GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Lodge at Gulf State Park Gulf Shores, Alabama

April 5, 2022

VOTING MEMBERS

Tom Frazer.....Florida
Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
Susan Boggs.....Alabama
Leann Bosarge.....Mississippi
Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
Phil Dyskow.....Florida
Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
Bob Gill.....Florida
Jessica McCawley.....Florida
Chris Schieble (designee for Patrick Banks).....Louisiana
Bob Shipp.....Alabama
Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
Greg Stunz.....Texas
Troy Williamson.....Texas

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
LCDR Lisa Motoi.....USCG

STAFF

Assane Diagne.....Economist
Matt Freeman.....Economist
John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
Karen Hoak.....Administrative & Financial Assistant
Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
Ava Lasseter.....Anthropologist
Mary Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
Natasha Mendez-Ferrer.....Fishery Biologist
Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
Carly Somerset.....Fisheries Outreach Specialist

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

Richard Cody.....NOAA
Peter Hood.....NMFS

Jim Nance.....GMFMC SSC
Kelli O'Donnell.....NOAA
Ed Walker.....AL
John Walter.....SEFSC
Laurilee Thompson.....SAFMC

- - -

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....3

Table of Motions.....3

Adoption of Agenda and Approval of Minutes and Action Guide and Next Steps.....5

Review of Reef Fish Landings and IFQ Landings 6

Red Snapper Private Recreational Component 2021 Landings Summary and 2022 Season Projections.....16
- Alabama.....16
- Florida.....26
- Louisiana.....28
- Mississippi.....31
- Texas.....38

Draft Options Amendment 54: Modifications to the Greater Amberjack Catch Limits and Sector Allocations.....44

Review of Revised Great Red Snapper Count Estimates and SSC Recommendations to Red Snapper Catch Advice.....62

Presentation and Discussion of Gulf of Mexico Gag Grouper Interim Rule, SRFS Calibration, and Interim Analysis.....75

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Programs.....105
- IFQ Focus Group Formation and Next Steps.....105
- SSC Presentation.....109

Review of Gulf Red Grouper Interim Analysis Heath Status and SSC Recommendations.....115

Other Business.....117
- Discussion of Reef Fish AP Motion Regarding Permits.....117
- FWC's Decision on Goliath Grouper.....120
- Further Discussion of Gag Grouper.....126

Adjournment.....130

- - -

TABLE OF MOTIONS

PAGE 71: Motion to direct staff to begin work on a framework action to revise the red snapper catch limits based on the SSC's March 2022 catch limit recommendations. The motion carried on page 74.

PAGE 110: Motion that the SEFSC and SSC prioritize increased human dimensions data collection and analysis, consistent with the recommendations from the report, "The Use of LAPPs in Mixed-Use Fisheries." The motion carried on page 115.

PAGE 118: Motion to request the Southeast Regional Office to analyze and advise the council with regard to allowing permit leasing by permit owners. The motion failed on page 120.

PAGE 121: Motion to request that the SSC reconsider the OFL and ABC for goliath grouper. The motion carried on page 125.

- - -

The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council convened at The Lodge at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Alabama on Tuesday morning, April 5, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Tom Frazer.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA
APPROVAL OF MINUTES
ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS

CHAIRMAN TOM FRAZER: We will call to order the Reef Fish Management Committee, and the first order of business is the Adoption of the Agenda, which is Tab B, Number 1 in your briefing materials. Is there any modifications or additions? Mr. Gill.

MR. BOB GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to add an item under Other Business, the discussion of the Reef Fish AP motion regarding permit leasing.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay, and so Reef Fish AP permits. Ms. McCawley.

MS. JESSICA MCCAWLEY: I would like to add an item to talk about FWC's decision on goliath grouper under Other Business.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. FWC goliath grouper. Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have a couple of slides that staff put together, and it is posted on the website, under the discussion on Gulf of Mexico gag grouper, the supplemental rebuilding plan and regulatory timeline.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right, and so there's a tab identifier for that?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: It's under Tab B, Number 8, the last item.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right. So Tab B, Number 8, and we'll incorporate that into the gag discussion. All right. Is there any other Other Business items? I am not seeing any, and so can I get a motion to adopt the agenda, as amended, with the addition of the other business items?

MR. GILL: So moved, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: We have a motion by Bob Gill. Is there a

second?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Second.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Seconded by Ms. McCawley, and so the agenda is adopted. The next order of business is the Approval of the January 2022 Minutes, Tab B, Number 2 in your briefing materials, and is there any modifications of the minutes? I am not seeing any, and can I get a motion to approve the minutes?

MR. GILL: Motion to approve.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Motion by Bob Gill. Is there a second?

MS. SUSAN BOGGS: Second.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Seconded by Ms. Boggs. Thanks, Susan. All right, and so we will go ahead then and move into the meat of the agenda, and we have the Action Guide and Next Steps. Mr. Rindone, I think it's probably best if we go ahead and tackle those kind of issue-by-issue, if you want. Is that all right with you?

MR. RYAN RINDONE: That's all right with me.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. So then we can go ahead and move right into the Review of the Reef Fish and Individual Fishing Quota Landings. Ms. O'Donnell.

REVIEW OF REEF FISH AND INDIVIDUAL FISHING QUOTA LANDINGS

MS. KELLI O'DONNELL: Good morning, Mr. Chair. Okay. As with CMP, and it's the same with reef fish, and the 2021 and 2022 landings are preliminary, and we have commercial landings through the end of February.

Gray triggerfish, the same thing we're seeing with CMP yesterday, and they are on a decline in landings since 2020, and the yellow-dashed line for all of the reef fish species presented is, again, going to show the average for the 2017 to 2019 fishing years, which were also all years in which the gray trigger commercial sector had a closure, and they have not had a closure since 2019.

The same thing for greater amberjack, and there's been a decline in landings since 2020, and they also had in-season closures in 2017 to 2019, and they did have a little bit of an uptick in landings at the end of 2021, to get them a little bit higher

than 2020, but, in none of the years since we have implemented the trip limit step-down, once 75 percent of the ACT has been reached, has it been implemented. They have not reached that point of even reaching the 75 percent of their ACT for us to put that trip limit step-down into effect.

Gray snapper is the same, and it did have a little bit of an uptick in landings at the end of 2021, but still not quite as high as what their 2017 to 2019 average had been.

Lane snapper is getting on par to what their average was, but then they had the closure, because we were anticipating that those landings were going to exceed what their ACL was, and the new lane snapper document had not had regulatory implementation yet, which did happen right at the end of last year, but it does not look like fishermen really went out and fished those last couple of weeks of the year.

As a reminder, the stock ACL did just increase, and is now in FES units, and so when, we present the recreational landings at the June meeting, that will only be through the end of 2021 and showing still the CHTS units, and then we may not be showing lane snapper recreational landings until we get a couple of years to go off of under the FES units, but we will still show what the commercial units are.

Vermilion snapper is the same thing, and it's still been a little bit lower than they have been in their 2017 to 2019 average, although, since 2020, they seem to have kind of a new lower average that is similar.

Yellowtail, they did have an uptick in landings this fishing year, but then they kind of leveled off, although, in the past couple of years, it's right around this March time that they start having an uptick in landings again, and so we will see if that is par for the course, and we see that at our next meeting.

Cubera is up more than what they have been, on average. They didn't really seem to be affected at all by the 2020 to 2022 fishing year. I mean, most of their landings have still been on par for their average, even for 2017 to 2019, and they are showing lower landings, and I was looking, just this morning, and commercial landings are still less than 1 percent of their ACL, and this is a stock, but they pretty much have been landing about a little bit less than 50 percent of their ACL, which is pretty low, and it's only a little over 5,000 pounds, but, since they did exceed the ACL last year, between commercial and recreational landings, they will get a projection this year, and

we will let you know if a closure is anticipated, but that won't be until later in the year, once we start getting some recreational landings in.

The same thing for mid-water, and they did have a closure last year, because they had also exceeded their ACL in 2020, and this is another one of those stocks that has an accountability measure that's only in the year after they have exceeded their ACL, where they have a projection for closure, and so they did close last year.

The majority of the mid-water snapper stock landings are from the commercial sector, and so we are keeping an eye on that, to see where they are at, and, currently, they are only about 12 percent of the ACL landings right now, although, as we heard from the fishermen last year, it's not until about April or May that those wenchman landings were starting to increase, and so that will be the timeframe that we're starting to really keep a close eye on, these next couple of months, to see if that happens again, like it did last year.

The jacks complex is another one that -- With being a stock, we're having to wait for both landings, and, especially in this case, the majority of their landings are recreational, and it's not going to be until later in the year that we see what is happening, as far as landings, but they did exceed their ACL last year, and so they will also have a projection, to see if a closure is needed, this year. That is the end, and so I'll see if there is any questions.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you, Kelli, for the presentation. When you were discussing lane snapper, did I understand you to say that we won't be seeing the recreational numbers in FES for two years, that we're currently monitoring in FES, and I didn't quite understand what you said about that.

MS. O'DONNELL: What we've been doing with these slides is showing what an average in landings has been for the past couple of years, and then what the current year is, and, since we don't -- We would have to do some back-calculation stuff, and I'm not sure if that's the path that we wanted to go down for showing the recreational landings in July, but, if you still would like to see that, then we could talk with our data branch, to make sure that we could have everything in the correct units and show what it is, the next time we show recreational landings, which would be the October meeting.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: A follow-up, Ms. Boggs?

MS. BOGGS: Well, I don't understand, because red snapper is FES, and triggerfish is FES, and I don't recall that we've had those issues with the other species, and so here we come back to this common currency, and, I mean, we're talking so many currencies that I can't keep up with what we're doing, and I don't understand why lane snapper would be any different than trigger or red snapper or all these other species, and maybe Andy can answer that question. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Rindone.

MR. RINDONE: I was just going to say, for a point of clarification, red snapper is not in FES, and it's still in CHTS, but Andy, and then you can come back to me, Mr. Chair, if you would like.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. ANDY STRELCHECK: Thanks. Good morning. Just to clarify, FES started in 2018, and so we do have FES landings estimates from 2018 forward. Anything prior to 2018, we would have to essentially back-calculate, or estimate, what the landings would be, to have an FES equivalent, and so any species that are currently monitored in CHTS, or even going back to the old MRFSS methodology, once we switch over to the FES, it could be compared to data from 2018 forward rather easily.

MS. O'DONNELL: Thanks for that clarification, Andy. That's what I was trying to get out, but you made it more clear.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. LEANN BOSARGE: So I was confused too, and can we go back to the screen for lane? Did we get recreational landings for lane, or did we only get commercial landings? I think that's what we're trying to figure out, is where are we at on that?

MS. O'DONNELL: At the last June meeting, the council decided to only get a presentation of recreational landings at their June meeting and the October meeting, and so, at this June meeting coming up, we could have final 2021 recreational landings, and we'll give a presentation on that, and, by October, we should have a couple of waves worth of 2022 recreational data, and we'll present that, and we're not presenting at meetings in between, because we really don't have any updates by that time.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Ms. O'Donnell, I think there's a little confusion there, and I think we were going to ask the council about that, but they had not made that decision yet, I believe.

MS. O'DONNELL: That was at the last June meeting that that decision was made.

MR. RINDONE: Kelli, I think the point that she's making is that it wasn't a decision, and it was a discussion point, and that decision is something that the committee would still like to review, it seems.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: I don't know if we're going to have that discussion now, or if this is slated for a future meeting or what, but, I mean, I will throw my opinion out there. To me, it's important to see the landings updates for all sectors, whether there is two or three for that particular fishery, or it's a stock ACL.

It's important to see the whole picture at every meeting, and we have waves for MRIP-FES, and so I don't see why we can't get an update at every meeting, and so is the question are we going to give it at every meeting or are we going to get it twice a year? Is that the question? What were the options? I guess I'm not sure. I want it at every meeting, but I certainly am a little nervous if we're talking about only getting it twice a year.

MS. O'DONNELL: Well, I can say, like for this meeting, and even the January meeting, we do not have any 2022 recreational landings yet, and so there wouldn't be anything to present, except to show zero landings, and I see that Andy has his hand up, and maybe he can add to that.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I will go to Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Kelli made one of my points. Obviously, because of time lags in data collection, presenting recreational data during the year -- We might not actually have landings to present.

The other, I guess, point I've made to council staff is we have a website that summarizes the recreational and commercial

landings, and that's available at any point in time, for anyone that wants to look at it, and so I see this as very duplicative, to present to the council and also maintain that website more in real time, and so certainly, whether we're presenting to the council twice a year or every meeting, that other information is available on the NMFS website for people to review at any point in time.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Rindone.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to remind everybody, the MRIP data are collected in two-month waves, and the data for a two-month wave are not available until at least forty-five days after the end of that wave, and then they will go through continual QA/QC procedures until such a time as the landings data are collected for the entirety of the year, and they've all gone through that process, and then they're eventually certified as final, which can take a year or more after the end of that calendar year.

In reference to the website that Mr. Strelcheck is talking about, the data are continually updated on that page as well, which is why, whenever council staff and SERO staff reference information on that page, it's referenced with a date, because you could look at it today and it says one thing, and, by tomorrow, the numbers could have been slightly shifted, because of some change in procedure, or sorry. Not a change in procedure, but a change in the data from that QA/QC procedure.

Until the data are actually finalized, it should be expected that there could be some fluctuation, and so I would encourage the council to consider the ACL monitoring page as kind of a heat check, as a reference, but, until the data are actually listed as final, they are not final.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Peter.

MR. PETER HOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to add just a couple of things here. The dataset that Ryan has been talking about is -- We do provide that, and that's Tab B-4(b), at this particular meeting, and, you know, the most up-to-date, you would obviously -- If you went right on our website, you would be able to see that, and I would be happy to provide anybody with that web address.

Then the other thing I just wanted to mention is that our LAPPs branch, with our data analysis, they're a person down, and it takes a while to corral the data and get it ready for these

presentations, and, in some of our internal discussions that we've had, it just seemed that it would be easier, and more informative for the council, if they got this information twice, once in June, and that would be able to show what happened in a previous year, and then in October, and that then would allow the council to see what had happened during the first part of the year, and so it's -- From our perspective, it's a way to be a little bit more efficient and provide some really good information and for our analysts to do some of the other things that they also have on their plates. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Hood. Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: I'm looking at the website now, and the last update was January 13 of 2022, and so is that because there has not been any new data come in since January 13 of 2022? I am looking at the 2021 preliminary Gulf of Mexico recreational landings by two-month waves, and so, if that's the most current data that -- I mean, if this is what we're referencing, that's fine, but, I mean, is that correct to say, that we haven't -- That there hasn't been an update in almost three months?

MS. O'DONNELL: I would have to look at the page, but, if you're looking at recreational landings, we are -- I think we may have gotten Wave 6, or, if not, we're still waiting for Wave 6, and I would have to look at the website to confirm, and then, if we did, then they're kind of in that QA/QC portion of procedure of trying to get the landings considered final, and I see Andy and Richard, who could probably give more detail.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right. We're going to go to Mr. Strelcheck and then Dr. Cody and then Mr. Gill.

MR. STRELCHECK: I will go ahead and defer to Dr. Cody.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Richard.

DR. RICHARD CODY: Okay. I think there's a little bit of confusion here about what's available and what's not available on the website. All data are considered preliminary until we produce final estimates, and that usually is for the entire year and occurs around April 15 of the following year, and so, around the middle of this month, we should have the final 2021 estimates. We'll also have Wave 1 estimates as well.

Right now, the website lists the landings for each of the waves, through Wave 6, as preliminary, because there are some, as Ryan pointed out, some QA procedures that are ongoing, and those have

to be evaluated before we consider them final, and so hopefully that clears things up a bit.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Richard. Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So my feeling on this subject is that, as we've heard, the information is available twenty-four-by-seven, and, in terms of presentations to the council, I'm comfortable with a June and October intention, and I don't need any more than that, and, if I do, I will go to the website and get it. Thank you, sir.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Gill. Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Sometimes I think the conversations we have around this table get just silly, and so, if you think about, fundamentally, what we do around this table to manage fisheries, it's based on science, and you have a stock assessment, and you get a quota out of the stock assessment, a number of pounds that you are supposed to land, and so that is what we are managing to.

Now, we do that through a lot of different mechanisms, but, ultimately, we're trying to not exceed a quota, and so not getting a landings update to see where we're at, right, how are we progressing, at each meeting seems kind of silly to me. Give me whatever you've got.

Surely, on the commercial side, and we're getting like three years' worth of landings in that presentation, for each species, 2017 through 2019, or more than three years, because that's three years right there, and then we're looking at 2020, 2021, and 2022, but we can get nothing whatsoever for recreational, and I don't see that as viable.

We have the landings in the past at least, and we should at least be looking at their trends, right, over the last couple of years, to go along with ours, and then as much as you can get in up-to-date information for the current year for them, so that we can see how we're doing as managers. We need to know what track we're on. Are we trending too high? Are we starting to bump up against things? That's when we have a conversation around the table of what's driving this, and it's very present in our minds at that mind, where we know this is going on and that's going on.

If we look at it months down the road, if we get this only twice a year, and we have to try and think back of, well, what was

going on, and was there something that drove that, and we have really good discussions, around this table, when we're looking at these charts, and so I think it's of the utmost importance that we have all the information that we can get at each meeting on how we're tracking on our management goals to a quota.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: To Leann's point, and in a way to streamline things, and that's what we're trying to do, right, is, if this is -- I don't want to say a burden to the agency, and I don't know how else to say it, but can staff just put that link in our document, and at least we can -- But I'm like Leann.

If we don't look at this every time we meet, and see the trends, you don't think about it, and so, maybe as a reminder, as opposed to a formal presentation, the link can be included in our documents, and that says, oh, I need to go look at that, and then, if we have questions, we can ask, and maybe that's a compromise between the agency having to prepare a presentation and us getting the information that a lot of us at this table would like to see.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Rindone.

MR. RINDONE: Mr. Chair, if it pleases the committee, I can send out that link to everybody right now, and you can all bookmark it in your browsers and have it forever and ever, amen. It has all -- It doesn't have the charts, but it has all the landings information about -- It has like all the preliminary landings information, the previous years, and all the historical landings information going back about ten years or so. It includes everything broken out by sector, and then there's links to IFQ landings information as well on the SERO page.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. There's a couple of things going on. I think the reference to the link would be good, and, in fact, in the briefing materials, you might just add that, moving forward, and so there's a couple of issues.

Recently, we opted to get kind of a visual kind of characterization as to what was going on with the IFQ fisheries and the ACLs there, and, as Peter pointed out, there is, in the briefing materials, the tabulated ACL data, and I guess that's really the question here, if that's the most up-to-date information at the time that it was put in the briefing materials, and is that right, Mr. Hood?

MR. HOOD: Yes, it is, and I was just going to add that maybe one of the things we can do is, as we provide those tables, during the presentation that Kelli gives, if it looks like there's an ACL that maybe, in the recreational sector, that looks like it's running high, that could possibly lead to a closure or something like that in the future, we could then identify that and provide that information at that time, just so that you all have the -- That you have sort of a heads-up that there might be a closure in the near future.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay, and so, moving forward, I think we've got some direction here. We'll continue to get kind of the graphical updates, as Kelli provided today, and we'll still get, in the briefing materials, the most up-to-date catch limits and landings, and we'll also provide a reference to the data that are available on the NOAA website. Okay. Is there any further discussion? I am not seeing any, and so we will move forward.

The next agenda item is Item V, the Red Snapper Private Recreational Component 2021 Landings Summary, and so we will start off with Alabama.

MR. KEVIN ANSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. RINDONE: Mr. Chair, we still have the for-hire projections that are from the Southeast Regional Office.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I apologize. Sorry, Mr. Anson. So we'll go back to Tab B-4(c). Kelli, I've got you back on the line. Sorry about that, or is that Peter? Peter or Kelli.

MR. HOOD: Andy will be providing that.

MS. O'DONNELL: Yes, Andy.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Mr. Chair. We are still working on the projections and the document for the projections, but, if you recall from last year, we closed the for-hire season in early August and then reopened it later, and I believe it was in the November timeframe.

Based on catch rates, we expect that the season will be open longer in the summer this coming year, and I don't have an exact estimate, but, right now, it looks like the season will be projected somewhere between about seventy and eighty days, given recent catch rates in the fishery, and that would extend the

season into the mid-August to late August timeframe, and so we'll be working on publishing a note to all for-hire fishermen, very quickly, and letting them know about the exact season dates that they can begin booking trips and schedule, obviously, any fishing activity. Any questions?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. It looks like Ms. Boggs has a question.

MS. BOGGS: I know you said it's not exact, but did you say approximately seventy days?

MR. STRELCHECK: Approximately seventy to eighty days, and so, depending on the catch rates you use, the years you use, it's variable, and so we're looking at, obviously, what's the kind of best way of estimating the season for this year, but it's in that range.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Any more questions related to the for-hire season projection? All right. I am not seeing any. Sorry that I missed that item, but we'll go ahead and we'll move then into the red snapper private recreational landings summary, and we'll walk through each of the states, and we'll let Mr. Anson and Alabama go first.

RED SNAPPER PRIVATE RECREATIONAL COMPONENT 2021 LANDINGS SUMMARY AND 2022 SEASON PROJECTIONS
ALABAMA

MR. ANSON: Thank you. For 2021, the season opened on Friday, May 28. It included extended weekends that were from Fridays to Mondays, and I have a slide later on in the presentation, but that essentially was our second year of doing a Friday through Monday season.

In 2021, the daily bag limit remained the same as it has been for some time, even before the state management, at two fish per person per day at sixteen inches total length minimum size limit. Our allocation for both private recreational and state charter anglers was 1.1 million pounds.

The season closed on Monday, December 27, which resulted in 124 days of fishing, and the estimate from Snapper Check for private recreational and state charter vessel anglers was 939,143 pounds, and so, in 2021, we also required mandatory reporting for two additional species, gray triggerfish and greater amberjack, and, just like in red snapper, we require just one landing report per vessel for those species, and fish are

required to be reported before landing.

In 2020, we had included those two species, but it was for voluntary reporting only, and we had low reporting rates for that in the voluntary stage, and we were not able to produce any estimates.

In 2021, this just graphically depicts, from the start of the season to the end of the season, the cumulative daily landings for the private and state charter vessel anglers, and you can see there's a big jump in effort and landings during the beginning portion of the season there, in the first twenty days, or three weeks, essentially.

I believe, at that time, we had a tropical storm in the area, and not a direct hit in Alabama, but at least it was enough to impact effort, because of the increased seas, and we've seen, over the last four or five years, that, once you get through the end of June, the effort starts to go down, and then, when you get into sometime in August, mid-August, the effort really goes down, probably as families and such start returning to school and other outdoor activities take priority, like hunting.

This has come up in conversations in the past related to red snapper, as well as other species that we manage, and so I just provided this to give some context, I guess, to at least the weight portion of the estimation that we do, and so you can see that roughly 800 or more fish are weighed each year, since 2018, in private recreational, and then it ranges quite significantly, more so depending upon a season length, but anywhere from forty to nearly 200 fish during the four-year period for state charter vessels.

This is a season summary from state management. 2018 and 2019 were the EFP years, and so it just provides -- I took this table from Chris's presentation. He had it in there, and he was the first one, and so it's nice to go second, and so I added this, just to give, again, some information as to when the season originally was open and closed, and whether or not it had a second season opening or closure, and, in 2018, that did not occur.

We just had a lot of fishing effort, and a lot of catch, and we had to close it sooner than we had wanted, but we closed it after twenty-eight days, and we did not reopen, but, in 2019, we reopened, after a brief closure, just so we could make sure our landings were correct, and then we chose the most appropriate date that we would kind of balance the landings with what we

believed to be proportional effort.

Then 2020 was the same thing. We reopened the season. Then, in 2021, we did not close, or have a pause, during the season, and we just opened it and kept it open until the end of the year, and we had 124 days, again, of the season.

For the 2022 red snapper season, we will also open on Friday, May 27, which is the Friday before Memorial Day, and, again, we'll include Fridays through Mondays, two fish per person, sixteen-inch minimum size limit, and we will close the season when the quota is projected to be met.

We'll also, again, include mandatory reporting of red snapper and gray triggerfish and greater amberjack by the private recreational and state charter vessel owner-operators before the fish are landed in Alabama, and, in 2022, it will be the first year that we will not require owner-operators of federally-permitted charter boats and headboats to report either of those species.

They had been required to report the three species in 2021, but, because of SEFHIER coming onboard, we just saw that as extra reporting burden, and they're essentially reporting the same thing through SEFHIER at the end of their trips, and so we hope that the information would be almost identical to what we would have gotten, if not better, since they're reporting every trip and such.

What we also have had, for the last couple of years, but just wanted to use this as an opportunity to remind everyone who might be listening in, is that we also have required the purchase of a reef fish endorsement for any angler, and it's not exclusive to vessel owners, or those fishing from vessels, but any angler that would be in possession of reef fish, and reef fish as defined by the council, and so there's a large suite of reef fish species, and so I just wanted to throw that in there, and that concludes my report.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Anson. It looks like we have a couple of questions. Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Kevin, for that report, and so, by not requiring the charter folks to report, are your landings, and your landings report, going to change, or are you going to draw that information from the federal information and add it to your other landings data?

