapper will be a bit higher than that.

We've seen an increase in lancha incursions over the last several months, and I think, about a month ago, we had I think close to ten separate lanchas interdicted within a one to two-week timeframe, including five lanchas at once, that ended up rafting off next to each other, and we've seen an escalation in use of force from the lanchas, as they're coming north, and so we're continuing our efforts down there, partnering with CBP and NOAA and TP&W, especially, to get after the illegal incursions.

Some of the big things that I wanted to note is assessing the

illegal red snapper catch is very difficult. Ideally, we would like to catch them as they're coming north across the line, before they're able to set any gear in the water.

However, a lot of times, we're catching them after they set their gear, when they're running back south to hang out below the line while the gear soaks, and so, when we're catching them then, the gear is just kind of out there ghost fishing and having a further impact on the environment, and so the red snapper that we have in these totals here is only what we find onboard the boats, and so that's when we catch them as they're running south with a full load, and so it's only a small portion of what the actual impact is from them.

Likewise, our cutters are routinely recovering several miles of illegal fishing line, each patrol, and so, every time they see a group of high-flyers out there that are illegal, they will sit out there and recover, you know, three to five miles a day, as they see them.

During the year, we've seen I will see a relative increase of cooperation with Mexico, leveraging some of our Coast Guard and Mexican navy talks to put a little bit more pressure on them to patrol the maritime boundary line. We had a really good exercise, based out of Corpus Christi, Texas, this past year, that sought to increase cooperation with them, and we've exercised a few projects, including that picture there, with Mexico since then.

We had another one lined up for two weeks ago. However, the weather that was rolling through -- We cancelled that, just due to the sea state, but the exercise that we did in Corpus Christi was really was really good, because it not only brought together Mexico and the Coast Guard, and the sole focus on that was getting out to the illegal lancha fishing. However, TP&W played a significant role in that, as well as some of our other federal partners, like CBP, and so that was a really good exercise for us.

On the domestic side, we're sitting at roughly 427 boardings, with ten significant violations. Our most common fisheries violations are TEDs and BRDs being out of spec. However, while we're out there to enforce fisheries laws, we're also out there to enforce safety laws, and so, while we're getting a good number of fisheries violations, we've also seen an increase in safety violations, and I will highlight specifically -- We call it 75-25, but it's the crewing requirements, and having the proper number of U.S. citizens and people permitted to work onboard a vessel, versus not, and so we've seen a big increase, specifically here in the Houston-Galveston AOR.

About two months ago, we had one of our eighty-sevens go out, and, within I think ten boardings, they had five or six 75-25 violations, and so we've seen a dramatic increase in that, within this local area specifically, and also a few down off of Corpus Christi, and we're also seeing -- I think the next biggest safety violation that we see are EPIRBs being out-of-date, batteries expired or not registered.

Then, on the domestic side, we continue to build on our partnerships with NOAA and the state LE agencies throughout the Gulf. Specifically with NOAA, we do a lot with overflights, on leveraging the aviation training center out of Mobile, Alabama, and so we'll let NOAA officers up in our aircraft, and they go observe a number of the different marine protected areas around the Gulf.

Specifically along the boundary line between District 8 and District 7 off the west coast of Florida, we've had a few good joint operations with NOAA up in our aircraft, from the District 8 side, and then leveraging District 7 assets to go -- Actually, Florida vessels issued some violations for fishing in the marine protected areas.

Then, lastly, marine protected resources, and, as Mr. Salinas mentioned, we continue to see a lot of this. I think, over the winter, with the cold weather off of Texas, our station helped with a lot of turtles during the cold snap, and so we continue to take an active role in that, as we see them, and that concludes, and I will be happy to take any questions, if there are any.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any questions? Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Lieutenant, for your report. Relative to the EEZ enforcement, and you may have addressed this in one of our prior presentations, but I don't remember the answer, and so is the dip in last year's interdictions a result of decreased effort by the Coast Guard, less time doing that activity, or was it the fact that you spent the same amount of time and just didn't get many interdictions?

LT. FUHS: That's a good question. It's not necessarily a function of -- The illegal fishing is not going down. I think, if anything, it's increasing, and it's due to, frankly, a lack of manpower. You know, all the military services are encountering that, especially the Coast Guard, but we're working on actually some -- We're developing some new statistics, at the Headquarters level, of getting a percentage, based off of our number of available boat

hours, and so number of hours we're able to have a small boat on the water, to do a correlation between that and the number of interdictions, to get a better ratio there.

MR. GILL: We call that CPUE in the fisheries world.

LT. FUHS: I guess one thing I want to thank everybody for the year that I've been here. I'm transferring out, within the next month or so, and we'll have Lieutenant Jackson Morton will be coming to take my place. He just finished a two-year grad program up at the University of Washington for living marine resources, and so he'll be coming in a little better prepared than I was to, I think, take the seat, but he should be a good benefit.