MR. ANSON: Sorry, Bob, and I'm a little confused, and so the information that I provided here in the presentation just applied to state only licensed charter vessels and private anglers, but, in the past, up until this year, we have required reporting, through Snapper Check, of federally-permitted vessels, for federally-permitted vessels, but we generate estimates specific to that sector, and so we just won't be asking them to report, starting in 2022, and so we won't have that information any more from federally-permitted charter vessels and headboats, starting in 2022. Did that answer your question?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: I think I'm a little dense, but what I'm trying to clarify, in my own mind, is whether your landings data, say for 2022, is going to be directly comparable to your landings data for 2021 and 2020, as a result of that change.

MR. ANSON: For the entire recreational fishery for red snapper, no, it will be not. We will be lacking landings information from Snapper Check for federally-permitted charter vessels and headboats, but it will still be maintained for private vessel anglers and state charter vessel anglers, so that we can monitor the quota.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right. Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: So back to Mr. Gill's question, which is not my question, but the data up to now -- I didn't think we reported in 2021, the charter boats and headboats.

MR. ANSON: Well, we received reports from those entities, and we generated estimates, there was roughly about 55 to 60 percent, we estimated, of the vessel trips for federally-permitted charter vessels that had reported a trip that matched our algorithm, and, for headboats, it was less than that, but we were receiving reports, were requiring reports, from 2021 and previous years.

MS. BOGGS: Okay. Well, that's a conversation I can have you with you otherwise on the side, and so the numbers you presented today include landings -- I think that's what Bob is trying to ask, and your numbers have never included that data that you just collected.

MR. ANSON: Yes, and I was just -- In prior instances, where we've come to the council and we've specifically addressed the

issue of private recreational landings, related to the EFP discussion and implementation, as well as the state management, any of the numbers that we provided from Snapper Check, during those conversations, were related just to private recreational vessels and state vessels, and that's what I provided today, as far as the details. I have never provided any charter vessel, federally-permitted charter vessel, information to this body, when we've had these discussions.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Now my original question is do you know approximately how many of the reef fish endorsements the State of Alabama has sold to private anglers, not including the charter/for-hire, because we have to have those as well?

MR. ANSON: That number escapes me, and it had jumped up this last year, and I would have to lean on Scott a little bit. Scott is looking it up.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right. We'll circle back on that. Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Kevin, I really liked the presentation, and, of course, you're always thorough, and so I guess I shouldn't have expected any less. I like that slide you put in there, because you said you liked Chris's, where it gives us the rundown over the years, and that's really helpful, and thank you, because, for me, to try and keep up with each state's season and how you change over the years is tough, and so thanks.

Then I also like that info that you put in there on the weights, how many fish you weighed, and that, to me, is important information as we move forward, because it can be useful in other conversations that we may have, or in the scientific realm, and I think, the more that we communicate things like that, people listen in, and they say, hey, I know a way that we could use that, and so I think that sort of goes back to that dating app thing that we talked about yesterday for scientists and fishermen and managers.

I do have a couple of questions. On the Slide 3, where you have your chart, and I think you talked about this a little bit, but I'm wondering if you can give us some more detail, and so it looks like, I guess around Day 18 or so -- You had a season of a hundred-and-something days, and, around Day 18, you all had pretty much caught about half your quota, it looks like, and then it really tapers off after that. It flattens out, in other

words, and it took over a hundred days to catch the other half of the quota.

Is there -- I have a couple of questions, Mr. Chairman, if that's okay, but is there something that was driving that? That seems awful early to see the taper off. I can see it in the fall and things like that, but that's essentially, I guess, in June that it really just -- Fishing almost stops, and what do you think was going on there?

MR. ANSON: Well, I don't know. You saw the sign when you drove into town, Leann, but Orange Beach calls itself the red snapper capital of the world, and so we, as a state, and through federal management over the years, have built up the red snapper fishery, and the red snapper fishery is well-renowned, to many folks, as the place to go if you want to catch your fish.

This has created a situation, just like many other resources that states and the federal government manages, is, if you have a lot of opportunity, i.e., an easy opportunity, to catch that resource, or get that resource, you want to go when it's best to do it, and so we have a lot of folks, we believe, that basically mark their calendars for the first couple of weeks, three weeks, in June, and they're going to go fishing.

I think you see this in the federal for-hire fishery as well, and there's a lot of effort in the early part of the summer than there is in the later part of that summer window, and so they will do that, and we have seen that over the years, and I've presented similar graphs in the past, where you'll see this real large peak in that first several-week period in June, and this year was no different.

Once that occurs, those folks take their one or two trips, for a good number of the folks here, and they have their fill, so to speak, and they move on to other things, and other things occupy their time and their resources, and that's, I think, in summary, what we think is happening, is the demand is just -- There's a pent-up demand every year, and people know that it's easy to go and catch their snapper, and they will do it.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: A follow-up, Ms. Bosarge?

MS. BOSARGE: So, I guess, dovetailing into that, I was wondering -- I was a little worried, and is that kind of telling us what may be going on in the water with the fish, and I was a little worried about that, when it takes that long to catch the rest of the - You've got about a million pounds, a little over

that, somewhere in there, and so to catch the other half-million pounds.

On those weights that you did the weights, and you did a lot of weight measurements, did you see that average weight going down? I mean, are we starting to have a lot of undersized fish, or do you see anything that's troublesome or worrying? Then so the average weight, and then did you see any issues with compliance on the reporting? I am just trying to look at all the possibilities of what might be going on there, other than just people really want to do it in May and June.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Kevin.

MR. ANSON: On the compliance issue, it was around 50 percent, which is slightly better than it has been, for the private recreational, and, as far as the weights, they went down for -- As I recall, they went down, and I am looking at this by wave, and I can't recall by week or anything like that, but I look at it by wave, and that's how we set up the estimates, and it went down for federally-permitted charter boats, for state charter boats, and for headboats during the time series, but it stayed relatively the same for the private recs.

Going back to my discussion about, you know, the effort and such, there is kind of a demographics, if you will, there within that group of fishermen that target red snapper and go for red snapper, and I believe that, the folks that go in that early part of the season, they are -- There is a large proportion of those that just are very indifferent, if you will.

They will go out their couple of times in the year, just to say they went fishing, because the catch is easy, but that's also intermixed with those folks that go out on a regular basis, and they'll continue to go out throughout the remainder of the year, and so you have those trips mixed in, in the early part, with the folks that are just kind of really part-timers with those that are going fishing a lot, and you will weigh and measure those fish.

The fish is -- Because of our artificial reef system, the way it is, and it's all of the habitat for red snapper off of Alabama within twenty or twenty-five miles, which is brought up as this localized depletion question, off of Alabama. Most of that habitat is artificial in nature, and it's either artificial reef or it's a rig, and so those folks go to those areas, and they will fish those areas down throughout the season, and so you'll see that, and it's not only just private anglers that are

fishing that habitat, but it's also the charter boat anglers, state and federal, federally-permitted charter boats, that are fishing that habitat as well.

You will see a depletion, if you will, or a marked reduction, in the abundance and the size of fish off of the artificial habitat, but, once you get out to twenty-five or thirty and more miles, you start to transition more into natural bottom, and that natural bottom, at least as far as the Great Red Snapper Count is concerned, accounts for around 65 to 70 percent of the abundance of fish, and those fish are a little bit more disperse, and they're also a little larger, and they're a little harder to catch, but, because they can be caught, and because they are a larger size than those that are on the artificial reefs, those fish -- Those people that are accounting for these trips in the later part of the year, as avid fishermen, they're still going to those areas, and they're still able to catch those fish, and so that's why we've got all sizes of fish, or good sizes of fish, inshore in the first part of the season, and those numbers go down, but then we're getting trips measured, and catch weighed, from those people that are going farther offshore later in the year, and so, when you look at the average size of fish, it has remained relatively stable in the private recreational fishery.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: One more.

MS. BOSARGE: Okay. That sounds good. That really explains it for me, Kevin. Thank you. On the compliance, you know we had some discussion yesterday about compliance, and it was on the commercial side, and the compliance was about 60 percent, as we're phasing-in something new, and so I think we have to have that discussion on the recreational side, too. The compliance is about 50 percent with a mandatory reporting, and so what -- On the commercial side, we were talking about revoking permits, you know, if you didn't comply with what we were trying to phase-in, and so what is Alabama's plan to get compliance up?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Kevin.

MR. ANSON: It's essentially the same thing that we've been attempting to do for the last four or five years, and that is to educate, and so we try to use opportunities to let people know that there is a reporting requirement, and the other component of that is enforcement, and so there is a -- I don't want to call it a directive, but there is emphasis that is placed amongst the enforcement officers to check folks, to make sure that they are reporting throughout the season.

There are citations that are written for folks that don't comply with that regulation, and so, you know, for anything that we do, there is always a need to remind folks of what they're supposed to be doing. You know, I mentioned that I have not provided really much information on the federally-permitted charter boats from the data from Snapper Check, but, you know, they started out in the upper sixties in the first part, when we first started Snapper Check in 2014, and now they're around 55 percent, last year, and so, you know, it is a constant thing to remind folks of things they need to do, and so thank you.

Just one more thing, Leann, and, in a couple weeks, as far as that how do we know that we're doing okay, as far as having access or managing the fishery from our perspective, and we have, each year, because we've funded essentially the same type of research that was used in the Great Red Snapper Count, and we funded Dr. Sean Powers at the University of South Alabama to conduct a biomass estimation for off of Alabama.

We have a meeting each year, and we're going to be having our next scheduled meeting in a couple of weeks, and we'll be discussing this, and we'll be seeing what Dr. Powers has found from his fishery-independent sampling for last year, and we're going to kind of match that up with the fishery-dependent estimates for landings, to see how we're doing.

We do have very frank conversations with Dr. Powers, and he's been kind of nudging us that we're up near that upper limit, when you add up all the landings and such, as to what the biomass off of Alabama can support.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Anson. Mr. Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Kevin, for the presentation. A lot of my questions have been answered. I did want to ask, both you as well as the other states, and have you looked at changes or trends in catch per unit effort, as you've run the state seasons, and have you been seeing any changes in catch per unit effort over time?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Kevin.

MR. ANSON: It has gone down a little. You know, maybe 1.9-ish to 1.8, or 1.7, as far as harvested fish that are landed. The time series started out closer to two, and now it's around 1.75 or 1.8.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Gill. Sorry, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Just real quick, just a comment, and so the other thing that I noted was already mentioned, kind of that right-hand turn at Day 18 that someone talked about. I noticed that Mississippi kind of has a similar trend, in terms of landings, and it really kind of aligns with what you were describing, Kevin, as like a huge influx of effort at the start of the season.

There is also, obviously, tropical storms and weather events and other factors that could be influencing catch rates, and Mississippi overlaid kind of the dates of key storm events, and so just a suggestion, going forward, that that might be a good way of at least showing some things that might be disrupting, obviously, catch, and I don't know if it's related to that kind of eighteen to forty-day time period, but certainly there could be some factors that we just aren't aware of in this discussion.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Kevin.

MR. ANSON: Thank you, Andy. Yes, I will keep that in mind for future updates for like the 2022 season. I just wanted to remind everyone that, from our perspective too, and I hate to bring up the word, but the calibration. As Leann noted, up to Day 20, that's roughly about half of the quota, or a little less maybe, but, you know, we're talking about calibrations essentially reducing Alabama's quota by half, and so we'll be back to around twenty or less days, because then we get into a compression effort situation, a derby fishery, and everybody will want to go, which may not be going now, or may be going later in the year, but it would have a serious impact on our ability to offer opportunities to folks, and so thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Kevin, given the compliance rate, I assume that, in your catch estimation procedure, you have a correction factor to account for that, and is that a fair assumption?

MR. ANSON: That is a very fair assumption. Obviously, we knew, going in, that not everyone would be reporting, and so we needed to come up with a way to try to do that, and we've incorporated an independent, or separate survey, where we're going to the dock, just like in the APAIS survey, the federal survey, to try to get the catch information and get the weight information. we also use the vessel registration information for those vessels

that we encounter and compare that to our landings database, our reporting database.

MR. GILL: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. I am not seeing any more, and I've got a real quick one, though. I mean, there's a couple of good points that were raised about the time series of the data, right, and the size of the fish over time, catch per unit effort, and so do you, as part of your sampling program, collect discard information as well?

MR. ANSON: So the Snapper Check landing report, as well our dockside survey, up to this year, has normally asked for dead discards, and dead discards is used in management, in season management, and it goes against the quota, but we don't have information on live discards.

This year, because we have taken on a few extra questions for barotrauma, related to the Return 'Em Right program, we're trying to identify the extent and use of barotrauma devices, reducing devices, and we have also asked for the number of live discards that are attributed to each of the vessel trips that we make at dockside, and not in our landings report. We have not incorporated it, and so we won't be able to come up with estimates, per se, unless you want to use a proxy for the dockside trips.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Kevin. I appreciate it, and so we'll let you off the hook. We will move now into the Florida report and Ms. McCawley.

FLORIDA

MS. MCCAWLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. All right. You can see, on the screen there, our quota for 2021, and our season was a continuous fifty-five days, starting on June 4 and running through July 28, and so we only had a summer season.

We did this continuous summer season, which we historically have had a summer season and a fall season, but we selected this continuous summer season in order to maximize the number of summer days.

We had the highest landings in this time period, for June and July, that we've had since 2018, and our final 2021 landings indicate that 113 percent of Florida's quota was caught, indicating that we will have a payback this year.

Here is our 2022 quota, accounting for the overage that we had in 2021, and we don't have our 2022 season ready yet, but we will be looking at past landings and effort data, and there was a lot of interest, and I would say disappointment, in the fact that Florida did not have a fall season, like we've historically had, and so that's something that we're taking into account when thinking about what the season will be for 2022, is trying to make sure that we have I would say less summer days, so that we can ensure that there will be some fall weekends available for harvest.

That's all my slides, Mr. Chairman, and I will certainly try to answer questions, but, if you hit me with the detail that you asked Mr. Anson, I won't have that ready, but I can certainly go to Beverly Sauls and get back to you later in the week, but I will try to answer what I can.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right. Thanks, Jessica. I am looking around. Kevin, I think you took one for the whole team. Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: What did -- I know you all do a lot of extra intercepts too, right, Jessica, in Florida? Did you take some extra weight measurements? Are you seeing any changes there, in your average weight, or your CPUE?

MS. MCCAWLEY: There was some interesting information that came out of MRIP, and so there were a number of folks that would not allow us to sample the catch, and so the MRIP estimates had some strange numbers this year, but our FWC folks worked with the MRIP folks to look at those folks, and so the MRIP estimates did have much higher weights, and then that was extrapolated out.

It was also based on a low number of interviews, and the people that were interviewed had high numbers of red snapper, and heavy fish, if you will, but that's something that we had to get worked out, and it took some time, and I would have to go to Beverly Sauls to figure out if we have additional intercepts other than what we're doing with MRIP. Remember that we have the State Reef Fish Survey that runs side-by-side with MRIP, and so the State Reef Fish Survey is like a supplement on top of MRIP.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Any more questions for Jessica? Okay. I am not seeing any. Thanks, Ms. McCawley. We will move forward. Next on the list is Louisiana. Mr. Schieble.

LOUISIANA

MR. SCHIEBLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will give a quick overview of our 2021 private recreational season, and then I will try to go into as much as I can with our projections for the 2022 season.

Our private recreational snapper season started on May 28, in both state and federal waters, with a two-fish per person bag limit and a sixteen-inch size limit, and we fished an allocation -- We started the season at about 832,493 pounds. However, that was based on what we thought was going to be the new ACL, and then, shortly after that, we reverted to 816,233 pounds as the ACL that we completed the season on.

We closed the season the Tuesday after Labor Day, but Hurricane Ida had impacted the last two weeks of that season before we had closed, and it took a little bit longer, because of Hurricane Ida, before we reopened, and so we did not reopen the season until September 23.

Because of what happened with Hurricane Ida and the reduction in effort, we chose to recommend opening with a four-fish-per-person bag limit at seven days per week, or I mean a seven-day season, with the same sixteen-inch size limit. The season ran until the end of the year, and it closed itself, basically, on December 31, but we fished a total of 823,151 pounds, and that includes a payback of 6,918 pounds that we will be deducting from our 2022 season, this year.

We have an estimate of federal charter landings in Louisiana that was about 106,192 pounds, and the table you see there is an average weight of our private recreational and state charter combined by month, just for Leann purposes, and we normally compute our weights on a weekly basis, coming out of LA Creel, and this happens to be a compilation of those weeks by month, is what that is, and so you can see the same, I guess, and average weights were lower this year than in past years, and I think this is reflective of what we saw from the LGL study.

Benny Gallaway's group presented to the SSC what they saw with their Louisiana snapper count, and it showed a cohort, I guess, if you will, of the age-two-plus fish coming through the system, and I think that's what the anglers fished this past year.

They fished a cohort, or an age class, coming through the system that just happened to be smaller average weights, and that didn't really change until we got to the very last month of the

season, and you will see there that the weights jumped up to an average of ten pounds, at the very end of the season, but it was noticeably a lower average monthly weight than we've seen in the previous years.

This is the landings graph that we typically send out on a weekly basis, that you've probably seen throughout the year, and it shows the ACL at the top, the green line, and then our landings graph, peaking at 823,151, indicating the payback, but, very similar to what Kevin showed us on his graph, where it's an early onset, and there's a lot of effort in the beginning of the year, and then it tends to kind of taper off after about the June, or July 4th weekend, somewhere in there, and then you'll see the big hit with Hurricane Ida at the end of the August, and there's a massive change.

Then the level line is where we had the season closed, and then we reopened in September, and it starts to increase a little bit there, but keep in mind that effort was significantly reduced in the Grand Isle area for this type of fishing, because of Hurricane Ida.

The next slide is also the complementary landings tables that we sent out weekly, via LA Creel, to everyone, and it shows the same thing. The graph reflects the heaviest landings in the beginning of the season for us. Our highest week was 167,000 pounds, roughly, and we have an average of about 30,000 pounds, as a weekly average that we typically have throughout the season.

This is a similar table to what Kevin had that shows the history since we had the first two years of our EFP in 2018 and 2019, and then state management in 2020 and 2021, and you can see that each year is different. It's unique in the total number of days that we have open. During the EFP years, the first year, we only had sixty days open, and that was still daily, seven days a week, with two fish, and then, in 2019, we had weekends only, with two fish, and it closed and reopened with daily the two fish, and a total of 109 days.

Then, last year, we had weekends only with two fish, and we only were able to stay open for forty-one days, and so effort is different year-to-year, as well as throughout the season, is I guess what I'm trying to show in this table, and then this past year was our longest, and I think that's due to the impacts from the hurricane and the reduced effort that we saw after August 29.

This is essentially the same thing that I just showed you in a tabular form, but this is the graph of the past four years, and you can see the significant difference in 2021 especially, because of Hurricane Ida I think, and then that leveling off, and then it just never restarted the same.

This is my last slide, and are there any questions? I would like to add that we'll be going to our commission this Thursday with recommendations for the 2022 season, and our recommendations will include options for a seven-day season at two fish, and also projected landings for weekends only, at possibly three fish, or four, but it's the commission's decision, ultimately, on what type of season they want to see, and they may take into some consideration the socioeconomic factors, as well as recovery post-Hurricane-Ida, and so I can't tell you what our exact season is going to be, but I can tell you that, in rule, it starts the Friday before Memorial Day and is set to run, and so we know we'll be opening for sure that day, Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Do we have any questions? Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Schieble. Do you all, in the State of Louisiana, also have a reef fish endorsement that your private anglers and your state anglers have?

MR. SCHIEBLE: Yes, and it's called a recreational offshore landing permit, and ROLP is the acronym for it, and so it's a free landing permit that they can sign up for to get, and there is no cost involved.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Is it mandatory or voluntary?

MR. SCHIEBLE: It's required to have if you're landing any reef fish species in Louisiana, including tuna, and, also, we're now going to be adding triggerfish to that list this year, starting in June.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Do you know approximately how many permits, endorsements, you all have for the State of Louisiana?

MR. SCHIEBLE: I think it's over 20,000 registered right now.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thank you. Mr. Rindone.

MR. RINDONE: Chris, what is that called again?

MR. SCHIEBLE: ROLP, recreational offshore landing permit.

MR. RINDONE: Thanks.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Diaz.

MR. DALE DIAZ: I want to commend the State of Louisiana for requiring that offshore recreational landing permit. I mean, I've had conversations with different people, and, basically, if we all that -- I mean, what we're trying to get is the universe of people that's fishing offshore, and that's where we're struggling, and we can get weights and lengths, and it would be difficult to get what you all have, because each state would have to do it on their own, but then we would have that universe defined, and then we could target that universe, to figure out what's going on out there, and we could surely improve things greatly, and I really think a lot of thought was put into you all's program, and it's well done, and I commend you and the other staff that set it up, and I think it's excellent, and so thank you for that.

MR. SCHIEBLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate it. I think it helps define the difference between who is fishing and who are your license holders, and that's key to at least our system working.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Chris, I am not seeing any other questions. Thanks for the presentation.

MR. SCHIEBLE: You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: We'll go ahead and move forward, and we'll go to Mississippi and General Spraggins.

MISSISSIPPI

GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS: Thank you very much, and I will tell you what, and I've tried to write down every note that everybody has had to answer, and so maybe I can give it all to you, but, Kevin, thank you for taking all the heat, and so I think you've answered 90 percent of them, and I appreciate it.

Just to give you an idea, before we get started, and I'll give

you the data and all of where we're at, but Mississippi has the Tails 'n Scales, and Tails 'n Scales is a great program, and I will tell you how great it is, and the American Fisheries Society just awarded us with the President's Fishery Conservation Award, and so that tells you that it is definitely a great program that we have, and we have talked about it for the last five years, almost, and talked about how great we think it is, and I think it's been seen by other people that it is as good as we think it is.

We are trying every day to improve it though, and we're not just sitting still. We're trying every day to improve it, and we're looking at hiring other people to come in and consultants and give us other data, to say that we can back this data up against the data that we have, and so we're looking at every way that we can do to possibly do it.

With that, I will go into the presentation, and I think that you will see there that Mississippi had a fairly long season. We started out on Memorial Day, as we always try to do, and the effort was, obviously, pretty good right at the very start. You will see that there was a little break in it, after twenty-five days, and that was because we had a tropical storm that came through, and it did disrupt a lot of things that happened with us, and our catch data.

We always do a mid-season closure, and that's usually around the 4th of July, and, after the 4th of July weekend, we close it down, and then we look at it, and we go back and assess where we're at, and we decide where we're at on our catch, as far as the data and our limits.

Then, after that has happened, we look at a date to open back up, and we judge our date to open according to what we look at for the catch that we have at that point, and then we'll also -- We do seven days a week, and we open all seven days, to start with, and then sometimes we adjust that after that and say, okay, now we're only going to be open on weekends, or we're going to be open whenever we need to, to try to give the best data for more people to be able to get the fish.

It's hard, especially with our charter boats, and it's hard for them to be able to -- I'm sure it is for everybody else, but they try to book their charters in advance, and so we try to give them as much advance as we can, to tell them what we will have. We do collect their data, and it has worked out very well, and around 5,000 pounds, I think is what the charter boats actually catch, and it's not a whole lot, which is very good for

what we do.

You will see there also that we closed again, because of Hurricane Ida, and, obviously, there was a lot more damage in Louisiana than us for that, and the Texas area, but we closed, and that shut us down for a little bit, and then we closed again at Labor Day, because we do another assessment. We look at it and do another assessment and say where we're at, and we were able to extend the season.

The reason for it, there's a couple of things. Number one, once you get past -- As Kevin said, and I think -- About the June timeframe, the effort really goes down, the effort that people are going after, and, plus, we're in very shallow water, and, in Mississippi, our water, we don't have the luxury of having the deep water that other states have, and the temperature of the water causes the movement of the fish, and causes some other things, and it just basically slows things down.

We would up with 119 days this year, but that just gives you an idea that the effort was just a lot less than we had in the past. Of course, in 2020, the effort was unreal, and we didn't have hardly days, because there were so many people fishing, and we expect the effort to be less this year, and I will tell you that, and the reason for it is a couple of things.

Number one, at five or six-dollars a gallon for fuel, it's not going to be very easy for people just to run out and have fun, and they're going to -- The effort is going to be according to how much they really want to fish. You're going to get the people that want to come in and do the little -- As Kevin said, I've got to go fishing once or twice a year, and we're going to get a couple of those, but they're not going to go four times a year, because of the price of fuel, and you will see the most effort in the very first, and I think that will change some of the things that we're looking at.

To give you an idea of our 2021 estimated harvest, it was 143,042.7 pounds, and our ACT was 136,395, and we were at 104 percent of the ACT, but our ACL was 151,550, which was 94.4 percent. Once again, we have not exceeded our ACL, and we have not exceeded it for the last four years that we've been looking at this data, and so I just want you to know that. In Mississippi, it's very hard, looking at it, but we give it everything that we can to be able to make sure that we don't exceed that data.

We plan on opening on May 27, which is Memorial Weekend, again,

and closing on July 4, and that's if everything works right that we will do that, and, also, we anticipate a reopening if everything is fine after July 4.

I will give you a couple of things, so I don't have to answer these questions that Kevin did, and I'm going to answer them ahead of time, as much as I can. Our average weight in 2020 was 6.46 pounds, and our average weight in 2021 was 6.86 pounds, and we tested 275. We measured 275 fish in 2020, and we measured 498 fish in 2021, and so we did a pretty good measurement on it.

Our compliance rate on Tails 'n Scales is 95 percent, and that's over the last two years that it's been 95 percent, and so we're very strict, and I will tell you how strict we are. If we catch you not following the Tails 'n Scales, we don't only fine you, but we take your fish too, and that makes you really mad, when they take those fish away from you, and people are very -- They are very, very, very compliant with us on it, and they realize that it's a good thing, because they realize too that they can get something out of this, because it gives the data better accuracy, so we can fight for our accuracy, to be able to keep our season the way we would like to, and they know that.

Our calibration, over the last four years, we've got great data. We've got some great data, and I realize that we've been talking five years, five years, five years, five years, but we'll have five years this year, and we'll have five years of state calibration, and I think this is some of the best calibration that you will see.

As much as I hate to bring up the word, I still say that we are far better than MRIP, and I still say that our calibration, the way that we do it with Tails 'n Scales, is far better, and a lot more accurate, as to what the actual catch is. I don't want to get into the calibration thing, and I'm sure that will come up sooner or later, but I don't want to get into it.

Our intercept rate, just to give you an idea too, we do cross-checks, and we had intercepts, this past year, of 10 percent by Marine Patrol for the number of boats that went out, 10 percent that were intercepted, and that's pretty good. I don't think any other state can say that they intercepted 10 percent of the boats, and we look at that, and we not only use that data to be able to check and see, but we also take that data, and we will go back and cross-check it.

We will go back to their Tails 'n Scales, and, if they said they caught four fish on the Tails 'n Scales, and the intercept said

they had six, we realize there is something wrong, and we adjust our data, and we make it better, and so we do everything that we can to make that data as accurate as possible.

Our harvest rate in 2018 was 1.3. In 2019, it was 1.32, and, in 2020, it was 1.24. In 2021, it was 1.16, and so it's just to give you an idea of where we're at with it, and it is -- We're doing everything we can, and I don't know if I answered all of Kevin's questions yet that he had to answer, but I know Leann has got one. She just can't let me out of it, but, with that, I will open up for questions.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, General Spraggins. Mr. Diaz.

MR. DIAZ: I don't know that I've got a question, but I do have to say that Tails 'n Scales is impressive, and Mississippi has done one heck of a good job. Just like I mentioned with Chris's presentation, for red snapper, Mississippi does have that universe.

Not for the other offshore species, but for red snapper, and so that helps move us along the path of trying to identify that universe, and some other states have pieces of the puzzle for that universe, and so, I mean, we're moving in that direction.

The General mentioned the high gas prices this year and what effects that's going to have on the effort, and I've been putting some thought into that too, and I would like a crystal ball, to know, but I do agree with the General that there's going to be less effort, but I just don't know how much less effort, and I think he brings up a really good point there, and we might even want to kind of weave that into our conversations, as we go through some of the other things later today, and so thank you, General.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Diaz. Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you, General. Do you all have any type of reef fish endorsement or anything that you require, like a permit that you all require?

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: No, and ours is basically the Tails 'n Scales itself. The one that we -- Rick, tell me and raise your hand if I'm wrong, but I don't think that we actually have a reef fish permit, any type of reef fish permit, but we do -- As the Chairman said, we only check the snapper at this time on that. We are looking at expanding it to the other species, and that's something that we're looking at, and we're trying to

expand it there, and, of course, we also do the checks on other inshore fish, too.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: I don't know that I even have a question, but I thought it was a very good presentation, and I had one observation. We were talking about Alabama meeting half of their quota at about eighteen days, and I was looking at ours, and it looks like maybe around thirty days or so that we met ours, but that would probably line up, because we're open all week, and so you have lower landings during the week, and so I can see how those two numbers do kind of line up with each other, as far as when that effort is starting to maybe taper off a little bit.

I do think we have a great program, and I have to commend your staff, and they do a great job. I have to commend your commission that helped develop that program too though, and I think maybe that my daddy was the chairman at that point, and I know he had a lot of input on it, and so I'm going to give him a kudos on that. I don't give the old man a kudos very often, and so he did good.

Have you looked though -- The only thing that I remember was changing a little bit on our numbers, over the years, was that cancelling of trips, and has that cancelling of trips number kind of gone up? Have you see that go up, where you can cancel it, cancel it before you land, or anything like that? Have we looked at those numbers?

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: I don't think it's really gone that far. Rick, you may -- I don't think Rick has, but the numbers -- We do have a good -- It happens that, obviously, weather makes a lot of difference, and we had a lot of trips that were cancelled, during the time of the storms and all, that they just basically said, hey, you know, I can't go out, but, most of the time, our trips are holding about the same, and just a small amount, but we're doing pretty good with it, and we're very persistent with people, to make sure that they close out things, because they've got twenty-four hours, I think, to close it out, and we make sure they close it out, and, if they don't, we start asking questions.

MS. BOSARGE: I love that number of intercepts that you had, I mean that number of fish weighed, and you had like almost 500 in 2021, and that's a lot. Are we making sure, and this is like for all the states really, but are we making sure that that info

gets shared with the MRIP people? I mean, we're looking down the barrel of a stock assessment on red snapper, and I just want to make sure that we're funneling all this information into one bag somewhere for everybody to look at.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: That is being shared with them, and, as a matter of a fact, a lot of those weights are from the MRIP. You know, we catch them whenever they come in at the docks, and we actually look at the fish and measure the fish and all and do that at that point, and so it is shared, and we try to share as much data as we can.

Once again, I want to explain that, just as Kevin said, I hope that everybody will look at it very hard. There's a lot of things, when you've got as much data as we have, to be able to say that Mississippi -- We've never exceeded our ACL, and to be able to look at it and say we're that consistent with what we're doing, and we're that consistent with the measuring and the 95 percent rate of being able to check for our fishery, and it's pretty darned good, and to take calibration that's going to be talked about sooner or later, and to cut us down to 50,000 pounds of fish, under something that has no real data to prove it, and I want you all to please look at that very hard, because they had just -- If there was something there, I can promise you that, if we thought that we were overfishing something, we would stop it immediately, and we would never want to do that, but to be able to look at that calibration that's going to come up and to talk about that, and to say that they're going to jeopardize us 100,000 pounds, of our 150,000 pounds of fish, over a couple of days that they checked for two years, is just not good.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: I have a quick comment. I just wanted to say, on Slide 2, you are putting in your tropical storms and your closures, and, the way you did that graph, I really like that, because it helps you understand the weather patterns, because sometimes we sit around this table and say, well, what caused that, and, well, we can see here that you had Tropical Storm Claudette, and you had Hurricane Ida, and I really appreciate that in your slide. Thank you.

GENERAL SPRAGGINS: Just to give you one other data, we had 1,800 active users, and so that doesn't mean that we had 1,800 trips. We had more than that, but, I mean, we had 1,800 actual Tails 'n Scales users, and so that's pretty good for a small state like Mississippi. If there are no more questions, I will be quiet.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: You have no more questions. All right, and so we're going to go ahead and move over to Texas, and, Dakus, are you going to do that?

MR. DAKUS GEESLIN: I sure am.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Geeslin.

TEXAS

MR. GEESLIN: Before we dive into the 2021 summary and talk about projections for 2022, I just wanted to give you a background of our approach in estimating our landings, and most of you all are certainly familiar with all this, and we monitor catches, and we estimate the landings, and we close both federal and our state waters and seasons when a certain percentage is reached or, more accurately, in our state-water season, as we're projected to meet our quota.

Previously, we used a simulation model to project our federal season length, and you can see here that I've got 2018 and 2019, and that seemed to pretty work pretty well for our anglers until we project out, and, in 2019, I believe we projected out and advertised that we were projecting a ninety-day, or ninety-five-day, season and had to close the federal season after sixty-two days.

That was incredibly unpopular, and, admittedly, it compromises some of our credibility, and so, based on a lot of the uncertainty within our fishing season, and primarily the offshore conditions in June, which really allow our anglers to get out, and, typically, in Texas, off the Gulf coast, our June season is incredibly variable, as far as wind and wave height, and so we're scaling that back. We're not going to protect a season length, per se, but we will, as the General alluded, give our anglers a good heads-up, a week to two-week lead, as we near that closing of the federal season.

Internally, in trying to incorporate and utilize some of those uncertainties, some of those things that go into that simulation model, there is certainly the latent demand and behavior modeling, based on previous years. This last bullet, or second-to-last, is based on 2017 weight ranges, and that's an error. We certainly look back at our most recent years and weights and then use the catch pattern behavior of previous years and run two to three different behavior pattern baselines, to get a range of that outcome, and so we know we have, with some

reasonable amount of certainty, where that season and season projection -- Where internally we may land, and, as I mentioned, the weather and the fishable days certainly play a big role in how fast that allowable catch limit is approached.

Just a little bit about our 2021 season, and this is not unique to 2021, but we use our long-term Marine Sport Harvest Monitoring Program, and we've got several Gulf-only and day pass sample sites that our folks are out to weekly, and then we've got, in concert with the Harte Research Institute and our colleague, Dr. Stunz here, who is going to be glad to give iSnapper back to us. That's more of an app-based and volunteer-based catch mechanism, and it's really used to kind of assess the patterns within the catch throughout the season and not truly a catch estimate tool.

The 2021 red snapper season, we did have an adjustment, based on our 2019 overage, which Andy mentioned and announced our settlement agreement at the last council meeting, and we did have an overage in 2019, and we had an adjustment in 2021, based on that settlement agreement, and so our quota -- Ordinarily, it would be the 265,105. In 2021, that was bumped down by about twenty-some-odd thousand pounds, and the projected days -- Again, we didn't do that projected days, and we ended up with about sixty-five days for our federal season, and that was about -- That action went a little longer than we had anticipated, due to, again, some of the weather patterns there in the middle of the summer.

Here's something that's new for us, is closing down our state waters. Our state waters, we like to keep those open for 365 days a year. As we approached that ACL, we recognized that we needed to take that management action, and we closed down our state waters on November 15, and we will continue to evaluate those projected landings and make that management action, as necessary, in closing down our state waters, and that's obviously not a popular decision with our anglers, but one that we felt that we needed to make.

Our 2021 landings were 89 percent of our adjusted ACL, and we ended up at about 211,000 pounds, and we did have favorable weather in the latter part of our federal season there in July. We did see an increased angler effort, and that was some of the remnants and carryover from the increased utilization of the fishery coming out of COVID.

Most of the anglers caught their limits, and we're starting to see larger fish, as we've heard from our counterparts in

Louisiana and Mississippi, and I will talk about the average size here in just a minute, and, as I mentioned, we did close state waters on November 15.

This is just a bag distribution. Again, in our state waters, we have that four-fish bag and a fifteen-inch minimum size limit, and, of course, we've got the two-fish bag and sixteen-inch minimum size limit within federal waters, and you can see here that we've got a couple of bad behavers over there catching five fish, but we do see most of our catch within that two-fish bag limit.

Here is a length frequency distribution, and you can see that most of those fish are within -- They back up within those minimum size limits of fifteen and sixteen inches, and it just shows you the distribution of rather large fish. The mean weight is 6.6 pounds, and that's a little larger than what we've seen in the past, but also comparable to what we've heard here today.

This graphic just shows really the catch trends in approaching the ACL over time, for the last four years. You can see that outlier there, where we did exceed our ACL and went over in 2019, and that resulted in the quota adjustments in 2021. The blue line is we caught 124 percent of our quota. Over the last three years, we've been back in that sweet spot, as I like to say, and you can see that we've been below our quota, and even that 2021, that yellow line, knowing that we only went through November 15, still got us to 89 percent of our allowable catch level, and that's it. I'll be happy to take any questions.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Do we have any questions for the folks in Texas? Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: I forgot to ask Florida, but do you all have any kind of reef fish endorsement or a type of permit that you require anglers to have?

MR. GEESLIN: I'm sorry, Ms. Boggs. I was going to mention that, and, no, we do not.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Do you want to go ahead and ask Florida, while you're at it?

MS. BOGGS: Yes. Ms. Jessica?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes, and we require the State Reef Fish Survey, and so, just to give you a couple of numbers, since the State

Reef Fish Survey was the Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and now it covers both coasts, and so it's called the State Reef Fish Survey, and, as of December 2021, which would be relevant to the 2021 season, there were 735,838 people signed up, but we cannot partition those folks into Gulf coast or Atlantic coast, because they could fish for reef fish on either coast, and that State Reef Fish Survey covers thirteen species, and it's free.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Jessica. Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Jessica, will you ask your staff -- When it was just the Gulf survey, how many were there then, on average, generally speaking?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I will get it for you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Just a follow-up to Susan's question about the reef fish endorsement sales in Alabama, in license year 2021, we had 54,829 licenses sold for recreational anglers. Then, for number of licenses, actual saltwater fishing licenses, that were sold, and that comprised of trip licenses, resident and non-resident, disabled, and I didn't include pier licenses, but there may be situations where a peer angler will still purchase a reef fish endorsement, but, anyway, just to give some scale, there was 114,928 of those recreational saltwater fishing licenses, and so the reef fish endorsement accounted for 47.7 percent of the licenses sold.

Then, just to round out all the reef fish endorsements, we had twenty-eight commercial reef fish endorsements sold, and then, for the charter vessels, which would be inclusive of just state-licensed vessels only, as well as federally-permitted vessels, and because it's based on possession in state waters, there were 238 reef fish endorsements sold in license year 2021.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Susan.

MS. BOGGS: The license fee for recreational is $10.00, and then I know it's different, based on the size of the vessel, if you're a charter/for-hire, correct?

MR. ANSON: That is correct, yes, and it's roughly $200 to $250, depending upon -- But yes.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Rindone.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As a lifetime saltwater permit holder for the State of Florida, I'm curious how many other states have similar programs and how many lifetime anglers that there might be, and I don't expect this information to be available right now, but, maybe just the next time that we talk about this, for the states that have those sorts of programs, maybe pull that out as well, because I would say at least half the people that I fish with regularly also have lifetime licenses.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thanks, Ryan. Are there any other questions? Mr. Hood.

MR. HOOD: This isn't a question, but it's more just a statement, and I just wanted to indicate that, because we did have overages in Florida and Louisiana, we will be publishing a notice in the Federal Register indicating that there was that overage and that the ACLs will be adjusted accordingly, and so it's just something that we do, but I just wanted to make sure that everybody was aware of that. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Peter. Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Jessica, I'm going to be coming back to you, and so I think this -- I didn't really understand your answer earlier, but I think I understand it now, and I think it could be important for us to think about, for some of our future conversations, like on gag and things like that, as we're trying to figure out how to manage them, and so you -- I was asking you about, you know, the fish that you all intercepted and weighed and such, versus maybe MRIP, and so I think -- Is this right, and is this characterization correct?

There is MRIP intercepts, but, with your -- It's now SRFS and not GRFS, and SRFS does some extra sampling, or intercepts, or something, and so there will be MRIP weights, right, that came out of those samples, but then, because you all have additional samples on top of that, you will have a weight, but, the way that your system is set up, your formula I think kind of maybe takes both of those into account, and so it really forces the MRIP people and you all to put your heads together at some point and say, hey, your weight, your average weight, is a little different from what our average weight is, and let's dig into these numbers and figure this out, what is driving this, and then somehow, and I don't know how it all gets mixed up and baked, but you come out with some sort of compromise between the two average weights, to come up with your landings, and is that right?

MS. MCCAWLEY: I would have to look up the exact formula for how we do that, but, yes, you're right that they are run side-by-side, and the final numbers that come out of Florida take into account both the State Reef Fish Survey as well as MRIP, and I would have to look at exactly how that's done, how the model is run.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Jessica. Greg.

DR. GREG STUNZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question, and I don't recall how we're handling this, and obviously some states were slightly over, and some were under, and nothing concerning me or anything, but I'm wondering about what do we do with those either underage or overfished, and, obviously, there's a payback for the states that are over, but we're managing the fishery as a whole, obviously, and so I don't know if there is some potential credit, or the states that are over, and, well, if we manage as a whole, and we're not exceeding the ACL, is that just okay, and then maybe the states don't have to necessarily be penalized, unless it's some kind of repetitive -- For the next year, unless it's some kind of repetitive overage that keeps going. I am, obviously, looking for some options to see, well, where are we really, and maybe we don't necessarily need to penalize the states for just the tiny overage that we're seeing here.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I think -- I mean, just the way that the language is written in the amendment, right, and so you have an accountability measure, and so you're obligated to pay it back, but I don't think, as a council, we would try to change that language in any way, Greg, and so I think we are where we are. All right. Are there any more questions for the folks in Texas or any of the other states? I am not seeing any, and so we are -- I thank everybody for those reports, and I thought they were very helpful.

We'll go ahead and move to our next agenda item, which is Agenda Item Number VI, and it has to do with the draft options for Amendment 54, Modifications to the Greater Amberjack Catch Limits and Sector Allocations, and so we'll go first to Ryan or John, and I don't know who wants to work through the action guide, and maybe Ryan, and then we'll let John do the presentation.

MR. RINDONE: John is way too excited to scoot on over here, and so I will let him do it.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Excellent. We'll let John get set up, and then we'll get right into it.

DRAFT AMENDMENT 54: MODIFICATIONS TO THE GREATER AMBERJACK CATCH LIMITS AND SECTOR ALLOCATIONS

DR. JOHN FROESCHKE: For those of you who are disappointed that our other documents are not sufficiently complicated or nuanced, this one will not disappoint. I am going to give a presentation, and we prepared a draft options paper, Reef Fish 54, which addresses rebuilding plan options for greater amberjack, in response to the SEDAR 70 stock assessment that was first received by the SSC in January of 2021, and keep your years straight here.

We worked on it throughout the year, and we finalized the projections in November, and now we have a document that we've been working on. The stock is overfished, and is experiencing overfishing, and it has a rebuilding plan in place that the time will be up in 2027, and so there's going to be some difficult discussions and decisions that need to be made in fairly short order in order to get this done.

My plan is to have a presentation that I'm going to go through that tries to give you some background about amberjack management, which is long and nuanced, some information about the stock assessment that kind of got us here, and then some actions and alternatives in the document that I will be asking for your input on the range of alternatives and actions, and then we're going to be talking about the timeline and next steps, which is going to be aggressive, and so any questions on that, before we get started?

Slide 2 of this is just kind of a background of some of the things that I mentioned here briefly that I'm going to over. There is lots of historical landings and management changes, and so I kind of want to go through those and give you some context of how that plays into it.

The timeline, we've had a lot of SSC meetings where we discussed this is in 2021, and there's some new science, some new methods, and we have some -- As you are probably painfully aware, this assessment used FES data, which means that, for stocks like amberjack, which you have sector allocations, we'll be taking a look at those.

Reef Fish Amendment 54, the draft here, we have an action that has a combination of sector allocation changes and changes to

the ACL, ABC and OFL, and then a second action that considers an ACT buffer, and so then we'll talk about the deadline to end overfishing and the rebuilding.

Just a little bit of background on this stock, and it's kind of a challenging one here, and so, since 2000, it's been assessed six times, and each time has been overfished and overfishing. That hasn't been for lack of action on behalf of the council to end it through various management actions, and so there have been numerous responses on both the commercial side, trip limits, size limits, seasonal closures for spawning.

On the recreational side, there have been changes in the size limit, all kind of seasons and fishing years and things, and so I'm going to kind of give you a brief overview on that, and, again, we're scheduled to rebuild by 2027.

I'm going to show this chart, just to give you some frame of reference here, and I won't go through these in detail, but they are good references, if you have questions later. On the blue and gray bar, the blue bars are the commercial landings, and then the gray bars are the recreational landings, and you can see there's a lot of interannual variability, with sort of a long-range trend in the downward direction, primarily because of management changes, and then the yellow and orange correspond to the recreational and commercial season lengths, and then the green dots sort of highlight some of the timing of the stock assessments.

This one is just focusing on the recreational landings, and so, again, both of them are displayed on the bars below, but the yellow line corresponds to the season length, and so it's essentially open year-round, and then various management changes got us down to a pretty short season that has bumped around a little bit, but now we currently have this split season in the fall, where it opens in August, and it's open for three months, and it closes, and then it reopens in May.

Then you can see some of these orange dots, or squares, at the top, and we've done bag limits and for-hire permits, and we changed the fishing season, which is different from the fishing year, several times, in order to constrain landings to the quota and provide access and flexibility to the management, and so there's been a number of increases to the size limit, which is now thirty-four inches on the rec side, and it's thirty-six on the commercial side.

The commercial, again, the landings are the same. The orange

dots cover some of the changes to the management, and we've got a thirty-six-inch minimum size, which has been in place for a long time and is above the size at 50 percent maturity, and there's a March through May closed season that was implemented in the late 1990s, and we've got paybacks and accountability measures.

At the beginning of 2014, we implemented trip limits, initially at 2,000 pounds, and then we've stepped those down, first to 1,500 and 1,000, and we're now at 1,000 pounds, with a 250 step-down when 75 percent of the quota for the commercial sector is reached. You can see, on this orange line, this increase in the season length, in the most recent years, corresponds to the implementation of that step-down.

In general, there have been -- For both sectors, there have been some overages, but, in general, they haven't been wildly over, and both sectors typically do catch their ACL.

I am just going to fast-forward a little bit here, just to kind of take you through some of the timing of this, because you might have some questions about why this begins in January of 2021, and we're now in April of 2022, and so I want to fill in that gap, that it hasn't been lost time, or at least not lack of working on this.

The SSC reviewed the assessment at the January 2021 meeting, and, again, the stock, at that time, was indicated as overfished and overfishing. The SSC reviewed the assessment and provided OFL and ABC recommendations at that time, based on the current 73 to 27 percent allocations, noting that, in the future, the council would likely consider alternative options for reallocating based on the use of the FES data, and so we would come back, just like we did for red grouper.

The next thing that happened was, on April 8, the Regional Office sent the council a letter indicating that the stock was overfished and experiencing overfishing, and we had two years to implement regulations to immediately end overfishing and rebuild the stock, as part of the rebuilding plan, and so that's sort of the timing that we're going to be looking at, as far as April of 2023 and having regulations implemented, and so you can kind of work backwards and see why this is going to be an aggressive timeline.

A couple other things, just to jog your memory. The council staff and Science Center, our collective workload, this is the time that we were working through the Great Red Snapper Count

aggressively as well, and so there were a lot of moving parts, and so the council didn't have a lot of time to work on this at the April 2021 council meeting.

Nevertheless, council staff and NMFS staff, we worked on assembling the landings information, and that took some time, and we provided a presentation at the June council meeting, using some reference years that we could go through to propose some allocation percentages for the council to consider. You all signed-off on those in June, and then we provided a request to the Science Center in July, requesting updated projections conditional on the various sector allocation options. That's in July.

When the Science Center went through this, a couple of things were identified. A couple were that, the way that the projections were done at the January meeting weren't quite consistent with how they were specified in the management, and so there were changes from the original, and the spawning stock biomass target was mis-specified, as well as there were some assumptions that needed to be worked through about recruitment, and it's very influential on how the projections are specified, and so that's one thing.

The other thing is that this is science, and so there's always new information and new methodology, and the Science Center has been working very hard to develop a projection protocol that was better, that was able to meet some of the target mortality and things like that more consistently throughout the projection period than the way they've done before, and so they did produce this, which was good.

The challenge was that, when the SSC reviewed all this, there were a lot of moving parts, and it was very difficult to understand why the projections were quite different, given that we had a lot of thing that changed, and so then the SSC had a lot of questions, and we had a couple of meetings where we had to move through, okay, what in the changes in the projections, and I will get to those, that were from the changes in the recruitment, and so spawning stock biomass assumptions versus the new code set and the new analytical approach. We had to parse all that out, and so that took some time.

The other thing on the data -- I talked a little bit about this, and we worked to put together the data, and I mentioned that the data are quite complex, historically. The commercial data, prior to 1993, all jacks were lumped together. After 1993, they were split apart. In terms of the treatment of the data, in

stock assessments and things, they have developed some protocols to best do this, and so, for the purposes of calculating the allocation percentages, we used the commercial data that went through the stock assessment that goes under this additional review, and so that's one caveat that's a little bit different.

For example, in red grouper, we used the ACL data for the commercial data, but, in this case, the ACL data doesn't get the routine additional review, especially for those early years, where this has to be parsed out, and so it's a long-term goal, and I think they're going to mesh these together, and, in the more recent years, they're almost identical, but that is just kind of one thing to keep in mind, for the purposes of the allocations.

The allocation scenarios that we looked at, a few of them -- We tried to follow the concepts that we've done for red grouper and other things, and so the ones that we came up with, the original, the 1981 through 2004, and this is what the original, or the current, allocation is based off of, and that was specified in Amendment 30A, and so we used that one.

The 1993 to 2007, we had some discussions that the data prior, especially the commercial data prior, to 1993 was not identified to species, and then the recreational side, if you look at those charts -- If you flip back to 1992, you can see it's very high, and there's always been some uncertainty as to about why that is, and I think it's on the for-hire side, but there is some questions about the reliability of that.

Then, ending in 2007, and, if you recall, 2008 is when we implemented the sector allocation, and so there may be some desire to cap it at that, because, beyond that, you, in theory, would be just reinforcing the allocation we have on the books.

The 1993 through 2019 tries to split the difference, in that it trims off those earlier years, where we have some of these concerns about the data, perhaps, but it does try to provide a longer time series, noting that these later years do have the sector allocation in place.

The percentages on the right are the results based on applying the calculations using the MRIP-FES data and the commercial data and the current allocation of 73/27, and so you can see that these all do shift, 7 to 10-ish percent, towards the recreational sector.

Two other scenarios that we went through, and one is similar,

again, to red grouper, and we kept the current 73/27 allocation in place, and we looked at a final option, where you would maintain the commercial ACL at their 484,380 pounds and allocate the rest of it to the recreational side.