Then, also, I made a concerted effort to try to get, when the meetings are held in our local areas, to get our local LMR officers to the meetings, and so we have Lieutenant Junior Grade Owen Gates here, from the Sector Houston-Galveston area, and then I know our LMR officer from Sector Mobile attended the previous meeting, and so I'm going to try to make sure that continues on after I leave, as the meetings go around the Gulf, to get exposures to the local sectors as well as the district level.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for those efforts. Any other questions for Lieutenant Fuhs? I just had a couple, maybe related to the 75-25, and can you briefly describe what that means again?

LT. FUHS: So it's based off the manning requirements, and so the number of U.S. citizens or people with a valid work permit, and so basically what it's trying to prevent is U.S.-flagged vessels have non-U.S. masters, or having a crew of non-U.S. citizens on a U.S.-flagged vessel, and so, based off the makeup of the crew, we have a little formula that we'll run through, based off of the different visas and work permissions that people may have, and based off of, after running that, then we'll determine whether or not it's a violation.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: So what do you do if you find that they've exceeded that? Do you detain anybody, or do you get Customs and Border Protection involved with that, or no?

LT. FUHS: No, and it's a safety violation, and, normally, that vessel would be terminated for safety, just due to not having the proper-credentialed mariners onboard, and so they will get escorted back to the pier and issued a violation.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you, and good luck to you. We'll miss you, but good luck to you in the rest of your endeavors.

Thank you.

LT. FUHS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Okay, and so that will conclude all of the liaison reports that we have, and that will take us to our next agenda item, and that's Discussion of Council Planning and Primary Activities, Tab R, Number 5. Dr. Simmons.

DISCUSSION OF COUNCIL PLANNING AND PRIMARY ACTIVITIES

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, we're just trying to give the council a better idea of what our plan is for the next meeting, and we are still working on the best infographic to do that, and so we're still making some changes, but if you just focus on what we have here on the screen for now.

For the Generic EFH Amendment, we have contract work that's being done on that, and that information will go to the SSC in July, and then you'll probably get a short report at your August council meeting, and then we can maybe start work, or more discussions, on that effort, and what you might want to consider changing, during the November council meeting.

We're planning to bring a presentation for the red snapper private recreational accountability measures. For the for-hire data collection amendment, you all discussed bringing some more details on the effort validation, and a revised draft, as much as we could, on some of the other actions, I guess depending on far we get.

For Spanish mackerel, you postponed that until we complete the stakeholder engagement, and so that would be sometime in January that you would see that again. For king mackerel, we're going to work on a presentation for you to think about in August.

For Amendments 60 and 59, we're going to work with staff and figure out which one of those we can bring back that will have the most information or data for you to continue to refine. For Amendment 58, shallow-water grouper, we are trying to bring a draft, at least options, for that document. For the framework action for red snapper, the for-hire buffer and adjusting the season, I think you gave us clear direction on that, and we'll try to bring a draft, at least of 1 and 2, for August, and then we have been working on the framework action for the shrimp vessel position data.

We've written a letter to try to get some additional information from the Science Center, and make sure we have that available for the IPT, and so we're planning on, right now, bringing a draft for

August. Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Any questions about the schedule? Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, I'm looking at, obviously, the number of actions here, and that's a pretty hefty workload, and so, Carrie, thoughts? I mean, the private rec AMs would be one that is just a presentation, and it's not as heavy of a lift, but is it -- Would it help, you know, with the schedule, if we moved that to November, rather than August?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: I think it would, if we want to give it a lower priority, if we don't think we have room on the agenda.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I mean, obviously, you know, staff has to go back, and we have, you know, a limited number of staff, analysts, people working on all of these actions, right, and so that, to me, just seems like one that we want to work on, and make progress, but I'm not sure it's urgent to actually bring back to us at the August meeting.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Okay. That's good information to have. I guess, just talking to Dr. Froeschke, we don't have the twenty-fathom boundary on here, obviously, because you just passed that motion for the lane snapper framework, and so maybe just a brief discussion about priority for any of those two frameworks, as you see the workload in front of us.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: So this is just me talking, right, and so, to me, the top priorities for the council right now would be shrimp, for-hire, for-hire data collection, and the IFQ program, just because we've been wrestling with those for quite some time, and, you know, we want to continue to make progress on those. I think, you know, if we want to potentially make changes for the red snapper season next year, which would be -- I'm not sure it's going to be possible, right, and that would be something that you could slow down a little bit, because we may not be able to get something in place before next year.

Then I think the shallow-water grouper action is going to take us some time, and so that's going to be, obviously, one that we're going to want to have enough time on the agenda to really work through, and so that's kind of where I'm at, and so lane snapper

and the shallow-water grouper closure, you know, probably is something that I would say would wait until November.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Okay. That sounds good, and, also, I forgot to point out the shallow-water grouper document -- That does have the yellowedge grouper assessment in it as well, and so that is getting to be a very complicated document.