Now what I want to do is kind of circle back, just a little bit, to the SSC and what happened at the November SSC meeting, where the SSC provided their final recommendations on the OFLs and ABCs, and try to just step you through, so you all can see the decision points that were made regarding the changes in SSB, recruitment, and the new analytical routine.

I am going to try to just step you through this, using the text, and the orange line is essentially the projections that were viewed by the SSC based on the original stock assessment in January of 2021. As a I indicated, this included the misspecifications and the SSB spawning biomass and recruitment, and so the deal with the recruitment is, if you look at a time series of recruitment of amberjack, it was very high early in the time series, and, since I think about 1990, it's been way lower, but consistently, and so there's this idea of a regime shift, and so the original method -- This orange line was based on an average of the recruitment over the entire time series, whereas the best practice is assuming that the more recent lower recruitment period is likely to occur in the near future, for the purposes of projections.

That is going to be the first correction here, and the gray line, all the way at the bottom, indicates the lower recruitment, and so you can see, going from the orange to the gray, the assumption about recruitment has major implications on what the projections look like.

The second correction addresses the spawning stock biomass, and, originally, it was SSB 30 percent, instead of SPR 30 percent, and so that change actually potentially offsets it, because you're rebuilding to a lower spawning stock biomass target, and so that's the blue line, and it considered the SPR alone, and so what you see is the yellow line reflects the integration of both the change from the blue line and the gray line, and so the yellow line is the final projection, or, well, almost.

What I didn't discuss in this slide was, again, the differences in the code, the analytical routine used to provide the projections, and the SSC took a look at this, and they agreed that, from the scientific perspective, is an improvement, but, until we got this part sorted out, it was difficult to understand what changes were based on the SSB or the recruitment

versus this.

The next slide here, you can see -- Just focus on the blue and yellow line, and, essentially, that's the integration of the corrections to the recruitment assumption and the SPR 30 percent, but then the yellow and the blue line just consider the changes in the coding routine, the forecasting routine, and so you can see that part, when it's all said and done, is very small, and so that part, I think, while a technical improvement that didn't necessarily have big ramifications on management, but it did take a long time for everyone on the SSC to understand that and be confident in providing scientific advice.

At the November SSC meeting, they made a motion that accepted the assessment, as amended through all of this additional work. The stock status was overfished and undergoing overfishing, and then we still have this rebuild by 2027 target date, and they provided ABC advice based on the F rebuild.

The second motion they made is, again, reverting the OFL, based on the million pounds whole weight of F 30 SPR and then the ABC based on the F rebuild, and then, in terms of the OFL conditional on the various allocation percentages, the Science Center provided allocation-specific scenarios, yield streams, and the SSC accepted those, as they're based on the same information and biologically equivalent, but did not provide guidance relative that one allocation was more appropriate than another, recognizing that's really a council issue.

In terms of the nuts-and-bolts of the projections, the first year of the projections in 2022, and it goes through the expected rebuild of 2027, using the methods, and then the allocation percentages that we covered are here indicated on the slide. If you have questions about these, let me know. Otherwise, we'll go forward, because I'm going to talk about those next.

Some of this is probably not new to you, and, again, this new assessment is in FES, and so the catch recommendations are not directly comparable to previous assessments, and so, even though the stock is overfished and experiencing overfishing, the catch limits may look slightly different than we might expect.

The council did request, last July, a comparison of the results from the previous assessments in FES, and that's been helpful in trying to understand the relative changes associated with a change in the condition of the fishery versus the change in recreational currencies, and so, based on this, I have a

following slide that I can show you, but it's essentially a 60 percent increase in the values, just based on the change from CHTS to FES.

However, just -- I put it in there as sort of approximately 60 percent, and these are not precise calculations. There is definitely some assumptions and things that you always want to be conscious of when you're making those determinations, but I do think it is helpful in framing the scale.

The way that I just -- For the purposes of calculating that, I looked at the assessments. On this table, the yield streams in the FES, and then the original on the right, the three right columns, are from the original SEDAR 33 update, and so, if you compare the 3.48 OFL, using FES, versus the 2.17 in 2020, that's kind of where I got that 60 percent from, and so, essentially, we had the 2.17 in 2020, using the original. If we had used the FES data at the time, it would have been the 3.5 million, and so that's the change in the FES.

These aren't the final numbers, and, obviously, you have a new model, and you have changes in the stock condition since then that further modify the catch advice, but just to kind of keep that in mind.

Here, this is just a summary of the catch advice that we have on the books now, and it's a stock ABC, and the recreational and commercial ACLs are summed to the ABC, and so there's a total ACL, and then we have ACTs in place that were developed using the ACL/ACT Control Rule, and it's a 13 percent buffer for the commercial and a 17 percent for the recreational sector.

Now we're getting closer to real time, and we have, today, the draft Amendment 54. As I mentioned, it's two actions, and the purpose of this document is to modify the rebuilding plan, to ensure that we rebuild the stock by 2027, and that requires changes in the OFLs, ABCs, and other catch limits.

The current document has two actions. Action 1 will modify the OFL, ABC, ACLs, and sector allocations, and then Action 2 would consider modifying the ACT, based on a new application of the ACL/ACT Control Rule with the new data, and so we'll go through the next slide.

Again, just to kind of step you through how the alternatives are set up, Alternative 1 would maintain the 73/27 allocation, and, again, this is based on the CHTS, and so it's not really a viable alternative, but the allocation percentage is viable, and

so, if you skip down to that lone row down there in the middle, Alternative 2 would use MRIP-FES, but it would maintain 73/27, and so this is similar to what we talked about with king mackerel, and so that's one option.

Option 3, Alternative 3, would use the time series as a reference to calculate percentages as was done in Alternative 1, and so the 1981 to 2004, but you would impute the MRIP-FES data and recalculate, and so that's 84 percent recreational and 16 percent commercial, and that's the highest recreational percentage of the options that we have here. Alternative 4 is the same deal, and it's using the 1994 to 2007 time series, and then Alternative 5 makes use of 1993 to 2019.

If you skip all the way to the bottom, you will see the -- This is the alternative where the commercial ACL is held constant, and the remaining portion of the ACL would go to the recreational, and so the way that we did this -- A couple of things.

There's a yield stream, and so, if you hold the commercial ACL constant, and the yield gets -- The ACL for the stock gets larger every year, and you change the recreational and commercial allocation year-by-year, and that's one thing. The other thing is that we'll see, based on the F rebuild, at least in the initial years, the ACL that we're talking about, the half-million pounds, is slightly larger, and so, in this case, you would go from an allocation that's mostly recreational to one that is mostly commercial. That's quite a bit different, and it might be worth taking a look at the need in the document, in the purpose and need section, to consider how consistent that is with the need and whether the need should be modified or if something should be done with that alternative.

Next, Action 2, again, is this -- It deals with the ACT buffer, and so we have a buffer in place. The way these work is you have a control rule, and it looks at a few different things, but, essentially, how well we've constrained the fishery to the management targets in recent years, and you get penalties for going over, and the uncertainty of the data, and so that's how it was done.

What we did is we updated the most recent landings data and applied that, calculated the buffers, and so you'll see a couple of different ways here, using the reference years of 2017 through 2020, Alternative 2 gets a 13 percent recreational buffer and a 7 percent commercial buffer.

At the IPT level, we had some conversations about 2020, both in terms of how representative that year was, in terms of angler behavior, as well as how good the data were, because the sampling was interrupted from COVID protocols, and so Alternative 3 uses the 2016 through 2019, as referenced, and you get a 17 percent recreational buffer and a 7 percent commercial buffer.

I will tell you one thing that the IPT is still going to have to work on, and the -- For the purposes of calculating the allocation, I mentioned that we used the SEDAR 70 commercial data, and then we used the ACL data for the recreational side. Those data are based on calendar years.

The recreational data, fishery, is currently managed through a fishing year, which is different from a calendar year, which is fine for the purposes of that, and I think it makes sense. For the purposes of looking at the ACT Control Rule, it doesn't make sense, because it wouldn't make sense to evaluate calendar year landings to an ACT that's based on a fishing year, and, also, the SEDAR data doesn't go through the most recent 2019 and 2020, and so, for that purpose, we used the ACL dataset, commercial and recreational, as necessary, to fill out these tables.

I think it's -- I don't think there's any issue with that, but, as far as reconstructing the entire management history and looking at those, and I was still working on this on the briefing book deadline date, and so, in the next document, you will see those tables and things more fleshed out, but that's why they're not here.

I mentioned the April 2023 deadline, and so the way that's supposed to work is we're supposed to have implementations in effect, and, if you think about our rulemaking and the general best-case scenario is six months, and that's pretty optimistic, and so, if you back up six months from that, it kind of leaves us at summer or fall, which would mean that we would have to get going on this, in order to have a document that is in place by that deadline, and so there are two consequences to that.

One is the council would need to go pretty fast, and, two the way the document is set up, it wouldn't address any changes in management, i.e., season lengths or season changes or anything like that that you may be interested in doing in order to constrain catch levels.

The IPT recommendation would be to address the catch levels and allocation in this document and follow-up with a framework

action for any management changes that you wanted to do. That way, we can meet the deadline to end overfishing, and so that's the way we have it. If you have different thoughts, that's your decision to make, but that's how we set it up at this time.

Let's go ahead and go to the next slide, and I will take questions there, but I do have, in this table, the OFL and ABC recommendations conditioned on the various sector allocations, and so I will just point you to that top row that is illustrated, and, in particular, the OFL, which is the 2.1 million pounds, based on the equilibrium at SPR 30, but, if the ABC is half-a-million pounds in the first year, and you can see, for each of these allocation options, it does build up through time, but that's going to be a severe cut, and so I think that's going to the basis of how we get there and all that, and so I will stop there and take any questions, and we can certainly go through the document, if you want.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Dr. Froeschke. Mr. Diaz.

MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Dr. Frazer. First off, I want to say that Dr. Froeschke did a great job with that presentation, and I was able to follow you and keep up and understand everything, and I know it was a difficult -- There's a lot of moving parts, and it's complicated, but there's not much time to move on this document, and so Dr. Froeschke emphasized that at the end.

When I think about this, I've got a lot of thoughts. The first is, at the last council meeting, there was a lot of council members that say that, if at all possible, we don't want to ever shut down the fishery, and we want to keep some harvest going, so we can keep a flow of data, and, right now, what is staring us in the face right now is there is very little fish, and so every sector needs to realize that there is cuts coming, and that this fishery is in trouble, and so I feel like we're moving through red grouper again, and it's kind of a similar situation.

Everybody is going to take cuts, and then there's some allocation things in here, and, when we talk about allocation, people get anxious about that, and I don't blame them, but, when you implement FES, things change, and you have to at least consider where the move things, and so we don't have easy choices ahead of us, and we need to move kind of fast on this document, to meet the timelines that have been mandated to meet, and, in the future, we're going to have to pick up another document that's going to have nothing but unpleasant choices, and we'll have to pick the best of the unpleasant choices that we can, but opportunities are going to be severely restricted,

because we have almost nothing to work with.

We're not -- We're at the point where folks had hoped we would be, where we had to completely shut down the fishery, but we're knocking on that door, and so, anyway, thanks again, John, for a great presentation. Folks out there listening, please be patient and understand that this is a fishery in trouble, and things are moving down, and I don't think it's going to be good for anybody in the near-term. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Diaz. Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, Dr. Froeschke, I too was able to follow along, and so you did a great job with this. I do have a couple of questions, and one of them I know you just hit on that will be addressed in a separate document, and so I understand that when I ask this question, but, on Slide 5, we have a closure in June and July for recreational, and, on Slide 6, we have a closure in March, April, and May for amberjack, but we keep talking about this spawning thing, and it's not consistent, and I know Panama City and Destin -- They've got have amberjack in May, but I'm putting that thought, moving forward, and maybe, in the next document, we may need to look at that, because there's no consistency, and that's what we've talked about, a lot of times, that there's not a lot of consistency in what we do.

I know that not everything fits each species, but I did want to ask that question, and I really like, on Slide 20, your Action 1, where you kind of lay that out with the different options, but I like the way that you took a look at Alternative 6, and I don't think we've ever -- We may have done that once before, but, to me, that's kind of thinking outside the box, and I appreciate that, and, yes, I know we need to move quickly on this, and I'm guessing -- Do we wait? I am trying to follow the process. So we would have to go final in August, correct, to have it in place by January 1 for the commercial fishery?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Real quick, John, I mean, if we're making reference to the action schedule, right, the way that it's written now, it would come back to the council with a draft document, and you would have some time to think about these alternatives, right, and then you would have a public hearing draft that goes out in August. I guess, to Susan's point, that might allow us to take final action in October, and is that an allowable schedule, to keep us on track, or not?

DR. FROESCHKE: I think that's the schedule that we have to work

with. I mean, I've discussed it with NMFS staff and things, and, to move that up, essentially we would need to bring a public hearing draft in June, and I don't think that's possible, because you all haven't had a chance to sort through the choices that are in there, much less think about it.

I don't think, from the staff timing, that we're going to have a chance to write all the information necessary to bring a public hearing draft in June, and so it just doesn't -- Whenever we try to go that aggressive, it just usually doesn't seem to work out, and so I think August, that we would need to do that, and then public hearings sometime in between.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I will get to Ms. Bosarge in just a second, but I guess, to Ms. Boggs' point, because they're not an IFQ fishery, and so we're not concerned, as concerned, about anything being squared away by the beginning of the calendar year. Ms. Bosarge. Go ahead, John.

DR. FROESCHKE: Just real quick, the way that I was kind of looking at it, it is not an IFQ fishery, and the Regional Office has started working on some initial season projections, based on this, and the way it probably would work is that commercial amberjack would open in January. As they normally do, they would be open in January and February, and there's a three-month March through May closure, and it probably would not reopen after that, if typical patterns would hold.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Yes, that makes sense. Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: I am going to back up a little bit, and I'm still trying to get a handle on where amberjack is now, and, obviously, it's not a success story for management, right, and so, when I came onto the council in 2013, and it was overfished and undergoing overfishing, and maybe it was the only one, the only species we had at that point, but it had been undergoing overfishing and been overfished for almost a decade-and-a-half when I came on the council, and so, you know, it's twenty-something years now.

We've done a lot of things, and I have to commend Dr. Froeschke. This was an amazing presentation, and thank you. I love those charts you had, where you somehow managed to show landings, seasons, and management, and stock assessments all in the same slide, and that was really cool. Thank you, and you went back all the way to 1990, and you know I love that long-term perspective.

I am still trying to understand how back we're doing, right? Okay, and so, on Slide 17, what I am trying to understand, John, and so MSST, minimum stock size threshold, if the stock gets below that, we're overfished.

Obviously, it was below that the last time we assessed it, and every time we've assessed it, and it was below it this time, but how -- What percentage of MSST is that biomass over the years, because I can't tell anything from pounds, because we're changing currencies, FES to CHTS, but do we have something like that that will show me, over time, and are we getting worse and worse and worse? Obviously, we're overfished, but are we more and more and more overfished, or are we coming up a little bit? Have we seen any kind of response to management in the right direction?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Have at it, John.

DR. FROESCHKE: I will try to answer that. First, the graphs were Ava that put those together, and so those were very helpful. As far as the biomass trends in time, I don't have that at the tips of my fingers, and it certainly is in the SEDAR 70 report, and we could pull that up for you.

I'm having Bernie pull up the MSRA table here, we could take a look at the biomass relative to the MSST, so you can kind of see where we're at, and I think Dr. Barbieri once said this stock was sustainably overfished or something, and we've kind of just been a low level, but it really hasn't moved much, despite our numerous changes in the fishery, but I think it's Table 1.1.3, maybe, Bernie, or 1.1.2.

The other thing, while she's bringing that up, is amberjack is one of those stocks, and I think it was in 2017-ish, when we did Reef Fish 44, that we modified the MSST, and so, historically, it had been based off of one minus M, which the MSST would have been around 0.84, I want to say, of MSY, and, when we did this, it allows it to be all the way down to 0.5 before you're overfished. You can see here that SSB current to MSST is 0.83, and so you're 0.4-ish, relative to biomass at SPR 30.

The stock status determination are the two values in gray there, and so the current over the maximum fishing mortality threshold of -- Bernie, can you blow-up that table a little bit? F current over MFMT, maximum fishing mortality threshold, is 1.25, and so that needs to be below one, in order to end overfishing. The SSB current over the minimum stock size threshold needs to be above one to be not overfished, but, at MSY, it would be two,

because MSST is 0.5, and so just the math, and so there is a long way to go on that.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Go ahead, Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: So that line you have highlighted there, with that 0.83 for this current assessment, and the one before that was 0.4, and we can't compare those quite directly to one another, because we changed the goalpost, but we can pretty easily, surely, right, and it's just a formula, and you could convert that 0.4 to our current goalpost, and so I can see did we actually -- I am trying to see -- You remember we made that minimum size limit change, and we were trying to let more of the fish reach maturity before we killed them, and so I think we had like four years of that, and I don't know, and what is the terminal year on this assessment, and is it 2020 or 2019?

DR. FROESCHKE: It's 2018.

MS. BOSARGE: Okay, and so we only had two years, or three years. Three years. Anyway, if you could convert that, and that's the kind of chart and metrics that I was talking about at the last meeting, and it will help me to understand where we're at with some of these species, if I can -- You're going to have to back-convert, when we changed the goalpost, and you'll have to account for that, but that will help me see if we're coming up a little, or are we going down, and how are we doing, and that tells me what we need to do, from a management perspective.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: John, real quick, and then we'll wrap it up.

DR. FROESCHKE: I think the easiest way to do that is to look at it as a percentage of MSY, which, I mean, it's fairly straightforward to do that. The caveat though, Leann, is you're correct that the 0.4 -- The reason it's so much lower is because it's the one minus M in the previous assessment.

The challenge that you have is, if you look at the line, the SSB MSY or the proxy, that biomass equilibrium value, those do change from the assessments, and they change just because assessments change, but, also, when you integrate the FES data, that's going to drive it up.

When you have the lower recruitment, which, from the regime shift, which we now think is correct, it's going to drive it down, and so that's why they're mostly similar, but I would say likely for different very reasons, and so everything is more difficult to interpret.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Go ahead.

MS. BOSARGE: I get that on the MSY, but, for MSST, it shouldn't -- Right? That's a better metric, right, or are we using a bunch of proxies for that too that's going to drive change?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: John.

DR. FROESCHKE: MSST is taking the MSY and dividing it in half, and so, if MSY is not good, then your MSST is not going to be good.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. We're going to take one more quick question from Andy Strelcheck.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Tom. I actually three comments, or maybe two comments and a question. In terms of the timing of the action, I just wanted to circle back on that, and, obviously, from the agency standpoint, the sooner the better, but I recognize that the council needs some time to work on this, and, if we got this from the council as of the October meeting, or shortly after the October meeting, that would still provide -- We think it would be able to be completed within the statutory timeframe.

It would affect, obviously, the fact that we would have to change the catch levels in-season for 2023, and so there's a risk that the commercial sector could already meet their revised catch limit, based on opening in January and February, but I think the risk of that, in terms of that happening, is probably fairly low, and we could just kind of see, based on trying to get this implemented as quickly as possible after October. Keep in mind that there's a March through May closure for the commercial sector, and the recreational sector season is split across years.

The other comment was that I appreciate John and team kind of thinking about how to streamline this action, and so I'm certainly onboard with the two actions that have been proposed. I think we'll want to be very clear and upfront with regard to the reductions in catch limits and allocations, as to what the management measures may look like, without being overly specific, and certainly we have in-season management authority to close the fishery, and so we can rely on that, at least initially, until any sort of framework action is completed by the council.

Then the third is a question for John, and I think he has probably kind of indirectly answered this, but, anytime we're considering allocation changes, when we have a fishery that is heavily regulated, and you went through the regulations with us in-depth, obviously, that influences what can or can't be caught.

There is also, obviously, times where one sector, or both sectors, might have exceeded their quota, and so my question to John is, based on the allocation alternatives that you presented, would you recommend eliminating any, because of the complex regulatory history, and, two, have the allocation percentages been adjusted to account for, or eliminate, for that matter, any overages that might have occurred under quota management?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: I will try, and, first, the second question would be no, and, I mean, in terms of adjusting for overages, no. We didn't penalize or anything, and it's just a straight landings and calculation, which is consistent with how we've always done it in the past.

As far as the other ones, about eliminating options or that, I am not prepared to make any recommendation. The only thing I would say is I think it would be worth the committee's time to take a quick look at the need, in the purpose and need section, and, in particular, there's one sentence in there that relates to considering historical participation in the fishery, and Alternative 6 is quite different from that, and so I would be interested in some feedback there.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thank you, John. We're just going to take one quick question, Mr. Chair, if we can, from Mr. Anson, and then we'll wrap it up.

MR. ANSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. John, you may have covered it, and it was a good presentation, and, if you covered it, I apologize, but, looking into next year, in regard to the recreational season, since it's split, and the fishing season ends, essentially, in May, relative to trying to get this document through and in place, and is -- Are the recreational landings, just for the ACL purposes, are they just looking at 2022 specifically, and so January to December, right? I am just trying to think of, you know -- If we keep the season the way it is, are those landings going to exceed, and I guess we'll get more information in the June document, and clarification of

that, but I'm just trying to look ahead, to see how the May recreational landings would impact what we're trying to do in this document.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: John.

DR. FROESCHKE: I am going to have to punt that one to the Regional Office. If we assume that the implementation would be in April or May of next year, I don't know about how that May season and how that would go and when this would start tracking. I would presume on the August, but I will defer.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: We can go ahead and circle back on that, and so certainly that will be some of what we talk about in our June meeting, but, just to recap for folks, right, we're going to bring this document back in June, and we're going to have to send it out for public hearing in August, right, and so we're going to need to be prepared to pick some preferreds, and it will be pretty controversial, because they involve an allocation decision, and so that's where we're at. Mr. Chair, I'm sorry I'm a little bit late, but we'll go ahead and take a break, if you wish.

MR. DIAZ: I would like to ask one quick question before we break, if I could. John, has there been any discussion -- This is a follow-up on Kevin's and Leann's points, but any discussion on the splitting waves for the season and its potential effect on sample size of surveys?

DR. FROESCHKE: Well, it's always been a recommendation, and I talked to Mike Larkin, and he does the data, and, if we were to look at changing the season in a subsequent action or something, I think it would be worth considering starting in maybe September or something, to avoid that wave split, but, in the near term, I think our seasons are going to be so short that we're going to be in partial waves no matter what.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Diaz, if I might, I ignored Mara, and I didn't mean to, and she's back there in the corner, but I think she had some clarifying information.

MS. MARA LEVY: You can ignore me, and I was very late in raising my hand, and, I mean, it just occurred to me, just so everything is on the table, that greater amberjack has a payback, and so, if we're going to implement things mid-harvest, and we're cutting things significantly, that does increase the chance of a payback if we don't somehow think about what to do with that, and I'm just throwing it out there so that we can

think about that and there won't be any surprises when we start implementing this stuff.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Mara, for bringing that up. Mr. Diaz.

MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Dr. Frazer. Good discussion this morning. Let's take a fifteen-minute break, and we'll come back at 11:00.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: We're going to pick up with Agenda Item Number VII, and I will let Mr. Rindone go through the action guide, and then we'll get Dr. Nance up to give us a presentation. Ryan.

REVIEW OF REVISED GREAT RED SNAPPER COUNT ESTIMATES AND SSC RECOMMENDATIONS

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, sir. Dr. Nance is here with us today. Dr. Nance, if you want to mosey on up to the podium, and he's going to summarize the SSC's deliberations about the revised data considered for generating catch advice for red snapper, based on the data from the Great Red Snapper Count and the LGL Ecological Associates study on estimating absolute abundance of red snapper off of Louisiana.

The SSC talked about these data at their March 2022 meeting, and they looked at the LGL study design and response to peer-review comments and its updated estimate of absolute abundance, and this estimate was ultimately used to supplant partially-imputed data for that state and the Great Red Snapper Count, which had both empirical data for Louisiana and imputed data from adjacent Texas waters.

The SSC also looked at a post-stratified analysis for the shallowest depth stratum for Florida, which was designed to better apportion the biomass of fish by depth, based on other fishery-independent surveys, and then Dr. Nance is going to go through the SSC's deliberations and recommendations for catch limits, and you guys should ask questions as appropriate, and you guys can also consider recommending that staff work on a framework action for the Reef Fish FMP to revise these red snapper catch limits, but you guys transmitted a previous framework action to revise the red snapper catch limits last June, but this framework action has not yet been implemented. Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Jim, it's always good to have you, and so I'll let you just go ahead.

DR. JIM NANCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate being able to be here today and present the SSC recommendations to the council. Let's go ahead and move to Slide Number 7 to outline the discussions and recommendations in three different areas.

The first is estimating absolute abundance of red snapper off of Louisiana, the second is our post-stratification analysis for Florida absolute abundance, and the third will be the Southeast Fisheries Science Center catch analysis for Gulf of Mexico red snapper.

With regard to estimating the absolute abundance of red snapper off of Louisiana, Dr. Scott Raborn from LGL Ecological Research Associates presented their completed research to generate estimates of absolute abundance of red snapper off of Louisiana. This study was designed for model-based inference of red snapper abundance through field surveys for two separate responses. The first was to estimate total fish density from hydroacoustic surveys, and the second was to proportion that total abundance that were red snapper using submerged rotating video cameras.

There were five habitats associated with offshore Louisiana, those being artificial reefs, natural banks, uncharacterized bottom, pipeline crossings, and oil platforms. These were evaluated within depth strata across three different areas in Louisiana, those being west, central, and east.

When looking the results from the LGL study, the largest discrepancy between the LGL study and the Great Red Snapper Count assessment was the estimate of abundance over natural banks. Differences were also noted between the Great Red Snapper Count and the LGL study for standing platforms and artificial reefs. The Great Red Snapper Count was about 4.7 times greater than what the LGL study showed. Abundance estimates for the uncharacterized bottom were comparable between the two studies.

The SSC discussed the differences between the LGL study and the Great Red Snapper Count estimates for absolute abundance recorded for Louisiana, noting the limitations of the sampling design for the LGL study and the imputation of some Louisiana data from Texas for the Great Red Snapper Count study.

The comparability of the studies, due to these differences, remains difficult. However, through lengthy discussions with our SSC, the SSC concluded that, in general, the differences between the surveys highlighted the uncertainty in both

estimates, which is likely underestimated. The SSC noted that the LGL study was designed to focus on the present habitats off Louisiana and likely represented a better estimate, a better abundance estimate, for that area, compared to the abundance estimate for the Great Red Snapper Count, since we had actual data from Louisiana instead of imputed data that was used from the State of Texas.

The SSC agreed, during our discussion, that the LGL study was an improvement to the data utilized for the Great Red Snapper Count, which was partially extrapolated from nearby Texas waters. The first motion from the SSC -- (There is a gap in the audio recording.)

Next, we talked about the post-stratification of the Florida absolute abundance, and Dr. Katie Siegfried from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center presented the post-stratification analysis for the estimates of red snapper absolute abundance in the West Florida Shelf. This effort was driven by concerns of higher than expected numbers of fish in the shallow-water stratum in that area, the ten through forty meters, off of Florida. Those data were post-stratified, and so we went from a ten-to-forty-meter substrate, or area, to one bin which was ten to twenty-five, and the next bin was twenty-five to forty.

Analysis still estimated a large relative abundance of red snapper in the Big Bend region, with a larger number of fish in the new deeper depth bin compared to that of the ten-to-twenty-five-meter bin.

Motion that the SSC agrees that the post-stratification analysis for the State of Florida is appropriate and should be included in the overall estimate of age-two-plus red snapper in the Gulf of Mexico informed by the finalized Great Red Snapper Count data and random forest design. That motion carried without opposition.

Now I will get into the part where we're talking about the Southeast Fisheries Science Center catch analysis. I think it's important to note that we're not talking about an interim analysis here, and it's not like our regular ways we do things, and this we're terming a catch analysis.

Mr. Matt Smith from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center presented revised catch advice for red snapper based on estimates of absolute abundance from the Great Red Snapper Count for Florida, which has been post-stratified, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, and LGL study for Louisiana.

After including the LGL estimate and the post-stratification for Florida, the estimate for the Great-Red-Snapper-Count-derived estimate, using the random forest approach, the revised combined estimate of absolute abundance for age-two-plus red snapper is approximately 85.6 million fish.

As the Center set up this catch analysis, these are the different things that they had to go through in order to accomplish that. The age and length composition were informed by SEDAR 52, using data through 2016. The frequency of age-two-plus fish were estimated using the last ten years of available data, that being 2007 through 2016.

The estimated virgin spawning stock biomass was derived from the fraction of the spawning stock biomass in 2019 divided by the projected SPR for 2019 from SEDAR 52, which was 20.7 percent, based on the projected pace of rebuilding from SEDAR 52. The terminal year of the data for the analysis was 2019, with future yields projected forward from that point, and so those are the items that had to go into these analysis.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Nance, real quick.

DR. NANCE: Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Why are we terminating the data utilized for the catch analysis at 2016?

DR. NANCE: I think -- Go ahead, Ryan.

MR. RINDONE: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The data that are included for the frequency distribution of age-two-plus fish are based on the data, similar data, from SEDAR 52, and so it's looking at the age and length frequencies that were used in that assessment, because we don't have those updated yet and available for red snapper from the SEDAR 74 research track, and all those data still need to be vetted through the data workshop and that whole process, and so this represents the most contemporary and complete peer-reviewed dataset available for this purpose.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Ryan. Dr. Nance.

DR. NANCE: Thank you. The uncertainty was quantified using a determination projection at 75 percent of the fishing mortality

rate corresponding to a 26 percent SPR. That was the deterministic approach that was used by the Center, and, also, they used a Monte Carlo simulation incorporating the uncertainty for the number of age-two-plus red snapper with recruitment, fishing mortality rates, and initial depletion based on SEDAR 52.

Three scenarios for consideration of abundance over the uncharacterized bottom were generated. The first one was assuming all structure, and those structures include natural and artificial habitats, and the second was all structure plus 10 percent of the uncharacterized bottom, and the third scenario was all structure plus 15 percent of the uncharacterized bottom.

The Southeast Fisheries Science Center also presented an ensemble model, or ensemble approach, that estimated the grand mean and variance for the catch advice and provides a broader estimate of uncertainty across the three uncharacterized bottom scenarios. It's important to remember that, in this ensemble approach, all the artificial reef and natural structures were used, plus around a 10 percent uncharacterized bottom fished.

Dr. John Walter from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center presented a spatial analysis, and we're going to term that the Gardner analysis, of commercial and recreational catch compared to biomass derived from the Great Red Snapper Count. Two objectives were to assign spatial, recreational, and commercial catch and effort using estimates of biomass derived from the Great Red Snapper Count and, second, to calculate exploitation rates for scenarios to inform potential fishery yields based on those rates.

The Gardner analysis was updated using the LGL estimate for Louisiana and the post-stratified area for the shallowest depth stratum in Florida. Biomass was estimated using composition data and mean weights from SEDAR 52 and regional abundance estimates from the Great-Red-Snapper-Count-derived data to estimate biomass in weight.

The Gardner analysis used a mean weight in the eastern Gulf of 3.2 pounds whole weight and 4.8 pounds whole weight in the western Gulf. The SSC discussed the fact that the stock is larger than previously estimated in SEDAR 52 and that the exploitation rates are likely lower than estimated by that assessment.

The SSC further noted that other aspects of population dynamics, like recruitment, reproduction, updates to age and length

composition, and other information have not been updated with current information, as is customarily done from a stock assessment.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: We have a question from Mr. Gill.

DR. NANCE: Yes, sir.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So we heard reports from all the states on their landings, et cetera, and they all talked about what they had for mean weight, and my recollection is that, relative to the numbers we're seeing here, they're twice, or 50 percent, greater, and so there seems to be a significant difference in the state-reported weights versus what was used in the Gardner analysis, and perhaps Dr. Walter can address that.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Go ahead, John, if you want to, but Dr. Stunz is going to weigh-in as well.

DR. JOHN WALTER: Very quickly, the assumption there of 3.2 and 4.8 was in the ambient population. What the states are reporting is what is landed, and so you're going to have that be a big difference, and they're not the same, not comparable, necessarily.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Greg.

DR. STUNZ: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Nance, I don't know if this is for you or Dr. Walter, whoever wants to answer it, but, at the SSC meeting, John, when you did your analysis on the UCB, you -- I don't know if "recommended" is the right word, but you were suggesting like using 22 percent, and then the SSC went, I guess, with a much more conservative -- They set UCB at a much more conservative estimate of 10 percent, and I wasn't sure why that was or what was the justification for going that much lower.

DR. NANCE: You know, as we discussed this at the SSC meeting, we just were unsure of uncertainty. You know, we have different works that have been done, the 22 percent and those types of things, and we looked at -- We wanted to look at different scenarios, and so we looked at structure only, structure plus 10 percent uncharacterized bottom, and structure plus 15 percent uncharacterized bottom, and so we were comfortable with those. We also had that ensemble approach, which gave us a grand mean of a lot of different things, and it was structure plus around 8 percent of the uncharacterized bottom.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Go ahead, Dr. Nance.

DR. NANCE: Okay. You bet. The motion was the SSC finds the catch analysis developed by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center and informed by age-two-plus red snapper abundance from the Great Red Snapper Count for Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, and the post-stratified abundance data for Florida and from the LGL abundance study for Louisiana is the BSIA for abundance information and is useful for development of overfishing limit and allowable biological catch recommendations. That motion carried fourteen to seven with three abstentions and one absent.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Dr. Nance, this actually might be more for Dr. Walter, but I am looking at the report that was generated, the Gardner analysis, and I'm looking at Figure 3 on page 19, and it's the depiction of the distribution -- I'm sorry, and it's Figure 2 on page 18, and it's the distribution of estimated recreational landings per ten-by-ten-kilometer block, estimated from individual state reporting programs, and it just seems -- I provided some information to you, Dr. Walter, and it just seems like there's a lot of fish that are being estimated to have been caught farther offshore than what I thought would be, and I was just wondering if you had any further information for that. It seems like they're forty miles, potentially, thirty-five to forty miles, offshore, where most of the fish are being harvested.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Walter.

DR. WALTER: There is a number of reports, different versions of it, where we revised those, in particular revising them based on data from LA Creel that was informative in identifying the spatial locations, but I think you're referring to off of Alabama, correct, and what I can say is -- I can look that, and I think I'm looking at that reporting, and that is based on the depths from -- I believe we used the iSnapper depths and applied them to Alabama, because we didn't have data on the specific spatial locations from Alabama, and I don't know if there is better data available.

I think we raised that as a request, whether any of the state programs had finer-resolution data, relative to the depth or distance offshore, but, in the absence of it, we had to make some assumptions, and so it could very well be off this.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Now that I'm thinking of it, I think I actually provided you potentially just data from 2016 through 2018, which was the years we added the depth question to our dockside survey, and so, for 2019, you probably didn't have the actual data, but, anyway, from those three years, I just recall that the percentage of those fish that were being caught off of Alabama -- The majority of those fish were being caught in distances that appear to be closer than what's depicted on this figure here, and that's important, because, when you have the slide previous to this, Slide Number 13 in the presentation, the one just before this one, the last bullet there, the other aspects of population dynamics, like recruitment, reproduction, updates to age and length composition and other information have not been updated with current information, as is customary from a stock assessment, and so that would be true to this, but, as we look forward to the next assessment, and certainly as we look into the research track assessment, the thing that I have had problems with over the years, relative to Alabama's data, is that most of the fish in the recreational side are being caught within that twenty-five-mile zone, and most of that habitat is artificial.

Our data has shown that the fish that reside on artificial reefs tend to start moving off around age-eight or nine, and so you will predominantly get fish that are under eight or nine years of age, if you're looking at that through our sampling programs, as I understand them to be, and they're not proportioned, or they're not proportional, to artificial or natural reefs or distance from shore, and it's just catch as catch can, and most of the trips, again, are targeting those shallower areas where the artificial reefs are, where the fish only get up to around age-eight or nine in great proportions. You occasionally will find an older fish, but those fish tend to move off and go start finding other locations and artificial reefs. Thank you.

DR. NANCE: Mr. Chair, can I --

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Go ahead, Dr. Nance, and then we'll go to --

DR. NANCE: Kevin, I appreciate that comment, and, you know, it's one of those things where, from this catch analysis, we're using SEDAR 52, and we're updating for our catch analysis, as much as we're capable of doing, to be able to give catch advice. Certainly, as we get this next assessment, we're going to be able to make some better informed decisions on those things.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I think we have one more question from Dr.

Stunz.

DR. STUNZ: This will be very brief, I hope, Dr. Nance, or maybe Dr. Walter, and maybe I didn't frame it quite right, Jim, and Kevin captured a little bit, and the study clearly showed that the fishery is taking place on the artificial reef, as Kevin just mentioned, but the fish are on the uncharacterized bottom, and the SSC choosing 10 percent over what John I think -- John, please correct me if I'm wrong, but, in your presentation, you were saying to use the 22 percent.

In my mind -- I mean, if we're talking about uncertainty, the 22 percent number is just as uncertain as the 10 percent number, if I understand that, and so, you know, when all the fish are out on the uncharacterized bottom, and you look at John's work, and our general understanding is they're not as exploited as much, and it just seems to me that we could have gone up from 10 percent to 22 percent, and I don't remember the analysis right off the top of my head, but I think it makes a big difference, a big difference, whether it was 10 or -- But, anyway, it just seems like there's some fish out there that we're not really utilizing.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I am going to let Ryan weigh-in, real quick, Dr. Nance.

DR. NANCE: Okay. That would be fine.

MR. RINDONE: Thanks, Mr. Chair. When we're talking about the percent of the UCB that's being included from the Gardner analysis for generating this catch advice, initially, that 22 percent, that referred to -- It was essentially saying that 22 percent of the UCB experienced greater than some very, very small fractional amount of fishing pressure, and so some harvest that occurred there, as opposed to none at all.

There's a large proportion of the UCB that's not subject to any harvest, for a variety of reasons, and there just might not be anything easily detectable from the surface, or any reason to fish there, but, like Dr. Stunz said, the more that you include, yes, it does have a considerable effect on what the catch limits ultimately are, but just to clarify what that percentage actually means.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Nance.

DR. NANCE: I think Ryan addressed that, and I appreciate that.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right.

DR. NANCE: Let's go to Slide 20. Uncertainty in catch advice, the abundance over the uncharacterized bottom received lengthy discussion from the SSC, and we discussed that for quite a while. We came up with this motion. The SSC accepts the Southeast Fisheries Science Center catch analysis and establishes an OFL based on the ensemble analysis using the five-year average of 18.91 million pounds whole weight. that motion carried twelve to nine with three abstentions and one absent.

The SSC discussed an appropriate catch recommendation for the ABC, acknowledging the uncertainties with respect to the data used in the catch analysis and also the catch analysis itself, two important concepts.

The motion is the SSC approves the ABC of 16.31 million pounds whole weight for red snapper, based on the five-year average using the ensemble approach, based on a P* value of 0.3. That motion carried eleven to nine with two abstentions and three absent. Mr. Chair, that ends my presentation.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Dr. Nance. I appreciate it. Do we have any further questions for Dr. Nance at this time? Jim, I'm not seeing any questions right now, and I just want to make sure. Let me get back to our agenda.

DR. NANCE: I will be here.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you. Okay. I guess a couple of things. Go ahead, Greg, and then I will --

DR. STUNZ: This wasn't a question really, but -- Well, it is a question, and, I mean, I think we need a motion to accept this catch advice, right? I don't know what that motion looks like, Mr. Chairman, but I'm happy to make it, and so, if you need a motion, and I guess would this be through a framework action? **Okay, and so a motion to create a framework action to incorporate this new catch advice, and I'm not sure what else we need to say there, but I'm happy if staff wants to jump in, to make sure we capture this correctly.**

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: We will get it up there, and we'll start to craft it, and so I just want to look at Ryan, and is a framework amendment? Is that the language we're using now?

MR. RINDONE: No, and framework amendment is only for CMP,

because CMP is more special, and we still use framework action for reef fish, and so we could say something like to direct staff to begin a framework action to revise red snapper catch limits, following the SSC's March 2022 catch limit recommendations.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay, and so we've got a motion on the board. Is there a second for that motion?

MS. BOGGS: Second.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: It's seconded by Ms. Boggs. Any further discussion? Okay. I have a couple of questions, probably for the agency and staff. We have, out there right now, an existing transmittal letter, and so will that impact what -- Will we just essentially put the brakes on that? Mara, can you explain to me what's going to happen?

MS. LEVY: Well, so the agency already is in the process of developing a proposed rule for the two current red snapper actions that you've already submitted, right, and so that process is going to move forward, and then this would, I guess, follow on the heels of it, right, and so we would just be updating the catch limits again, based on whatever you do here, but I don't really think there's a way to put the brakes on what we've already put in motion.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I guess the reason I'm asking is the intent is to implement this prior to the 2023 fishing season, and so, when you've gone through this process with the first transmittal letter, if everything flows the way that the council intends, you would have never really implemented that catch advice, and so I'm just trying to make things more efficient.

MS. LEVY: Well, I guess we have to figure that out, but, like I said, the agency is already moving forward with what you've submitted, and, I mean, I get it that, if you did this and took final action in June, that you might want it implemented before January 1, and that's probably enough time, or maybe it won't be. I mean, I don't know, and then it would just end up getting implemented a little bit later, but it's an increase, right, and so everyone would just benefit from that increase, but I think you just have to move forward with this, and then we'll have to figure out what to do with it.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Do you guys

have a timeline on when that proposed rule would publish? Is it going to impact this season, the 300,000-pound increase, at all, or is that going to be sometime at the end of the season? Do you have an idea of when that would occur?

MS. LEVY: Well, we're working on it, or them, and, I mean, I don't really have a timeline, and I think, ultimately, right, you have the two actions that are going to impact the catch limits, and so those are kind of going together, right, and they're two actions, both impacting the red snapper catch limits, and, I mean, all I can say is that we're working on a proposed rule, and then we have to do comments, and we have to do a final rule, and I just -- I don't really have a better timeline for you than that at this point.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. I guess I am looking at staff again, and I'm trying to think about our own timeline here, and so, if we were to try to get a framework action together in June, do we need to schedule for any public hearings or just -- Okay. So is the preference then of the council, I guess, to try to make sure that we have this framework action in place at our June meeting, and it's a final action activity? I am just trying to make sure we know where we're all at. Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we can move pretty quickly on it. I don't know if you could take final action in June, but certainly by August, I believe, and, because it's an increase, I think it would still -- It could be realized and absorbed by the commercial sector, and then the recreational sector would be able to realize that by their season, I believe, in 2023.

I guess my concern, and we can talk about this with the Regional Office, is the big differences in the OFL from what was transmitted to the agency compared to what was just recommended by the SSC, and so we probably need to work through that a little bit, because that's determining whether overfishing is occurring or not.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Rindone.

MR. RINDONE: To segue into what Dr. Simmons said, I mean, if we go final in August, and we get it transmitted in September, and the agency has its six-month period that starts after we transmit it, and so now you're looking at March, or maybe April, and that gets things in place in time for the recreational season, and the additional pounds would then be distributed commercially through the IFQ program.

As far as the OFLs are concerned, just to review for you guys the past framework action, it had an OFL of 25.6 million pounds, and this one is 18.91, and so there is a sizable difference there, and the ABC on the last one was 15.4 million pounds, and on this one I think it's sixteen-and-change. 16.3.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. I mean, so, again, I am just trying to understand the process a little bit more, and so you're essentially following up a framework action with another, right, and you're changing, pretty substantially, the OFL, and the question from staff to the agency is, is there going to be a question about why there was a large difference, and is there a justification that you're worried about or something?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: I guess I'm trying to understand if the OFL is shifted for the 2022 catches, and that's what you're managing overfishing for the fishery on in 2022, to the 25.6 million pounds, and then you ratchet it down, in 2023, to the eighteen, I'm just trying to frame that up a little bit in my mind.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. I got it. Thanks. All right. We have a motion on the board, and we have a second to that motion. Is there any further discussion? **I am not seeing any, and so is there any opposition to the motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Mr. Chair, we're at 11:41. Do you want to just move into the next section of this or --

MR. DIAZ: I think my preference would be to go ahead and break for lunch, and we're at a good stopping point right here, and I don't know where we'll be if we start another section, and we did a full hour-and-a-half yesterday, and did everybody have enough time to get back? I know it's difficult to get something to eat here and get back. If we did an hour-and-a-half again today, does that work for everybody? All right. I'm not seeing anybody really complain, and so we'll start back at 1:15.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Dale.

(Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on April 5, 2022.)

- - -

April 5, 2022

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

- - -

The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council reconvened at The Lodge at Gulf State Park in Gulf Shores, Alabama on Tuesday afternoon, April 5, 2022, and was called to order by Chairman Tom Frazer.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Let me get back to our agenda. We are going to pick up with a discussion of gag, the interim rule, the SRFS calibration and interim analysis, and we'll let Mr. Rindone take us through the action guide, and then we'll have a presentation by Mr. Strelcheck.

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF GULF OF MEXICO GAG GROUPER INTERIM RULE, SRFS CALIBRATION, AND INTERIM ANALYSIS

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so Mr. Strelcheck is going to review a presentation with you guys about the proposed interim rule to end overfishing for gag. SEDAR 72, which the SSC reviewed last September, found that gag was overfished and undergoing overfishing. SEDAR 72 also used updated recreational catch and effort data for our using MRIP-FES and also an ecosystem model for incorporating red tide episodic mortality.

The SSC is also recommending a revision in the proxy for the fishing mortality at maximum sustainable yield for gag. Right now, it's at Fmax, and they're recommending F 30 percent SPR be used instead. At its 2022 meeting, January 2022 meeting, the council's Reef Fish Advisory Panel recommended the longest rebuilding timeline possible be considered for gag when the council starts talking about developing rebuilding plans, and so you guys should consider this information that's going to be presented and ask questions and make recommendations, as appropriate, as it relates to this proposed interim rule.

Dr. Porch isn't here, but Dr. Walter is, and I'm sure he's super excited to also discuss with you guys the progress and timeline for calibrating the State of Florida's State Reef Fish Survey to MRIP-FES, for the purpose of using that index to inform an alternative model run for the SEDAR 72 stock assessment base model.

SEDAR 72 is completed, and so this is an analysis that we've requested of the Science Center, and so this SRFS model run will inform landings for the private angling component only, and Dr. Walter will talk to you guys also about the feasibility of conducting an interim analysis for gag, which was talked about at the last meeting, including candidate representative indices

of relative abundance that might be suitable to inform the SSC and the council about the condition of gag at the present. You guys should ask questions about those topics as well.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Rindone. We will go ahead and get Mr. Strelcheck's presentation loaded up. Andy, are you on the line?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, I'm here, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: How are you feeling, Andy? You sound awful.

MR. STRELCHECK: I feel as good as I sound.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: There you go. Well, thank you for taking the time to run through this presentation.

MR. STRELCHECK: Sorry, but you'll have to bear with me and my voice. Are we ready to go?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: We are.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay. If you recall, at the last council meeting, there was a motion made for an emergency rule for gag, to address the overfishing and overfished status, and I had made some comments on the record, noting that it was probably most appropriate to do an interim rule, and so we've just noted here, in Magnuson, the authority that the council has to request the Secretary of Commerce to implement interim measures.

A couple of things to note, and one is that the interim measures need to reduce overfishing, and they don't have to prevent overfishing, but certainly, if we want to get the rebuilding plan jumpstarted, the goal would be to prevent overfishing, and then the interim rule is only effective for a limited duration, and so we can implement it for 180 days and then extend it for another 186.

This would really be then kind of a stopgap measure, and it would give the council some additional time to work on getting additional scientific advice and information to help update, or implement, the rebuilding plan. As a reminder, the council was notified of the stock status back in late January, at the last council meeting, and so the interim measures would be in effect, if you recommend them, for the 2023 fishing year, with the goal of then having more permanent measures to end overfishing and have a rebuilding plan in place for the 2024 fishing year.

To give you an idea of kind of what's been happening with regard to landings data, you can see that the commercial sector has not harvested more than 50 percent of their annual catch limit over the last five years, and averaging around 500,000 pounds of landings, and a little bit more or a little bit less in some years. For the recreational sector, it's kind of a similar story. There was a little bit of an uptick in landings in the most recent year, 2021, but the same kind of theme, and landing about 50 percent of the annual catch limit in the most recent time period, and so the catch limit is certainly considerably higher than what is being landed at this point.

I will note, because it's a little bit confusing switching between units, that this is all summarized in the current ACL units that use MRIP, the Coastal Household Telephone Survey, but the new assessment, as it stands right now, utilizes the Fishing Effort Survey, and so that will be noted in some slides coming up.

There is some decision points that we wanted to talk to the council today. Think of this as you are recommending to the Secretary of Commerce the interim rule, and we are then tasked with carrying out implementing that interim rule, and so, at the last meeting, I was concerned that there was not a lot of specificity around what we were implementing, because the recommendation was simply to change the catch limit, and so we've brought forward, for you, some other considerations.

Ryan had just noted that one of the choices is whether or not -- Or how you would reduce the catch limit, what rebuilding plan scenario you use, and we have a question of whether or not the council wants to consider an allocation change, and, if so, what would be the allocation that the agency would consider, or use, for that interim rule?

Then, for the recreational and commercial management measures, we have various season and bag limits, and there could be a vessel limit considered, or even other management measures, and, on the commercial side, because it's operating under an IFQ, one of the provisions in the IFQ program is to allow for red grouper multiuse allocation, and so this makes harvesting gag and red grouper kind of interchangeable and some flexibility for discards.

For those that need a refresher with regard to the status quo management, right now, we have a catch target for the recreational fishery that's 90 percent of the catch limit, and the season opens in June each year, and it runs through

December, unless we project that the landings reach the catch limit.

There is also a state waters fishing season for certain counties off of Florida that opens prior to the federal season, but then closes during the kind of early portion of the federal season and then reopens, and so that's something that the State of Florida has authority over. There is a minimum size limit, a bag limit, and there's payback provisions, and then the IFQ program, as a whole, serves as the accountability measure.

In terms of the target reduction, if the goal of the council, under the interim rule, is to end overfishing and essentially adopt the first year of the rebuilding plan, you essentially have the three options, and so one is to set it at 75 percent of the MFMT, and then Options 2 and 3 would be essentially rebuilding plans, different calculations of rebuilding plans, but the bottom line is that the overall catch level would be somewhere between 540,000 and 660,000 pounds, and that's equivalent to a net reduction in landings of somewhere between 77 and 82 percent, and so this is substantial, and that net reduction is based on the combined commercial landings and FES-calculated landings.