OTHER BUSINESS
LITIGATION UPDATE

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other discussion on the schedule, the priorities? I'm not seeing any, and so then that will take us to the last item on the agenda, and that's Other Business, and so we had a litigation update prior to Reef Fish, and, Ms. Levy, is that all -- Have you provided everything that you wanted to for a litigation update?

MS. LEVY: Of interest though, I will note that the U.S. Supreme Court is ending its term, and they still have yet to decide the case related to chevron deference, and so we would expect that to come out tomorrow or Monday, or possibly the next day, and so that has not direct implications to the council, but it has implications, because everything you do is implemented through rulemaking, and so maybe we'll talk about that next time.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mara, for mentioning that, and so is it possible that the court will adjourn, at the end of the day on the 30th, and that decision be delayed in coming out, or is it normally that it would be in the couple of days -- I'm trying to think what happens if, by the 30th, we haven't heard, and what follows on, based on court procedure.

MS. LEVY: I think we will hear. They generally don't -- I don't know the U.S. Supreme Court that well, but, whatever they take up in the term, they finish by the end of the term, and so we should have a decision. I did read something where they just added Monday as a potential opinion-release date, and so they originally had Friday as the last day, and they added Monday, and so they're clearly working towards finishing the cases that they have, and that will be one of them.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Any other questions about litigation? All right, and so the next item under Other Business is Discussion of Briefing Book Deadlines. Mr. Gill.

DISCUSSION OF BRIEFING BOOK DEADLINES

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you recall, we discussed this briefly at the last meeting, and, just to recap, the question here is whether there is interest on the council in attempting to deal with the issue of late-arriving items in the briefing book prior to the council meeting.

This problem has been around forever, and certainly it occurred when I was last on the council, and it probably will occur in the future, and there are workload issues, and there are staff issues, and there is priority issues, et cetera, and it's not a thought about considering blame, but it is the recognition, at the end of the day, that the buck stops at this table, and you have to make a decision based on the information that you've got.

Early in the process, it's not a big deal. At the end of the process with an issue, it is a big deal, and so the question is, is the council interested in considering a way to deal with this, to help in some fashion, and I would note that it doesn't make any difference what you do to address it, and there is pros and cons. There is some pain pills that are involved. For example, one way to address it is to have fewer council meetings, with the same workload, and that's not very practical.

There are other ways, and I have -- I will float a motion, just to have a discussion about whether the council wants to address it in any fashion, and perhaps this one, or not, or just leave it as it is.

Relative to the motion, if you would bring that up, Bernie, the motion that I have prescribed -- One of the downsides is that it requires council staff, and the council, to be the enforcers. You know, at the end of the day, if you violate the intent of the motion, then somebody has got to say, woah, okay, we're not going to address this, and, well, we all recognize there is pressures, at times, that we have to address things, whether we particularly want to or not.

The motion reads that agenda items not fully in the briefing book five calendar days prior to their time on the final agenda should be deleted from the agenda and scheduled for the next council meeting.

By "not fully in the briefing book five calendar days", what that means, or what it's intended to mean, is that it's available to the public, so that they have access to it as well, and the time is precise. As an example, we have an agenda item scheduled for

ten o'clock on Wednesday, for example, and that would say that whatever the briefing book items that are needed for that item would be in the briefing book by ten o'clock on Monday, and it doesn't mean twelve o'clock. It means ten o'clock, and five calendar days, in my opinion, would be the minimum, because you have a travel day, typically, and if it's, for example, a Wednesday calendar item, you also have two days that you will be at council, and you won't have time to really address and get into it.

That's one way to approach it, and it's certainly not the only, and I just throw it out there to see if the pain that one gets on late-arriving briefing book items, and, again, this is not intended to be punitive, pointing fingers, or assigning blame, and it's trying to say that, well, in order to make the best decision we can, whatever the materials that are considered necessary to make that decision, we have to have enough time to digest and consider them, and so I throw that motion on the table, Mr. Chairman, for consideration, and let the council do as they may. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you, Mr. Gill, and so we have a motion. Is there a second to the motion? It's been seconded by Ms. Boggs. Any discussion on the motion? Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, after the April council meeting, we had a little bit of internal conversation about this as well, and tried to look at some of the materials that came in later, and, in looking at that, and, you know, I agree that April was not our best council meeting.

We did have a lot of items that came in after the second briefing book. However, many of those items were for the council's information, and they weren't necessarily materials that the council had to make regulatory decisions on, and the other thing that I wanted to point out is, oftentimes, we have very little control on what we're asking people to do.