You can see, at the top of the slide, just a comparison of the difference between the Coastal Household Telephone Survey and those FES landings for recreational units.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Andy, can you hold on, real quick? Can you go back one slide, I think? Mr. Rindone has a question.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Strelcheck made my point, and that wasn't on the slide, and I just wanted to say that 2022 is in CHTS, and 2023 and 2024 are in FES.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Ryan. Okay. Go ahead, Andy. I'm sorry.

MR. STRELCHECK: As I mentioned earlier, the council should discuss, with the recommendation on the interim rule, whether or not they want to maintain, you want to maintain, the current allocation, which is 61 percent rec and 39 percent commercial, and that is based on a time series from 1985 to 2005.

If you just simply update that time series and plug in the new MRIP-FES data, it shifts to closer to 79 percent and 21 percent, and certainly that's one way of doing it, and there is certainly other alternatives, if the council wants to reallocate under the

interim rule, and so these are decisions that the council really needs to make, whether or not they want to decide to do this under the interim rulemaking, wait to do it under the longer-term, more permanent action.

To give you an idea of the distribution of landings, and so this is a three-year time series, and you can see the big spike in landings in the June-July timeframe, and the falloff in landings in kind of August through October and November, and then the landings come back up again in the early-winter period of the November and December timeframe.

The commercial fishery, the distribution looks, obviously, a little bit different, because it's open year-round, and that would be managed under the IFQ program, and so, essentially, by reducing the catch limit for the commercial sector, commercial fishing would be allocated less of a quota, and they would have to decide when and how to use that quota throughout the year.

In terms of the left-hand graphic for the recreational sector, I think the one thing to note is, when calculating fishing seasons, the real challenge we have is that the questions about whether or not there will be substantial effort shifting, and because the seasons look to be very short, the potential benefits of shifting the season are really hard to estimate, from the Fisheries Service standpoint.

This is kind of a similar graphic, and it's just showing kind of that distribution of landings. There's a little bit more variability when you look at it, obviously, across years, but kind of the same story, where the bulk of the landings are occurring in that early part of the season, as well as when the water is cool toward the end of the year here.

When you take that into account and look at what the catch limits would be for the recreational sector under the current allocation, you can see what we're talking about with regard to being able to harvest the catch limit very quickly, and so, using that June 1 start date, we potentially are going to have a fishery that's only open for a matter of weeks.

If you look at different start dates, the season potentially gets longer, and some of that would be likely to occur because we're moving into months where the weather conditions might not be as conducive for fishing, or people obviously get busy outside the summer months, and ultimately have more things that they are involved with, and so less fishing activity, and so the, I think, take-home here is that the season is likely to be

very short, whether it's on the order of weeks, or a month, or a month-and-a-half, and it's really hard to estimate, and that note that I made earlier --

MR. RINDONE: Andy, we lost you.

MR. STRELCHECK: Earlier about shifts in fishing effort could really considerably change kind of --

MR. RINDONE: Andy, we cannot hear you. I think Tom is calling you.

MR. STRELCHECK: Can you hear me?

MR. RINDONE: There you are.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: We lost you since you started to essentially orient us to this particular slide, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Okay, and so the estimates, here on this slide, of how long the recreational season length could be are based on essentially historical trends in landings data, and so these may not be representative of ultimately what a fishery could look like under very a short fishing season, especially if fishermen redistribute fishing effort.

One thing to note, obviously, is that, the more you get outside the summer fishing season, the likelihood of days increasing goes up, because of poorer weather conditions, as well as just other activities that people are involved with that might take away days, obviously, that they go fishing, therefore reducing fishing effort, but the bottom line here is that the season is likely to be a matter of weeks to a month or a month-and-a-half, at the longest, in most instances, in order to meet the catch limit.

We looked at changing the bag limit and determined that reducing the bag limit would have no net effect on harvest, and 99 percent of the trips do not harvest more than one gag per angler, and so I would not recommend the council pursue a bag limit change, and you could change the bag limit to a vessel limit, and we expect that that would have a more substantial reduction in harvest, because there are, obviously, numerous vessels that report harvesting more than one gag per trip, and so it would really become very much a bycatch species at that point, and so that could, obviously, lengthen the season, if the vessel limit is reduced to that amount.

Then, as I mentioned earlier on the commercial side, not really a lot of changes that we would recommend you look at making, but certainly one to consider is that, if gag is under a rebuilding plan, regulations indicate that red grouper multiuse would be set at zero. In this instance, you wouldn't have adopted a rebuilding plan at this point, and so you're not bound by that, but you could certainly go ahead and adopt that under the interim rule, knowing that that would be the case once the rebuilding plan took effect.

I will stop there, and I think maybe the best thing to do would be to go back to that decision point slide, and I'm certainly happy to answer any questions that people have.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thanks, Andy. We'll go back to the decision point slide. Okay, and so we've got it up on the board here, and I guess I will open the floor for discussion at this point. Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: It actually was to another slide, and I just wanted some clarification on the recreational season length projection, which was after this slide, a few slides after this one, I think. I don't know if it's typo, or if that's actually in the data, but, on the last column there, under the 402,000 pounds starting on August 1, the season, it actually has more days under 402,000 pounds than the other two choices, and I just was wondering how that might -- Again, it might be a typo, and it might be seventy-five, but I'm just curious as to, Andy, if you know anything about that, if that's in fact the case.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Andy, can you see that?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, I can see that, and so you're talking about eighty-five days for August 1, versus like seventy-nine days for September 1, under the same quota levels?

MR. ANSON: Correct.

MR. STRELCHECK: I think, and I would have to confirm this with my team, when you start the season in September, because you start running into that November-December time period, where I showed the catch rates kick up again, that that's why the September 1 season actually becomes a little bit shorter, is because you're drawing from higher catch levels in that November to December timeframe, whereas August would run up until that timeframe and not get into those higher catch rates at the end of the year.

MR. ANSON: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Andy. Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Andy. I had a question. If the council wants to consider an allocation change at this time, would we -- It seems to me we would have to go back to the Science Center, with that change in allocation, and ask them to rerun the projections, and hopefully we would be able to choose one of those scenarios, but have you spoken with the Science Center about whether they would be able to do that for the May SSC meeting, if the council wanted to pursue that?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am going to look to John Walter to talk about that, and I did not discuss that with the Science Center at this point.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Walter.

DR. WALTER: That's correct. If we're going to look at different allocations, we would need to run projections on that.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Then I guess how quickly could that be done? I don't know if it would cut into this timeline or not.

DR. WALTER: Well, we've got a number of other things coming up, and potentially related to this, and so it -- I would have to check with whether that could be fit in amongst some of the other things that we'll talk about in a couple of minutes as well.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks. Mara.

MS. LEVY: Well, just to that point, and I am not advocating for an allocation change in your interim rule request, but the idea of the interim rule is to at least reduce overfishing, and so the fact that you might not have a catch level reduction that's exactly in line with what the new projections might show, you're definitely going to be reducing overfishing under any scenario, right, if you implement any type of catch limit that is as low as these are, but, if you want to -- If your intent is to try to start the rebuilding plan with 2023, which would be great,

right, and end overfishing, then, to Carrie's point now, I just wanted to note that you have that flexibility, right, to just reduce the overfishing.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Thanks, and so how do we actually implement this interim rule? Like let's say we wanted to do this, and the council is going to make a motion that says we want you to implement these specific things, and we want an OFL of this, this, and this? In other words, we're not going to have a document that's presented to us, and we're just going to pass a motion, and whatever is in that motion is going to be the new -- Well, it would go to you all, and, if you all bless it at NMFS, then it would be implemented?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. Levy, that's correct?

MS. LEVY: Right, and so, in this circumstance, you would decide, as a council, to make the request for whatever measures you want, you know whatever measures you want to reduce overfishing and implement with it, and then the agency would take that request and have to do their own documentation for their rulemaking, right, and so they would have to do the NEPA compliance or whatever else they need to do, and they would implement it, because it's only effective for that year and one day. That's as long as it can be in effect, and you're supposed to be working on a rebuilding plan or actions to end overfishing, right, and so it's just supposed to be a temporary measure.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Leann, a follow-up?

MS. BOSARGE: Well, in that case then, I think it's fairly similar to what we did for red grouper that one time, where we had an interim -- Or maybe we -- Was it an emergency rule or an interim rule, where we reduced the catch levels below what the current ABCs were that we could go to, but we essentially looked at what had been landed in the last year or so, and we reduced our catch level recommendations to that level, and so I'm seeing this probably going down that same route.

These are all things that, yes, would go in a document at some point in the future for us to look at and consider, but, to have this one presentation and start making decisions on bag limits, multiuse, and maybe a season change, and maybe -- But I can see where that's going to get complicated too, when you start looking at private anglers and for-hire, and there may be

different needs there, and I can just see this being a quota reduction for an interim rule, and I don't really see how we go much further with that, with very little analysis to go on.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: I think the framework, right, and we won't deal with red grouper, but, yes, you can do that. I think the point is, if you -- This is only going to be in effect for one year, and so, if you want to reduce the catch levels, and you want to change the season for next year, based on that reduction, it will be in effect for that one year, while you're deciding what to do in a plan amendment that will have the analysis, but, obviously, it's up to you as to what you want to do with respect to all these other things, right, and the main purpose is to reduce or end overfishing.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Rindone.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, just thinking about this, thinking forward a little bit and how we assess gag in the future and how frequent management changes can create additional uncertainty in the stock assessment process, if you guys do decide to recommend any other measures besides just simply reducing the catch limits, as part of this interim rule, I would encourage you to think strongly about whether you would want whatever other measures you might recommend to continue and be a part of whatever rebuilding plan we ultimately develop, so that we have consistency in management moving from this point in time forward, because, if we're in a situation where we have multiple season changes or multiple bag limit or vessel limit changes or introductions, that creates a lot of confounding variables in selectivity and retention within the stock assessment and necessitates the use of time blocks, and those things can just start to balloon uncertainty, and we have plenty of that already, thanks.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Just another process question, to tag-on to what Leann is saying, and so, if the council doesn't recommend anything other than just the straight-up reduction, then can the Regional Administrator still go in and select some of these things for the interim rule, or only the council makes the recommendation, and then the Regional Administrator just implements that? I guess I'm just seeking clarification on the process.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I would defer to Ms. Levy, but I don't think that the agency would impose any more than what the council would suggest, right?

MR. STRELCHECK: Tom, can I comment to that?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, Jessica, Tom is exactly right. We wouldn't want to come in and impose anything that hasn't been recommended by the council. We do have, or I do have, authority to close the fishery when the catch limit is met, or projected to be met, and so that will, obviously, occur if you don't recommend a fixed season, or an adjustment to the season, under the interim rulemaking, but you're then leaving that decision with the agency, rather than with the council, to decide that upfront.

In terms of walking through the decision points and the interim rulemaking, I agree that there's a lot of moving parts here, and it's complicated, and I think the simplest and most straightforward thing would be to get an ACL change in place and potentially specify a recreational fishing season. Beyond that, obviously, I would leave it up to the other council members, to decide if they wanted to pursue those other actions, but I think simplicity, in terms of getting an interim rule done, and recognizing that we don't have to necessarily end the overfishing, but reduce the overfishing, will be key here.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right. Thank you, Andy. I am pondering a bit here, and so, Andy, you're going to help me out here for a minute. We have -- Let's just say we didn't consider allocation, right, but we know that we have to implement a reduction in the quota, right, and so with a new ACL, but the data that you provided in the table, because they are provided in FES units, and, again, we're getting into the same situation that we had with red grouper, because it's a de facto allocation.

A question I guess that I might have is, if we identify a reduction in the catch levels, and we just simply, for the interim time period, and I'm not suggesting we do this, but I'm just walking through this scenario, but, if we just did a proportional reduction, is that something that we can do?

I think Mara is asking what do I mean by a proportional reduction, and so I mean, at current, what is the -- It's a 61/39 percent split, right, and this is going to be difficult,

and that's why I'm saying that I think, any way you try to slice this, when you reduce it, there is going to be some discussion of whether or not that's a reallocation of some kind or another, and so my simple question is, is there a way to reduce the quota that doesn't result in a redistribution, or a reallocation, of fish to the sectors?

MS. LEVY: I don't know. I mean, if we're changing the way we're monitoring, right, and so, if whatever we're going to implement is in FES, that's kind of automatically happening. I mean, I think you could decide, for purposes of the interim rule, acknowledge that it is going to -- If you don't change the percentage allocation, it is going to result in that de facto shift, right, but it's a really big cut, and you're doing it for one year, to try and end or reduce overfishing, and so you're going to put it in place, and you are going to be looking at allocation, whether it's appropriate to change it in the long-term in the amendment, right, and I think we could come up with some sort of discussion and justification as to why the decision would be made, for the purposes of recommending the interim catch limits, but I don't know, and I would have to think more about your other question, and I'm not sure, and maybe Andy has some ideas.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Well, I will go to Susan Boggs, and I will Andy think about it for a second. Ms. Boggs.

MS. BOGGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I have several questions, but, to what you're talking to, Tom, I mean, if we just did a reduction in, and I think that's what Mara just said, in the quota, then you have a de facto reallocation, but you're not really reallocating, and you're saying we just want to reduce the quota, but I have a question, and I think I missed it, but on Slide 11, and now I'm looking at Slide 17, but Slide 11, Andy.

The header says, "Options for Changing Recreational Fishing Season, Assuming Different Starts and Using 2017 to 2019 MRIP-FES Landings by Wave", but then you have the ACL options with the 61/39 percent split, which I understood was in CHTS, and so can you do that, if you're looking at numbers in FES? I guess I don't understand where we're going with that, because the next table down, on 17 I think it was, shows the 61/39 split and then the seventy-nine-and-half or 20.5, and so I'm a little confused.

MR. STRELCHECK: Thanks, Susan, for the question, and so we did not want to be pre-decisional, obviously, with the council, in terms of decisions about allocation, and so what we were

presenting is, obviously, the status quo allocation, but we did show, in kind of the extra slides, the basis for the season lengths, based on that FES revised allocation, using the same time series as the allocation was set in.

I guess my comment to you, in terms of any decision about allocation, is the council can decide, and, as long as they have a rationale as to why it's fair and equitable to maintain the current allocation, or change that allocation, that is, obviously, going to be the basis and the record that is built for any decision under the interim rulemaking, as well as the long-term effort that goes forward, and so it really depends on the record that the council builds and the justification for why you are going to change it or why you're not going to change it, in terms of how we proceed moving forward.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Thank you. When we go through an allocation decision, we have a document, first off, in front of us, with a lot of different analysis, and we actually have, I don't know, the historical landings in front of us, maybe, for the time series, things like that, and we have a whole reasonable range of alternatives, and we go through this whole process of talking about it and building a rationale for why we may go one way or another.

We have nothing except this PowerPoint slide in front of us, and I am certainly not comfortable making any kind of allocation changes whatsoever to change what's currently on the books, the 61/39, and is that what you said, in an interim rule. No. That's something that has to be in a document in front of us, and we see the analysis, and we go through this debate and this back-and-forth, and we don't do that from a PowerPoint slide on the fly.

I just want to say that I think the best thing we can do is try and reduce the quota to some level where we hope that we can make a little bit of an impact, until we can get the rebuilding plan in place. I really feel like that's pretty much what we can do here under an interim rule at this point. The rest of it is going to get real deep real fast, and there's going to be competing interest on any of these.

I mean, think about how much discussion we've had on vessel limits versus reducing bag limits versus putting in vessel limits, and it's different whether you're a private angler or you're a for-hire, what your needs are, what fits the bill best

for you, and I don't see how we can get to a consensus on any of these things, other than maybe a quota for an interim rule.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess a question, maybe for Mr. Hood or Mr. Strelcheck. A long time ago, when we did an interim rule, and I think it was for triggerfish, we did bring a document, and so I guess what would be the next step? What is the plan for August? Will the council see another presentation in August, and does that document still have to be developed after the council makes those recommendations, and it just would not be brought to the council? Can you remind me of that process again?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Peter.

MR. PETER HOOD: I guess are you talking about the NEPA document and would there be some other documentation that would go with it, the reg flex analysis and whatnot? Are you talking about that document that we would prepare to support the interim rule?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: I think, for triggerfish, we actually had a couple of alternatives, and we had options in there, and the council made some recommendations, and then we carried that forward in a rebuilding plan with other management measures.

MR. HOOD: I think that, in the past, maybe there's been an action that's been moving along, so that we've had some sort of basis for, you know, whatever action that we did through an interim or emergency rule, and I recall back, and I think it was Amendment 27, that we did an -- I believe it was an interim rule, where that was the one where we went from, for red snapper, and it was a constant catch, to a constant F rebuilding plan, and, in that case, we were going from 9.12 million pounds to five million pounds, but what the interim rule did was it stepped it down, so that it went -- I think we managed it for six or 6.5 million pounds, which is a way to sort of transition down to the beginning of that rebuilding plan, but, yes, that had, I think, an EA, or an environmental assessment, associated with it.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Do you have a follow-up there, Carrie, or are you just pondering?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Yes, and I guess the question is what is the plan for August regarding this interim rule? Will

there be an actual document that the council will see, that we'll work on, or will we have another presentation, or will this be the last time that we'll see it?

MR. STRELCHECK: Tom, can I jump in?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Go ahead, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: I am a little confused, Carrie, by the question, and so the way -- Maybe I am misunderstanding the process, but the council, whether it's -- Preferably this meeting, but, if not this meeting, the June meeting, would recommend to the agency to develop an interim rule that accomplishes X, Y, and Z, whatever that X, Y, and Z is, and then we set that motion and develop, obviously, the supporting documentation, in order to implement the interim rule.

I don't -- I am concerned that, if you're asking like for us to bring it back to the council in August, or a later date, that there is a potential for other decision points at that point, and I think, right now, the goal of the council should be very definitive, in terms of what you want done, to give the agency enough time to successfully implement this by the start of the 2023 fishing year.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Sorry. I got my council meetings confused, and I was thinking we were in June already. For the June council meeting. Sorry. When we've done this before, I thought we've brought a document, and I guess that's my question. We just changed the catch levels, and I think the buffers, or maybe the accountability measures, in that interim rule for gray triggerfish, and that was discussed, and there was a document that the council voted on, and then we transmitted it, I guess, so to speak, to you all to implement with the Secretary.

We followed that up with the rebuilding plan, but, in this case, it sounds like we're not exactly doing that, and so, in June, we would have another presentation, and the council would have to finalize their recommendations, and is that what I'm hearing?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Well, I mean, I would want to talk to Peter and team, and I'm not sure we would have -- If you made a recommendation at this meeting, that we would be able to turn

around a document by June, and I would say, no, that's probably not reasonable. I guess the question is, based on the information that you received today, what other information would you want us to bring back and present at June to help inform a decision, versus having the information before you today, in order to go ahead and make that decision?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Sorry, Andy, but can you repeat that one more time?

MR. STRELCHECK: Sorry if I'm fading in and out. I commented that, if the council made a recommendation at this meeting, I don't expect that we would be able to turn around a document fast enough for consideration at the June meeting, and so I think the real question that Carrie asked is can we bring back a presentation in June, and, well, what are you asking for if we bring back information in June? Is it any different than what we provided today?

Is there anything else that the council needs to inform the decision, or, if the council just wants more time to think about this, but, at the end of the day, we want to have as much time as possible to develop the document and prepare the interim rule, because we do have to have this in place January 1, to ensure that we hold back the quota for the commercial IFQ program.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thanks, Andy. I will go ahead and let Jessica McCawley weigh-in, real quick.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I am kind of in the same place, with the questioning, that Carrie was indicating, and it's like we're just looking at this PowerPoint slide, which is the same thing that Leann said, and we're trying to make some decisions. There's a small amount of analysis in there, but not a ton, and it just seems a little premature without seeing a little bit more information, and how would we make these decisions?

So let's take allocation, and Leann brought that up, and she made some good points about why would we change allocation right now, but, if we don't change it, that's also a de facto reallocation, and so not changing, not converting, to FES is also a reallocation, and so there's just a lot to unpack here, and all we have is this one slide, and, if it's not mistaken, this presentation was available, and I don't know, on Friday, and so this is a lot to try to make some decisions on that are going to be in place for a year, and I am just putting that out there, I guess, and I'm saying the same thing that Leann is

saying, and kind of the same line of questioning that Carrie was putting forward.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Let me say it maybe in a different way, and so, clearly, I mean, we have to make an effort to reduce overfishing for the 2023 fishing year, and that doesn't have to be the end-all formalized plan to end it by 2024, and we have some latitude, from the agency, in that regard, but, in order to actually try to develop and implement something that is tantamount to an amendment, right, with management options in there, right, aside from allocation, whether they're bag limits or whatever, we know, from experience, that that's going to take a really long time, because we don't have that document.

That's why I asked Mara what I asked, and so we know that we're overfished and subject to overfishing right now, and we have, you know, a quota, essentially, right, and we've got three scenarios at this point, depending on the rebuild time, from 850,000 pounds to one million pounds.

A simple approach is to simply say, okay, we'll accept the reduction in the quota, right, that we'll implement in 2023, and, in the interim, we'll be working on a plan amendment that will involve, very likely, an allocation decision, as well as some of these other management options.

What I was asking is it's -- You would think that would be simple, just to say we have a quota reduction and we're going to move forward, but it's not simple anymore, because we have different units, right, and so, if we maintain the 61/39 percent, it's a reallocation, in somebody's mind, and so what I was trying to say is, if we simply reduce the quota, and, for an interim rule, we just proportionately drop that down, is that going to be considered a reallocation? If so, is that allowable? I guess, in my mind, that's now a plan amendment, and that's why I'm asking, Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: Maybe it's not satisfactory, in terms of the answer, but, you know, what I said earlier is it depends, ultimately, on the record that this council makes, with regard to why it would choose not to change the allocation under the interim rulemaking, and I certainly think there is some justification for doing that, and there is certainly, obviously, some justification for why you would want to change it, but I think the council would want to discuss that.

Going back to Carrie's comment, and others comments, one thing that would help the agency, if people are feeling uncomfortable,

in terms of moving forward at this meeting, is narrowing the scope of actions that you would want to bring back for discussion in June and giving us a little bit more, in terms of the sideboards, with regard to what you would want us to consider to bring back in June, and so are there things, for example, that were presented today that you think aren't worth pursuing under the interim rule, and then, for things that were presented, like if you want to consider different start dates or different recreational seasons, what guidance would you provide my team and staff that we could then bring back a range of options for further consideration?

I can't commit to a full analysis of this, a full document, but we could certainly try to bring back at least more information very specific to whatever is recommended coming out of this week's meeting.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thank you, Andy. Susan, did you have a question?

MS. BOGGS: Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm still a little confused, and so I apologize. If we do what Tom is -- First of all, how we are looking at these numbers? Is it in CHTS or FES, because these charts -- I am still confused with them, but, if we're looking at it in CHTS, and we do what you're suggesting, Tom, and you leave it at the 61/39, we're in the same currency, and we're not changing anything, and we're not -- In my mind, you're not reallocating, because we're not looking at FES numbers on the rec side, and does that make sense?

This table on Slide 7, in 2022, it's showing a 3,150,000 pounds, which is where we currently are, but then you go in 2023, and I guess that's with reductions, but is in that FES, or is that CHTS? I am very confused.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I mean, so Andy and Ryan both tried to clarify that, and so the bottom two rows are in FES, right, and so, moving forward, that's my basis question, is I think we can certainly all acknowledge that we have to reduce the overall quota, but I'm just trying to figure out what's palatable, moving forward, with regard to the allocation for the interim rule.

I think, both to Leann's point and to Jessica's point, I mean, if we're going to really consider, in a serious way, allocation decisions, that is going to require a lot of work, and that's a plan amendment that, in our experience, is going to take quite some time, and there's no way that we're going to be able to get

something like that together in the short-term, but we can start to have a discussion in June, and in subsequent meetings, about, okay, what would we like to see with regard to allocation alternatives, what are the consequences of changing the season lengths, and we can run all of those types of things, and we can start to put that in a document, but that's, again, going to take some time.

All I'm trying to do is get us to 2023, in the most simple, straightforward way that's going to be palatable to the agency and the Secretary and without disrupting, or disadvantaging, any one sector over another. That's my sole goal here, and so I'm trying to figure out the approach here.

What I'm hearing from Andy, and the agency, is that we need to probably have a suggestion to the agency in our June meeting, and, if that's the case, it's going to be probably very, very simple, that we're going to adopt the quota reduction as a way to start to reduce overfishing, and then the plan amendment that we would develop, over the next several months, and that's still a very aggressive timeframe, would allow us to put something forward that is intended to end overfishing in 2024, and so the timeframe I guess I'm looking at is, in June, we have to have a decision, right, about a simple approach for the interim rule, and was that right, Andy, or pretty close to it?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, Tom, and that's right. I guess I would say that, if you were going to take the simplest approach, which is essentially what the council was recommending in January, I would ask that the council go ahead and make that decision at this meeting, if you feel like you're ready to make it, versus wait until June, and that just gives us another couple of months to begin working, obviously, on the interim rule and preparing it for the end of the year.

The other thing that I will note, and sorry, because this is going to confuse Susan probably further, and so we are talking an assessment in FES and then forming the 2023 fishing season based on that assessment.

At the October council meeting, and John will talk about this here shortly, there was a request, and a decision made, to update that assessment with the State Reef Fish Survey, and so the guidance for that 2024 time period forward will likely be informed by that assessment, assuming it's reviewed and accepted, and allocation decisions will be based then on that assessment and the units that would be used to monitor gag and not on the FES, and so I think that is another reason why

changing allocation under the interim rule may not be a good way of doing things, given there's a lot of moving parts here.

I just note that, and this is going to be, I think, a very confusing process over the next year-and-a-half, because we're dealing with multiple stock assessments and having to address the overfishing on top of all that, and, any guidance you can provide to the agency at this meeting, we would welcome it, and, if you want us to kind of refine the information to bring back to you in June, we would ask that you provide a specific request to us, so that we can have that ready for you by June.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Ms. McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Instead of adopting that simplest option, I think I would like to see a little bit more about the season analysis, and I'm just concerned with the existing start date of the season, and we're only talking about like twelve days, versus, if we shift that to a different month, we could get considerably more days, and so I guess that I would like to see an analysis on that when we come back in June.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Rindone.

MR. RINDONE: Sorry, Ms. McCawley, but for what specifically? Can you repeat that?

MS. MCCAWLEY: The recreational season.

MR. RINDONE: For which opening date?

MS. MCCAWLEY: So do we need to select a particular one, or it's just narrowing it down that we would like to have the possibility of changing the season opening date, have that discussion in June, with some additional analysis, because there's four options here in the document, the existing season, a July 1 start, an August 1 start, and a September 1 start.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. I know I would want that information, right, and so what I'm going to suggest, for the purposes of this discussion, is there's a lot of other things going on here, right, and there's the SRFS data, moving forward, and so why don't we go ahead and hear the presentations as they relate to the SRFS calibration and the progress update, I guess, on the interim analysis, and then Carrie had an additional item in this section, with regard to the rebuilding timeline.

I think, if we start to put those pieces together, we'll have a

little bit better idea of where we might want to go at this meeting, probably in Full Council, or in June. John, do you think you could go ahead and give us those updates?

DR. WALTER: Yes, sir, Mr. Chair. The update on the SRFS transition process are that the terms of reference are being drafted this week, and they're being passed to the State of Florida, and the Science Center is working on making sure that they're going to be adequate for what our needs are to be able to incorporate them into a revised assessment, using the SEDAR 72 model.

The timeline for that is the transition needs to be completed by May 28. That will give us one month to complete the model runs, the diagnostics, and the projections and be able to provide something for the briefing book for the July SSC meeting. We would then be able to get that in by June 20. It's a tight timeframe, but, if the SRFS survey is well received by the external consultants and statisticians, and the calibrations happen to give time series back in time, then we can put them into revised assessment model runs and revised projections, and that would meet the request to do a revised SEDAR 72 model.

I want to give a couple of caveats to that. One, it's unlikely that that model run is going to be much improved, or more optimistic, than what we've seen. We've seen preliminary results of it that were quite similar to the original SEDAR 72 run, and so I don't think that it's going to avoid a lot of the decisions that need to be made, in terms of a rebuilding plan, and so I just want to make sure that we set the expectations properly that it's probably not going to avoid the need for this interim rule and other actions.

Then there was some -- I had mentioned, and I think Andy touched on it, and Carrie mentioned it, about how allocations play into that, and Andy was spot-on, in terms of this model run is going to then raise the allocation issue even more, in terms of it will be another model run with allocations using SRFS, and not FES, which would give different results, and so it's a lot of moving parts, in terms of which model runs we would then entertain for doing all of that work on the allocations, and, because it's often a back-and-forth process that the SSC then needs to see the runs, with a series of allocations, the timing on that, on reallocation, could be fairly extensive to be able to get that done.

I wanted to just comment on what I think Tom's proposal was for the catch reductions to be just proportional across the sectors,

which is, in my understanding, what the projections that we're already continuing to do are, but they're just reducing the overall catch and maintaining the existing allocations, which would be then the council choosing not to reallocate under that situation, which whatever was fair and equitable in the past could be maintained, at least until some other things kind of progress on, in terms of we get the SRFS and FES sorted out, and we maybe see if there's some progress in the stock towards rebuilding, and we probably are going to have a little more information regarding that.

That brings me to the second point that I think I was asked to talk about, which should I stop there, before I talk about the interim approach, and take questions?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: We have a couple of questions. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I was just going to note that we are on track to transfer that information from FWRI by May 28, and so we can certainly meet that deadline.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. To John's point, right, even if you do that, the fastest they could get it turned around and to the SSC would be for a July meeting, and so it wouldn't come to the council until the August meeting, and so any other questions? Okay. The second point, John?

DR. WALTER: Okay. Thank you, Chair. Then the second point is the request for an interim assessment, and this would be the index-based approach that we've done for red grouper, where we would determine whether there is a reliable index and then adjust the ABC based on that index trend.

In this case, the first thing that we need is we actually need an ABC and OFL on the books, to be able to adjust them, which means that we would likely need a rebuilding plan, or at least an ABC or OFL, based on the current assessment. Otherwise, the interim approach doesn't have anything to work on, and so that's the first step.

The second step is that that would be probably something that would need to be made -- We've got a couple of indices that seem to work, and we've got the Panama City video index and the SEAMAP video index, and now they're combined into the new index, and so presumably we could work on those fishery-independent indices and use them in that kind of interim advice framework, but, again, only once we've got an existing ABC on the books. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, John. I really appreciate that, and so are there any questions with regard to that part of the update that John provided? Okay, and so, Carrie, if you want to go ahead and talk about the gag rebuilding timeline, that will be great.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a couple of slides. Just to kind of remind everybody where we are, in October, at the October council meeting -- Something happened to our projector up here.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right. If you're out there on the internet, just sit tight for a minute. We're experiencing technical difficulties. All right. We're back and ready to go. Carrie.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Next slide, please. Okay, and so, in October, you received the results from the gag assessment, and, after that meeting, you asked us to send a letter to the Science Center requesting that they update the SEDAR 72 base model run with the combined sexes, using the Florida State Reef Fish Survey for the private recreational sector in place of the same data collected by the MRIP-FES, and so that's what we've just been talking about.

Then, in January, we received the various -- The OFL and ABC recommendations for the three rebuilding scenarios, and we discussed the regulatory needs, the interim rule, the rebuilding plan, all that stuff, and then we received the letter from NMFS in January regarding the requirement to end overfishing within two years of that notification.

Then, after that council meeting, there was a motion, and we sent a letter to the Office of NOAA Science and Technology, in February, and we requested that the calibration of the Florida State Reef Fish Survey with the MRIP-FES for gag grouper be a priority for the agency and all the associated parties to that process.

This looks like it's a little bit small, and so maybe if people can see it on their computers, but I tried to lay out a two-year timeline, and the white lettering is the council meetings, and the blue lettering is SSC meetings, and then I've got some deadlines here with the yellow, and so, in January of 2022, the council received those OFL and ABC recommendations, and then, later that month, we got the letter from NMFS regarding the stock being overfished and undergoing overfishing.

Now we're in April, and sorry about that earlier, and I was jumping to June already, but we're in April of this year, and we're discussing this interim rule request, and that request will be in FES, and we need to choose -- I'm assuming that the agency wants the council to make a recommendation on which rebuilding strategy you want, and so we need to talk about that at some point.

Our plan in May, at the SSC meeting, is to discuss and draft the terms of reference for the gag rerun in the State Reef Fish Survey units, and so we have that on the agenda, and we've been talking to Dr. Barbieri. Then, I guess in June, the council will finalize their interim rule request for gag, in FES, and so we'll make those final recommendations, unless that occurs at this meeting, and then, ideally, the SSC will review the new rebuilding projections in SRFS in July, and we really, really need that to be in July.

Then, after that, we would go to the council, and we would discuss any allocation scenarios that they may want to consider in SRFS, and so we would have to look at historical landings and figure out how we were going to do that, I guess with the charter taken out, and then bring that to the council, and then, if the council did want to consider that, we would have to take that back to the Science Center and then the SSC.

That would happen in September, and so those are all pretty tight timelines there that we're already talking about, right, and so now we're in October of this year, and so, if all that lines up, maybe staff can bring a draft options, with the projections in SRFS, for the rebuilding plan, and so the stars are aligning for us.

Now we're in January of 2023, that the interim rule hopefully would publish for gag, the first 180 days, and that would be with the catch levels in FES, and that would need to occur at the beginning of the year, because of the IFQ program, and then, in January, we would hopefully have those draft alternatives for the rebuilding plan and any other management scenarios the council wanted to look at, in January, and then have a public hearing draft in April approved, hustle to get public hearings done, and then take final action in June, in order to get that implemented in January of 2024.

Again, we really need this in July, and, even at that rate, we are concerned about very little time for error or anything the SSC may ask for, if they have to go back to the Science Center,

or anything that happens in the Gulf, such as hurricanes that delay or cancel meetings, and so there's not a whole lot of time to have a backup plan.

This is -- We put this together before we heard the presentation from Dr. Walter regarding the calibrations and the rerun, and so I guess, if that doesn't happen, we've got to be considering a back-up plan, and so that was the point of this slide.

This slide kind of addresses the fact that, because of the statutory requirement to end overfishing in that two-year timeline, our concern with moving forward with a rebuilding plan in FES, and then, later on, the six months to a year, coming back and having to do another rebuilding plan, potentially, that would be in the SRFS units. When I'm talking about optics here, I'm talking about the fact that the council would potentially have to consider or act upon two rebuilding plans, and so that's kind of what I mean by optics here, and so I'm just trying to think about this from our staff perspective, and I'm trying to bring this up and how we can really accomplish this.

We were a little concerned about confusion, because there's already been some confusion between CHTS and FES, and we can just add SRFS to it, no problem, and it will be smooth, and so, on top of that, regardless of the currency that the rebuilding plan is in, we know there's going to be large cuts in catch, and so I think we just have to all think carefully about how we're going to convey this to the public, because they're not going to understand these different currencies for monitoring, which one is better or worse, because all these catches are going to be down, and so we're going to have to think about a good messaging for this process and work with the State of Florida on that as well and with the agency.

If we do have to do two rebuilding plans, essentially, or somehow we can't meet that statutory requirement, we have concerns about eroding of the recreational data collection process and just confidence in the council process, and so we want to be realistic here, and we want to lay out, in a public format, our concerns about the transition and where that transition is and how that's going to flow through the SSC stock assessment process and come to the council, and so thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Any questions from the council? Go ahead, Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: So what do we have to accomplish today? I mean, I agree with most everything that Carrie said, and I appreciate

her taking the time to put that presentation together and really lay it out for us. We need to tell NMFS today, essentially, what our preliminary gameplan is for consideration of an interim rule, whether it's just quota, or is it quota plus something else, and we need to make that decision today and get some rationale for it, and is that right?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I don't think we have to -- I think we have to provide, to the best of our ability today, any specifics with regard to management options and for further exploration, like Jessica said, that you would like to explore, like the number of days, right, and so that would be one example, but we have to tell them today, or not today, but at the end of this meeting, what we would expect to see in June, but, in June, we're going to have to be prepared to say this is what we want for this interim rule. Go ahead, Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: Okay, and so one of the things that was on Andy's PowerPoint slides, that I don't think we've really touched on yet, was that idea of the multiuse, the gag multiuse, quota on the commercial side, and, I mean, so you could -- Or red grouper multiuse, but the multiuse. You can use it to land gag or red grouper, and so my initial thought there, and I'm throwing this out, so that, maybe at public testimony, we can get some feedback, but my initial thought is that I don't know that you really want to make any adjustments there.

If you look at red grouper, and you look at gag, and so gag, obviously, is in a bad spot, and it's overfished and undergoing overfishing. Red grouper, had we used our old metrics on red grouper, we would have been overfished, and we didn't. We changed the goalpost on red grouper, but, if you read that assessment, it will tell you that red grouper is at the lowest biomass on record, and so you've got, you know, six of one and half-dozen of the other. They're both bad, and so I really don't think you can mess with the multiuse on that. Neither one of those in are good shape, and so just let it flow the way it flows.

Whichever one is in better shape is probably the one that it will get used for, if you think about it, and that's the one that will be present, and you don't want to force it to be used for one or the other, because, at this point, we really don't know what kind of year class might be coming through on either one of those, and so it's probably best to let that flow more naturally, but I would like to hear some feedback, hopefully during public testimony, since that's not my fishery, from the commercial guys on their thoughts on that.

Then, as far as looking at allocation and the idea that, if you don't touch it, it's a de facto allocation, the point of this interim rule, really, is to put some measures in place to reduce, hopefully reduce, hopefully end, overfishing in 2023, right, before we can get the real rebuilding plan in place, and go ahead and make some progress on this overfishing.

All right, and so how are we going to do that? We know that, most definitely, we're going to reduce quota, and we're going to constrain catch, but that only works if you actually carry it out and carry it through and truly restrain the catch.

You can put whatever you want in writing in a document, but then you have to make sure that you don't catch more than that, and so, if you reasonably expect to constrain catch, well, there's one sector that you're pretty good at constraining catch. It has enough accountability measures built into it, mandatory, census-level reporting, with enforcement capabilities on that reporting, that you constrain the catch on that side.

If you really want to reduce the pressure on this fishery, to me, the last thing you want to do is start shifting fish into the sector where, as we just talked about, I'm not really sure what the confidence is in our ability to monitor the landings is and know what the landings are. To me, that's not what you want to do.

Leave it on the books where it is, and we'll get into those discussions. I am even nervous about this rebuilding plan and talking about changing allocation in three meetings. That's pretty fast for us, and that's light speed to look at an allocation. That's all.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Leann. Kevin and then Jessica.

MR. ANSON: I mean, we're at a spot, not a good one, but I agree with the folks that have commented that let's keep it simple, as simple as possible, and I'm just trying to think out, as Tom had indicated, and Andy had requested, we need something, some direction.

If we want an analysis, we need some direction to come out of this meeting for June, and then we're going to make a decision in June, and certainly, for the folks that are listening in, that are going to be attending tomorrow during public testimony, I would certainly like to get some feedback from them as to what they would prefer, and, from my perspective at least, from the

recreational side, it's the season dates tied to a specific ACL option, and that's in Slide 11 in the presentation that Andy provided.

In terms of that, Jessica, you had mentioned something about, for that June meeting, some additional analysis related to the season opening, and I'm just wondering what additional analysis you would be looking at specifically, or that might be part of the reason for getting some testimony tomorrow, but I'm just curious.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Go ahead, Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: To that point, Kevin, I would love to hear what other people have to say, and are they okay with a twelve-day season, a twelve-to-fifteen-day season, or would they rather move the start date of that season, so they could really take gag home for maybe about a month? I also have some concerns, based on things happening in the South Atlantic, that, when you really cut down the data streams, even for a year, my concern is that that's going to affect other things, and so to cut that data stream down to two weeks or less is also a concern as well.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I guess, with regard to that latter point, I mean, I don't think we would be using 2023 data in the short-term, right, and we would have a recent assessment that would last us for some time, and hopefully we would make some progress, and I'm probably less worried about that than you are, but, conceptually, I see where that's a problem. Kevin.

MR. ANSON: Just to follow-up and kind of think about this, and since we have the thread the needle, and several groups have to thread the needle here, you know, I heard, earlier, Mara give the agency's perspective relative to an interim rule and how they would receive the request from the council, and there wasn't a set level, or percentage reduction, or something related to, you know, trying to end overfishing, but it was just you had to make inroads to try to end overfishing.

If that is in fact the bar that we have to go under, in the spirit of trying to keep things simple, on Slide 11, where it has the -- At least for the ACL options that are currently analyzed, the 402,000, at the 61/39 split, I think it achieves what the agency is looking for, and it's some direction forward.

I guess it's one thing to, you know, try to maximize the amount of fish, or maximize the amount of days, that anglers have relative to the amount of fish that science tells us we can

have, but, you know, inasmuch as there's still lots of these other moving parts that have yet to be realized, you know, I want to try to make this bridge, if you will -- I look at the interim rule as a potential bridge, if in fact the results are going to indicate that there might be more reductions that would be necessary, and maybe it's kind of a step-down to get to that other place that we would need to go through the extra analysis that comes, but, not having that information, I just can't try to reconcile, relative to trying to achieve that goal, and if in fact if that was a goal that everyone else shared, was these three options here, but I guess just so that the folks in the audience that may give some testimony to this issue.

You know, I think we can probably at least nod our heads here as to maybe indicate which one we're thinking about, and then they would have a better idea as to what they would prefer, and I would assume they would want as many days as possible, but, you know, again, trying to shift that into the time of year that they would really need those days would, I guess, provide some clarity, but, again, I don't know, and I'm just trying to offer my two-cents.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Kevin. Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: A quick question, and, if we can't get this today, let's get it for June. That slide that's up there, that 402,600 pounds, how many fish is that? What is our average weight on these fish? It almost may be better for us to -- When we're looking at this and trying to visualize what we may do, let's -- It's time to start going in numbers of fish, and we're down to that low of a quota, and I think, when you look at that in numbers of fish, you know, I'm going to start looking down to the end of the table, where, you know, you've already got some tagging system going for goliath, right, and say, okay, you know, if this comes out to be 50,000, or 75,000, fish, recreationally, are there some other options that we might could look at, instead of having to say, no, you're going to start June 1, and you get fifteen days.

Can we offer some more flexibility? It's time to start thinking about that, and not for the interim, but we need to start looking at it now, so that we know what staff can flesh out for that other document that we'll have three meetings for.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ryan, it's five pounds?

MR. RINDONE: No, and I was going to say probably about seven-ish. 402,600 pounds is a little more than 50,000 fish, and so

50,000 or 55,000, somewhere in there, and it depends on what you assume for an average weight, but seven or seven-and-a-half pounds, somewhere in there, and so maybe a little closer to 55,000 fish.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thanks, Ryan, for that. Jessica.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I wanted to go back to the presentation that Carrie put up there and just talk about the timeline, and, also, John and I were having a separate conversation and then emailing with Luiz, and so, technically, we're going to be submitting that data in a couple of weeks, and so we're trying to meet an earlier deadline, so that everything could be completed by that deadline in May.

I guess I'm just wanting some assurances, from the Science Center, that that timeline that Carrie put up there can be met, and I believe it's on Slide 5 in the presentation, and I am just wanting some assurances that the timeline could be met, because I agree with Carrie that, if this gets offtrack a little bit, you've got a lot of confusion and a lot of other things happening here, and it is going to be quite difficult to explain, and so I just put that out there, that I'm just wanting assurances that we can meet this what is a tight timeline.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: John.

DR. WALTER: If we can get the calibrated SRFS data by the 28th of May, we can turn it around in a month for the SSC, provided that it meets all the -- That it checks all the boxes and can pass the external review.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. I mean, again, we can bring this back in Full Council, if we need people to think about it, but clearly we have limited options, right, and so we know that we're going to have to constrain our catch, and so we're going to have to reduce the quota, and we want to do that in a way that is as fair and equitable as possible, so that we don't disadvantage one of the sectors unnecessarily, and I think we have to at least look at what the consequences are of a start date on the number of days that you might be able to fish.

Those are the two suggestions that we're looking at, moving forward, and we can bring it up in Full Council, and, again, I don't think there's an appetite for changing the multiuse things, based on the comments that Leann made, but, in Full Council, we do need to be prepared to provide the agency with any additional analysis that they will need to come and provide

us within our June meeting. All right. Are there any other questions or items on this topic right now? I am not seeing any, and so we -- It's probably a good time for a break, Mr. Chair.

MR. DIAZ: I think that sounds like a good idea. Let's take a fifteen-minute break and come back at ten after.

(Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: We will now move into a discussion on the individual fishing quota programs, and Dr. Lasseter is going to lead us through that.

INDIVIDUAL FISHING QUOTA (IFQ) PROGRAMS
IFQ FOCUS GROUP FORMATION AND NEXT STEPS

DR. AVA LASSETER: Thank you very much. Okay. Briefly, from the action guide, this should be a very short agenda item, and I am going to just review kind of our process and what's going to happen for the IFQ Focus Group. The timeline has got to be updated a little bit, since we didn't get the appointments done until last night in closed session, and we will be announcing those appointments on Thursday, during the Full Council committee reports, and then, after my presentation, Dr. Nance is going to get up and provide the recommendations from the SSC.

This is a very, very short presentation with a bunch of slides at the end, which are from the last council meeting, which are just there for your background, and so the charge to the IFQ Focus Group, as modified, is to review the current IFQ programs goals and objectives and recommend a replacement and/or retention. These revised goals and objectives shall serve as the basis for the focus group recommendations.

Relatedly, the focus group should define the changes needed for an improved IFQ program for red snapper and grouper-tilefish to specifically address minimizing discards, fairness and equity, and new entrants issues.

Last night, during closed session, the council selected the participants, and we have also completed the background checks for fishing violations amongst applicants, and so our next steps, after this meeting, is we will notify the applicants of their appointments and very quickly try to send out a poll to find a meeting date that will work for everybody.

The facilitators will be meeting virtually with each of the

focus group members, and we will be developing and providing background materials to focus group members, because, again, we don't plan to spend a lot of time at the meeting, or any time at the meeting, going over background presentations, and we will be planning the meeting, and so we have a lot to do to get ready for this.

The earliest dates, revised dates, that we will be able to convene the IFQ focus group, because of schedules, schedule conflicts with the facilitators, would be the week of June 13, and so this is the week before your June council meeting.

If we are able to get the focus group together and meet that week, we will do so. We will know far enough in advance to have the report then put on your agenda for the June meeting. If that week does not work, it will bump us until the August meeting, bringing you their report to the August meeting, but we will do that as quickly and expeditiously as we can.

Then, reflecting the council discussion at your January meeting, the initial meeting will be two days, and we'll be meeting in Tampa, and it looks like we will be able to hold it in-person. If anything should happen, we would need to hold it by webinar, but we do not anticipate that being an issue anymore. The meeting will, of course, be open to the public, and also, per your discussion, there will be two meetings in total, and the results from each meeting will be brought to the council first, and then the council will decide next steps.

That is all that I have for you, and I do have all the slides from the January meeting available, in case there are questions or discussion, and this includes all the positions, position descriptions, but I will pause there for discussion.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Dr. Lasseter. Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question for you, Ava, is that we have established the charge, the two-part charge, and do you believe that that's sufficiently clear so that, when this focus group meets, they can accomplish the charge within whatever reasonable timeframe is needed, or do we need to provide additional clarity, in your mind?

DR. LASSETER: I feel that this is clear, and I feel that two days is sufficient. I have reviewed this charge with the facilitators, when we thought it was a day-and-a-half, and we haven't changed it that much, and they feel confident, and what we have here is reviewing goals and objectives, focusing on

minimizing discards, fairness and equity, and new entrant issues, and those are very specific tasks to the group.

MR. GILL: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Mr. Williamson.

MR. TROY WILLIAMSON: Ava, could you remind me what is the current goals and objectives of the program, and is that something that we've dealt with?

DR. LASSETER: They're mostly the same, and they are slightly modified for grouper-tilefish, because the problems with grouper-tilefish were not quite as pronounced as for red snapper, and, for red snapper, it was to reduce overcapacity and to eliminate, or adjust, the problems in the derby fishing, and it's very similar for grouper-tilefish.

At I forget which meeting, but some time ago, you did pass a motion stating that you felt that the objective to address derby fishing had been addressed and that you could remove that as a program goal. I can't remember if that was in 36B, and so I'm not sure if it has actually been published and finalized, but you have passed that motion, and so our remaining goal is addressing overcapacity, reducing overcapacity, and that is the goal that they need to be focusing on discussing and determining whether or not they feel that that goal should be continued, further capacity reduction is warranted, or if new goals should be considered.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Ava, for that. Any other questions? Ms. McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: So what's the timeline? I know that we're going to meet the focus group a couple of times, and so what's the timeline to come back to the amendment?

DR. LASSETER: That is at the discretion of the council. If you would like us to bring it at the same time that we also bring the recommendations, you could let us know. If you want to have the first meeting's recommendations and then you let us know, and we do have 36C sitting out there as well, which has some sub-actions that address new entrant issues, and so there is some material there as well.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Are there any further questions? All right. I'm not seeing any. Thank you, Dr. Lasseter. I'm sorry. J.D.

MR. J.D. DUGAS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If there is any vacant seats left, could we revisit this later to fill?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Lasseter.

DR. LASSETER: I believe, in our SOPPs, it says that the council can remove and appoint AP members at any time, and so it would seem to me that you could do that. Now, we do always do that in closed session, and so we would just have to schedule that in advance.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Any additional questions? Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Ava, it's possible that we'll see the first report-out from this group in our June council meeting? Is that right?

DR. LASSETER: If we're able to convene them that week of June 13, and that's the week before your council meeting, we will bring you the report.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Go ahead.

MS. BOSARGE: So, if we do, I think I would like, at a minimum, to see the 36B that is fairly progressed, you know, and we have preferreds, and we're pretty close to being done with that, and see if we can come to, you know, some sort of conclusion on that one, because we already have some feedback from the other AP on that. Once we have focus group feedback, along with all the feedback we've heard at the podium, surely we can decide to something or do nothing, either way, and be done with it.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Lasseter.

DR. LASSETER: Related to that, 36B addresses a permit requirement for shareholders, and I can see that being something that may come up, if they're addressing new entrant issues, and like should there be a permit requirement or not, but, if you want this focus group to specifically address permit requirement, you may want to elaborate, or expand, the charge, if you wanted them to comment on 36B specifically.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Leann.

MS. BOSARGE: Well, I mean, I feel like that's going to come up. I don't see how it doesn't come up in this discussion, and so I would feel that they're going to give us some sort of feedback

on that, but, yes, we're going to need feedback on that, because we delayed action on that amendment until we heard from this focus group, and so, if that was our rationale for delaying further movement on that, then we need to make sure that we get some feedback from this group on that.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. I am not seeing any more questions, Dr. Lasseter. Thank you very much. We'll invite Dr. Nance to come up and share with us the SSC's thoughts.