I think that better communication, and coordination, with the state liaison, or not the state liaisons, but the liaison reports, and with BOEM, and I think we've tried to improve that, and they met our deadline, and I think we had good communication on that, and so I think that has improved, but, oftentimes, we get policies, and directives, and things like this MSA data confidentiality proposed rule, and the EBFM roadmap, and they don't fit into our council meetings at all sometimes, unless we ask for an extension, and so, if we just cut this stuff out, it may mean the council has no way of providing comments, and so I just wanted to bring that up.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: I just wanted to acknowledge that, Bob, I think the intent is good here, right, and I would struggle to support it, because I know we're often under the gun to get materials in, and we, obviously, need some additional time, but our goal, obviously, is always to try to provide that material a sufficient time in advance, so that council members can prepare for the council meeting, and sometimes we fall short of that, because we are struggling just to get the materials and information done, but I think we do need to probably continue conversations around this. I wouldn't want it to be so binding, but point well taken. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: I tend to agree with Andy about that, and I think, with some more frequent communication amongst those that are expected to produce at least the presentations that the council requests, and needs for deliberation, and, you know, maybe that would foster more timely submissions.

Then, for those other items that just kind of pop up, and we're kind of in a rock and a hard place with, you know, comment periods, and the timing of our council meetings and that type of thing, and not having an opportunity, maybe, to at least discuss it during a council meeting, and I think could limit us too, in those situations, and so I wouldn't be in support of the motion. Mr. Schieble.

MR. SCHIEBLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand the intention, Bob, with where this is going, and, in some respects, I agree with trying to put some teeth into something, some gravity, to where there is accountability of having things by a specific deadline, but then, on the flip side, I look at it like, well, what if we miss something really important by one day, and then we don't get to see it, as a council, because it just missed it by one day, right, and would that day have been enough for us to go through it anyway ahead of time?

I'm sort of on the fence with this whole thing, and I know -- I may be wrong when I say this, but I think the SSC took some sort of action like this, a few years ago, where they requested things had to be in front of them within a week before the meeting, in order for them to fully review them, and I might be wrong, and I don't know if that's like defined in a motion, or if that was just their request, but I believe they had something to that effect.

You know, each of the states meets with the Executive Director and the Chairman, and we kind of go through some things that we would

like to see every year, or issues that we have, and this comes up, at least with our Louisiana meeting, almost every year, about the timing of things, and I don't want it to reflect on the staff over there, because, every meeting, we load them up with more stuff to do.

We ask them to write letters to so-and-so, and come back with an analysis of this, or whatever, and they've got a lot on their plate, and it's not a reflection of what the staff are doing or not doing, and it's a reflection of what Carrie just said, that they're dependent upon outside sources for things, to get data, to make an analysis, or a slide show, and so, however we go forward with this, I just want the staff to know that, whatever we do, it's not reflective of what you're doing back there, and you guys are doing your job.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Any other discussion on the motion? All right. I tried it with hands earlier, and I'm not going to try it again. We have one more -- Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and so I have no problem withdrawing the motion, if there is no traction on the council, and, obviously, I won't be here, one way or the other, but I would just throw out the idea that there are times when it is consequential, and, in fact, Andy was involved, way back when we were going to go final on gag, and it came on Monday night, and so I just offer it as a suggestion, and, if the council doesn't want it, I would be happy to withdraw it.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Well, without additional folks giving an indication as to where they lean, I mean, I think I would still go through with a vote at this point, unless you want to withdraw it, and I'm not -- If you want to leave it, we'll leave it, but are we ready for the clickers?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: They shut them down.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: They shut it down? **Okay, and so we're going to have to raise our hands, and, if you're in support of the motion, please raise your hand now. All right. I didn't see any hands go up, and is there any abstentions on the motion? Anyone abstaining from voting? All right. I don't see any hands up for abstentions, and so the motion failed.** Sorry to see your last motion, Bob, go down in flames, but, anyway, that will take us --

We did, at the beginning of the Full Council meeting, we did add discussion of timing for response to comment requests, and that was brought up, and suggested or asked, by Mr. Gill, to bring up

and put under Other Business, but, Mr. Gill, do you have anything to say towards that?

MR. GILL: I withdrew it, and I will deal with Carrie and you directly, to give that suggestion.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: All right. Thank you very much. Is there any other business that needs to be discussed? Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: The question that I was asked most this week is when are announcements about council appointments going to be made, and I would like to update everyone that I don't have an update at this point. In all seriousness, phone calls could be made as early as this afternoon, and it may be tomorrow, but there will be an announcement between now and close of business on Friday.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you for the update. All right, and so, as we close out the meeting, again, Bob, Susan, and Dale, thank you for your service to the council. We really appreciate it, and good luck to you, and hopefully we'll see you soon.

MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN ANSON: Thank you, Dale. We appreciate it. Otherwise, the meeting is adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 27, 2024.)

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