SSC PRESENTATION

DR. NANCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can I have Slide 22? Thank you. At our SSC meeting, we went over -- We had a presentation on recommendations from the National Academies of Sciences, and we had discussions on those.

During our discussions about the recommendations from that report, we had -- We discussed whether we supported all the recommendations within that report or some recommendations a higher priority than others, those types of things, and it was noted, during our discussions, that we felt like there was a lack of data available for evaluating the impacts of LAPPs in existing commercial programs and a greater lack of data available for potential establishment of recreational sector LAPPs, and so, through those discussions, this motion was forwarded.

The SSC agrees with the recommendations from the National Academies of Sciences report on the use of limited access privilege programs in mixed-use fisheries. That motion carried seventeen to six with two abstentions, and that, Mr. Chairman, is my report, if there are no questions.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Are there any questions? We have one from Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Dr. Nance. The discussion, relative to that report, ultimately did not provide any helpful advice for the council, and, in fact, one of the things that the SSC skirted was discussions of the individual recommendations, and, in my view, that's disappointing, because there was some desire by some of the members of the SSC to have that discussion on individual recommendations, and I don't know which ones they had in mind, but they never got to it, and so all we got was, okay, the report was okay, and we like it, but, in terms of helping the council deal with the recommendations within the report and how

we should take their science base, without any input from the SSC, for me is disappointing.

It basically says we do what we want willy-nilly, without any scientific advice, and it seems to me that part of the problem here is that it's a socioeconomic issue that doesn't get fully addressed, and we seem to have a history of that.

One of the -- There was one recommendation at the end of the report, and, Bernie, if you would bring up my RF IFQ motion, that, at the very least, we can say this is what we believe is correct, which is exactly what the motion was within that report, and the SSC didn't see fit to do that, and so I'm quite disappointed in how they handled that.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Are we expecting to see something on the board here, Bob?

MR. GILL: She is bringing it up. It's the -- **The motion is that the SEFSC prioritize the human dimensions data collection and analysis, consistent with the recommendations from the report, "The Use of LAPPs in Mixed-Use Fisheries", and it was the last item in the report, other than funding.**

I make that motion, because I think it is important. We manage people, after all, and we don't manage fish, and yet we don't ever do much on the people side, and so what this is, again, is the NAS report motion that I am making. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Gill. Dr. Nance.

DR. NANCE: Bob, I appreciate those comments. It's one of those things, as we discuss these things, and we did have a difficult time, and you were on that call, and we did have a difficult time trying to determine one priority over the others, and that's why we felt this at least gave the council some guidance, and I don't think the council doesn't have any guidance, but we did give some guidance, in the fact that we could not determine that we agree with -- There wasn't any recommendations in that report that we didn't agree with. We couldn't say one was higher priority than the other.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The problem that I have, Dr. Nance, is that there were two, or maybe three, members that were interested in speaking to specific recommendations, but the SSC as a whole did not do that, and so there was an opportunity

there, but, effectively, it was passed by, so that, from the perspective of the council, they're all the same vanilla variety, right, and my guess would be that, had you had that discussion, and it may not have been all the same vanilla variety, and I don't know, but we're kind of left adrift as to where we go from there.

DR. NANCE: I can't remember, and I'm having a hard time remembering for sure, but I don't think anyone was shut off from making motions or things like that, and I think each individual had an opportunity to make a motion, if they so wish.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. We've got a motion on the board. Let's get a second, if we're going to continue our discussion. Is there a second for this motion? It's seconded by Mr. Williamson.

MR. WILLIAMSON: I will second for the purposes of discussion.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right. Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: For clarification, Bob, this is going to be a letter that the council writes to the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, with this information, and it's a letter, I assume, that the council would write?

MR. GILL: I would think so. I would defer to staff in that regard, but I believe that would be the normal course.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Let me just ask this, Bob, and so your feeling, based on the motion that came out, or the recommendation that came out, from the SSC was that the -- It didn't capture this prioritization on the human dimensions data collection, and so there are really two types of information that we deal with. There is biological data and socioeconomic, or human dimension, related data, and does this motion prioritize one over the other, or what is this saying?

MR. GILL: To me, what it's saying is we need to pay greater attention than we have in the past, by, i.e., prioritizing the human dimensions side, because it tends to get lost, and, if we continue to do that, then the socioeconomic side is basically not being utilized to the maximum ability that we can, and we're doing ourselves a disservice, because that's the side that deals with the people, and that's what we're talking about here.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I am not disagreeing that I think it's important, but I just wanted to make sure that both of them are

a priority, right, and I get concerned, as we make motions that tell or would direct the Science Center and council staff to do something else, right, and we never tell them to stop doing something, for example, and we just continue to pile things on there, but I don't think this is necessarily making them do any more work, but it's just saying pay attention to this and think about it moving forward. Bob.

MR. GILL: As a follow-on, Mr. Chairman, I copied the recommendation in the report, verbatim, and I didn't change it. It's not the terminology that I think I would have normally used, but, to be consistent with the report, I merely copied it, and the idea being that we need to pay more attention to the socioeconomic side, and I will be talking more about this when we get to allocation discussions, but that's the intent of the motion.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Is there any further discussion of the motion? Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: I mean, just a question. So what would be your expectation for what the Science Center would be providing? Meaning most of your analysis, right, is done in your -- I guess, if we're talking about for an allocation review, or when you're actually doing an FMP amendment that might be a review and a decision, and I guess maybe John wants to speak to it, but it's not clear to me what the council would be asking the Science Center to actually do, like as an output, and I'm not sure that you're going to get what you want if you're not specific about what you want from them.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Go ahead, John.

DR. WALTER: I will note that our social science research group, and we have social scientists on staff both at SERO and the Southeast Center, do a lot of data collection and analysis of social impacts, particularly collecting information on disasters and economic performance data from many of our fisheries, and so I will echo Mara's point about what is the decision point for which this is going to be useful for, and I think that's the key thing that we need to know, because, when it goes before the council, the council needs a decision point, and we need to then feed that decision with the appropriate data and science.

The SSC, who also has a very strong component of social sciences on the SSC, I think also plays a role there, and potentially could help to craft what might be the decision points, and I will just use an example.

We've often got multiple different competing management objectives out of our fisheries, yield being one of them, but opportunity being another, and those may be both objectives that we try to get out of it, and, in that case, perhaps the analysis would be to inform how one would achieve an OY across multiple competing objectives, and that's just sort of something that I'm putting out that might be useful, as well as the data might be useful for informing the use of LAPPs, but greater clarity could help us to know which data collection to prioritize. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Do you want an opportunity to respond, Bob?

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes. This is much like the motion that we passed that talked about, if at all possible, we never close a fishery, and it's not an action motion, but the panel that produced the NAS report felt it was important enough to include that these outside folks are not sitting -- Well, with the exception of Dr. Powers, and I think he was on it, but they felt it was an important part of their report to make for emphasis, and I think that's the whole point here, is that we pay insufficient attention to the human dimensions side. If you will, we pay more attention to the biological side, at the expense of the human dimension side, and so it's trying to highlight the issue, rather than requesting an action.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Lasseter.

DR. LASSETER: Thank you. The main point in the whole report is that there are no data available to complete their charge, that they could not actually assess the impacts of LAPPs on mixed-use fisheries or any types of LAPPs on the commercial sector, because there are no data, and so all of the recommendations have to do with that, and I guess I'm very familiar with them, because I've been reading this a lot the last year, and so, when I read that motion, because it says in the context of the report, there are specific things in there, very specific, and they're all saying prioritize this human dimensions data, so that you can talk about the impacts of LAPPs.

The most foundational one is we don't even know who the people are. We have information on permit holders, just who the permit holders are, but we don't know crew, and I think there is a crew survey being developed, but I think that's been going on for a long time, and I think there's funding issues, because other things get prioritized, and so it's -- I get that it's very general, and we can definitely pull some material out of the report, but it's kind of difficult to do a lot of my work

without any information about even who the people are that we're working with, and that's all I have to say.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Ava. Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: I wonder, Bob, based on that information and then Dr. Walter's comment, I mean, should it be "prioritize increased human dimensions data collection", and maybe leave it at that, and then, once the data is collected, hopefully it will be analyzed, or if you want to include both, but, I mean, it seems as if, relative to the capacity at-hand, the agency is comfortable with the data that they have.

I mean, they are collecting some data, and they are doing some analysis on the data, and that's being incorporated into the documents that they produce and provide to us, but, based on the report, it doesn't appear to be sufficient, at the end of the day, to do some of the things that might be helpful to us as we try to look globally at the fisheries and such, and so, you know, I'm just trying to get a little bit more specific and to drill down what the actual product would be, or intent would be, of this motion, so that it does, hopefully, result in something with the Science Center.

MR. GILL: I am certainly open to any improvement in the motion to better express the will of the council.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Walter.

DR. WALTER: Thank you, Chair. I am a little sensitive the SEFSC prioritizing this in the motion, and I think we do try to prioritize with the resources we've got with human dimensions, but I think, in this case, I would suggest that perhaps the SSC could help out here, in terms of which ones of the recommendations weren't provided enough information, which ones might be, and which ones would be targeted for additional work, because I think they do have the expertise. They've got some of the best social scientists on the SSC now, and so I think maybe the tasking -- If I could just share the burden with the SSC on that, rather than focus it all on the Southeast Center, and that might be a friendly recommendation.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: I will be happy to add that, because it is collaborative, and, as you know, Dr. Walter, I just had that interplay with Dr. Nance over that very subject, and so I am sympathetic, and so I would like to modify the motion "that the

SEFSC and SSC prioritize improved, or increased, human dimension". Bernie, if you would add, after "SEFSC", "and SSC", and, after "prioritize", to Mr. Anson's point, insert the word "increased". Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Troy, as the seconder of this motion, are you okay with that?

MR. WILLIAMSON: I am fine with that.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I didn't hear that, Troy. I'm sorry.

MR. WILLIAMSON: I'm sorry. I'm okay with the substitute. May I make a comment?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Sure.

MR. WILLIAMSON: You know, I read this report, a long time ago, and I say a long time ago, but I think it was back in November, and I am having a hard time finding my car keys these days, but if I recall correctly, and I'm not qualified to really criticize what the National Academies of Science puts out, but, as a layperson, after reading it, I didn't see any merit in it, number one, and, number two, the reason I read it was because of the connotation of mixed-use fisheries.

If I recall correctly, in the references in the report, I think they had one interview with a recreational fisherman, and the rest of it was commercial, and so I don't know, and I just -- I guess I wasn't overly impressed with the product, and so that's where I'm at. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Williamson. All right. **We have a motion on the board, and I think we will vote this one up or down, and so is there any opposition to the motion? I am not seeing any, and so the motion carries.** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Gill. We are going to go ahead and continue with Dr. Nance, if he's so willing, to give us a Review of the Red Grouper Interim Analysis Health Status and SSC Recommendations.

DR. NANCE: I am willing.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Excellent.

REVIEW OF RED GROUPER INTERIM ANALYSIS HEALTH STATUS AND SSC RECOMMENDATIONS

DR. NANCE: I appreciate it, Mr. Chair. Let's go ahead and go

to Slide 25. We talked about the Gulf red grouper interim analysis and health check, and Dr. Katie Siegfried from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center presented the 2022 Gulf red grouper interim analysis, using data through 2021.

This interim analysis was provided as a health check of the stock, and you remember that the updated catch advice transmitted for implementation from the last interim analysis is pending in National Marine Fisheries Service, and a reduced spatial area NMFS bottom longline index and the NMFS summer groundfish survey were used to examine juvenile and young adult in the red grouper population. Both indices show relatively higher abundance in 2021, compared to the more recent years, which matches several observations by fishermen on the water. No motions were made by the SSC for this item. Mr. Chair, that ends my report.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Dr. Nance. You get your trophy back. All right. Is there any questions for Dr. Nance regarding the interim analysis, as it relates to red grouper? I think we're good to go. Thank you, Dr. Nance. Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Dr. Nance, sorry about that, and so I wonder -- I am trying to place this, relative to previous conversations the council has had with trying to come up with a faster way, or a quicker way, to get the health check of the stock, and I think that's what this is, is part of that overall effort, and so I'm just wondering, and there's a report written up and everything, but wasn't the Science Center also trying to come up with that methodology, or some way to kind of produce those reports in a more confined access, or something?

I am just trying to think how, operationally, how we're going to try to utilize this information, as we look at it and make our decisions, kind of similar to the point that Leann was talking about relative to the graphs and looking at the landings trends and everything, and these interim analyses provide us some kind of, you know, opportunity to check things, in the interim of assessments and such, and is there efforts towards that, Dr. Walter?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Go ahead, Dr. Walter.

DR. WALTER: Thanks for that question, and I think, yes, and, to answer your question, there is sort of a plan in process, because, in theory, if we get to where those are something that is routine, and even annual, it's going to produce a lot of annual ABC and OFL advice, potentially, which we need to set up

a system that can handle that, because the rulemaking isn't as quick as what we might be able to turn out.

This is something that we're beginning to entertain with a lot of our partners, in terms of what this sort of stock assessment enterprise, and management advice enterprise looks like in the future, where we've got a portfolio of interim approaches and benchmark, or research track, assessments and operational ones, all of different complexity and intensity, some churning out advice rapidly, and so we're kind of in the beginnings of this.

We're going to have a proposal put forward that fleshes out a little bit more at the SEDAR Steering Committee and what that portfolio of things actually would entail, but, right now, we're sort of getting our feet wet, and we've got red grouper, and we did it also for red snapper, and that was what the previous one did, and then we're starting to entertain it with some other species, like potentially with gag. We haven't stood up the process to post it on the webpage and have it like rapid, because we kind of need to have that conversation, and can the council handle it. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, John. Okay. Do we have any other questions for Dr. Nance? Thank you, Dr. Nance.

DR. NANCE: Thank you, sir.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: You betcha. Okay. We have a couple of other business items, and so the first one, I believe, had to do with the Reef Fish AP and permits, right, Bob, and so do you want to speak to that, Mr. Gill?

OTHER BUSINESS
DISCUSSION OF REEF FISH AP MOTION REGARDING PERMITS

MR. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Bernie, would you put up the Reef Fish other business motion? This motion that Bernie is going to put on the board was an output from the Reef Fish AP that was provided at our last meeting as part of the Reef Fish AP report. We didn't do anything with it, and, in my case, it was because I didn't know much about it, and I didn't understand what we should do with it, but I have thought about it since then, and it seems to me that it's obvious that this recommendation from the AP would be good for the permit holders, and there's probably more to it than that, and so I'm thinking, from our aspect, it's worth looking into, but it's a SERO question. What does this really mean, and what are the ramifications?

I am looking, and I guess I will direct this to Andy, if SERO would provide us with a presentation on this question, so that we can consider whether it makes sense, in the grand scheme of things, or not.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Mr. Strelcheck, are you still on the line?

MR. STRELCHECK: Yes, I'm on the line. I mean, certainly we're happy to provide a presentation or discuss this issue. I mean, I will say that we've had some preliminary discussions, and we have major concerns about the request, mostly from the standpoint of the substantial changes that would be required of our online permit system and just kind of how our online permit system is set up and currently functioning, but we can certainly come back to the council and talk in more depth in June, or a later date, with regard to the concerns we have and kind of how we see the issue.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thank you, Andy, and so do you have a specific recommendation then, Bob?

MR. GILL: My recommendation is that we do ask SERO to do the analysis of this question, in response to the Reef Fish AP, and come back to the council with what they find, for consideration.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay, and so, Carrie, do we need a motion to direct staff to do that, or are we going to just make a request to SERO to provide a presentation on this topic?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: I think it would be helpful to have a motion. I think we could just amend this slightly pretty easily, couldn't we?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Bob, if you want to amend it.

MR. GILL: I will try to. Amend this motion? I would like to start a new motion, I think, rather than use this one. **This one is the Reef Fish AP motion, but I think what we want to do is have a motion to request SERO to analyze and advise the council relative to the -- With regard to allowing permit leasing by permit owners.**

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay, and so the motion is to request the Southeast Regional Office to analyze and advise the council with regard to allowing permit leasing by permit owners. I don't know if Andy is on the line, or Peter and Mara are here, and is that enough information for you guys to put together perhaps a

presentation in the future? Go ahead, Peter.

MR. HOOD: I guess it's -- I mean, I guess why is it that -- Why do they want to be able to lease permits, I guess? Can we get a little bit more definition here, so that it will help? I assume it will probably be someone from our LAPPs branch that does the presentation, but, if we can get a little bit more information, then I think we might be able to target the presentation a little bit better. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. We're going to go to Ryan, real quick.

MR. RINDONE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to note that the Reef Fish AP Chair, Captain Ed Walker, is in the back of the room, and he might be able to answer that a little bit more directly.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Captain Walker.

MR. ANSON: Mr. Chair, just a technicality, and it hasn't been seconded, and should we get a second?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I wasn't sure we got it to the state that we need it to be at this point, but we can certainly wordsmith it after the fact. Is somebody willing to second this motion? I will go ahead and second it, for discussion, because I want to hear what Captain Walker has to say. Ed, go ahead.

MR. ED WALKER: It's pretty straightforward. One of the members of the AP has a couple of commercial permits, and I think his intent was that there is some kind of unofficial leasing going on in the industry, and a lot of people are -- I think he was just seeking discussion on maybe an easier, more direct way of allowing permits to be leased to other commercial fishermen, and the AP passed it, and I can't recall if it was unanimous or not, but I believe that there was not opposition to it. I think they were kind of just open to passing it forward to you all and hearing what you had to say about it.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right. Thanks, Ed. Does anybody have any specific questions for Captain Walker? Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Captain Walker, was that just for commercial reef fish permits, or was it for other permits? I was listening online, but I can't recall.

MR. WALKER: I believe that was just for commercial permits, the

grouper snapper commercial permits only.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thanks.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: We have lost our screen. Let me ask another question, Bob, and so maybe what we're really asking for at this point is a presentation by SERO to talk about the issue of permit leasing in general, right, and so that gives them free rein to talk about pros and cons, what you can do and what you can't do.

MR. GILL: Exactly, trying to respond to their request and see whether there is things that we ought to consider, and perhaps we do or we don't, but, without the information, we can't respond properly.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Ms. Boggs.

MR. BOGGS: I am not going to support this motion. We've got 36B hanging out right there now, with determining if you have to hold a permit, and, I mean, I think we need to do something with that amendment before we go down this path, because, if you think we're complicated and confused now, throw this into the mix. I think this is premature, and I'm not saying that I might not support it down the road, but I think we need to dispense with 36B before we go down this path. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Susan. Is there any further discussion? Okay. We'll vote on the motion, and we'll use hands. **All those in favor of the motion, raise your hand.** All right. **All those opposed.** Have you got that? All right. **Unfortunately, the motion fails.** Okay.

We're going to move on to our next Other Business item, and, Ms. McCawley, if you want to go ahead with an update, I guess, with regard to the FWC's position on goliath grouper.

FWC'S DECISION ON GOLIATH GROUPER

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At the recent FWC Commission meeting, they approved final rules to allow goliath grouper harvest in state waters, and this would be a recreational harvest of 200 fish per year. There is open and closed areas, and there's an open season March 1 through May 31, hook-and-line only, and there's a slot limit, and this would be done via a random draw lottery, and so people would be issued a permit and a tag.

The first draw would occur this fall, and then the first harvest season would occur in 2023, and so, based on this particular action, I would like to make a motion to request that the SSC reconsider the OFL and the ABC for goliath grouper.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay, and so we have a motion on the board to request the SSC reconsiders the OFL and the ABC for goliath grouper. Is there a second for that? It's seconded by Dr. Shipp. Any further discussion? Mr. Gill.

MR. GILL: My memory is a little vague, but my recollection is, the last time the Science Center went through this, the assessment failed, and they could not derive projections for status determination criteria for goliath grouper, in which case -- If that's the case, then how is the SSC going to come up with management?

MS. MCCAWLEY: That's a great question, and I would love for the SSC to have that discussion, and so, for example, there is no overfishing limit on the South Atlantic, partly because they felt like they couldn't make a determination, and so, right now, the OFL is zero, but I think that it's unlikely that the removal of one fish would cause overfishing, and so I think that there's a number of things, including the FWC data streams, that could be used here to talk about the reconsideration of the overfishing limit and the ABC.

There was a workgroup, back in the day, looking at -- Because there was a motion by Roy Crabtree to the South Atlantic Council for a joint workgroup to be formed to try to figure out how to move goliath grouper beyond the moratorium.

That joint workgroup met a number of times, and the SSC met as well, to determine that the stock of goliath grouper had increased, and then FWC said that they would conduct a stock assessment and put it through the SEDAR process, and so the workgroup was disbanded.

Ultimately, as you mentioned, it was determined that an independent panel of experts said that, for a number of reasons, the stock assessment couldn't be used for management, but I think that there might be some other ways that the SSC can look at this. I had been talking to Andy Strelcheck about this, and he had some suggestions as well, and I don't know if he wants to weigh-in here, but he also said that -- I think that the ABC could be for federal waters only.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Andy, do you want to weigh-in at all, or are

you just listening?

MR. STRELCHECK: No, I will weigh-in. I would need to look up what I sent Jessica, but I believe, in our National Standard Guidelines, when it comes to setting catch limits, that, when a fishery is managed in state waters, you can't, obviously, specify catch limits or advice, obviously, just for state waters and not for federal waters, or, excuse me, for federal waters but not in state waters, kind of making that distinction, but we still, I think, need the SSC to weigh-in on the appropriateness of that, regardless, and we can't, obviously, control what the FWC does and their management authority, but it does have implications on the status and health of the stock as a whole and determining, obviously, the overall mortality of the species. I think there are some management things here to consider, but it would be worth, obviously, getting the SSC to weigh-in on this further.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Andy. Mr. Diaz.

MR. DIAZ: I agree with Andy that it's worth taking a look at this. I think we need to start figuring out a path, when we shut a fishery down, of how we're ever going to reopen it, because, right now, you shut it down, and you stop the flow of data, and then, whenever you need to do something, you don't have data, because the fishery is shut down.

We just got a -- I would like for that conversation to be had at the SSC too, because, you know, at the last meeting, we had several council members say that we don't want to ever shut a fishery down, but, in reality, we might have to sometime, and we've got to figure out a way to where we can restart some of these fisheries, and so I support the motion, and I would like at least for them to have a conversation and see if we can't figure out a way where we can get out of this cycle, and so thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thank you, Mr. Diaz. Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Jessica, along with that 200 fish that you're looking at, there's a lot of reporting requirements that go along with it, right? When I listened -- So you gave this presentation at the South Atlantic Council too, and, to me, it's almost like an exempted fishing permit, in some ways, because there's so much research tied in with it, and so I think it would be good to most definitely maybe not only have the SSC --

If they're going to look at that, why don't you give your

presentation to them too on what you're talking about doing in Florida, so that, if there is a data need somewhere -- As you're giving out these tags, if there needs to be some random stratification for how to have your lottery, and I don't know, and do you know what I'm saying?

So that the data is more relative to what need, you know, and make the most out of it, is what I'm saying, and maybe get the data that we need, if they can't do anything with what they have from years ago, even with some -- Hopefully Dr. Walter can give them some updated indices, if we have any kind of data there on his end, and combine that with what you're going to get, and maybe we can get something in the future.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: We do have a number of reporting requirements, and, also, FWC adopted five management metrics that we're using to track the stock. It's not quite the same as getting a formal, accepted federal stock assessment, but we recognize that opening up the harvest and collecting -- So the people would be harvesting on the juveniles, and so that's not going to likely get us an accepted stock assessment, and so that's not a realistic path here, but you're right that we are gathering data.

There is also long-term indices from Everglades National Park and some other datasets that we've been looking at that helped make this decision, and so I believe that Luiz is on the SSC, and he can actually gave the presentation that we gave to the commission and bring those datasets to the SSC, and I think that's a good idea, Leann.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Two things. I guess two questions, separate, but, Jessica, the information that you will be collecting from these is fairly comprehensive, and, I mean, it's more than just length, weight, and otolith. I mean, you're doing stomach contents, and you're doing genetics, and you're doing mercury testing. I mean, you're doing a wide range of things, are you not?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes and no, and so not all of that is coming from the harvest, and so FWRI is doing a number of additional studies, as well as you have other university researchers

conducting research on goliath as well, and so, for example, FWRI -- I don't believe we're taking stomach contents, but we do have some genetics goals, and so we're doing a next-of-kin analysis, and we have a number of genetic samples that we need, and the harvest will get us some of that, but we also have Dr. Ellis at FWRI who is going out with a number of charter captains and getting additional DNA for that analysis. I want to say that our number is like -- We need like 5,000 samples for that analysis.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Thanks, Jessica. Dr. Walter. Kevin, did you have a follow-up, real quick? Sorry.

MR. ANSON: Just a separate question, but it's kind of along the line of what Dale was saying about trying to get to a point where we can focus on a plan or processes to how we can sample fisheries that have been closed for an extended period of time, and I just want to get some clarification from Mara, and I think I know the answer, but, relative to research set-asides, I think there is some language in Magnuson that allows for that, but that is only under the auspices of having fisheries that have OFLs already defined, and is that correct, Mara?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Well, I mean, I guess I would have to look into it, but I don't know what -- You can't set aside something that you haven't specified, meaning, if you haven't specified any catch limit, there is nothing to set aside.

MR. ANSON: That's what I thought.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Dr. Walter.

DR. WALTER: I think we have some precedent in like research fisheries for sharks, that have been able to operate somehow under certain different auspices that we might be able to explore, but my main point is that I know that FWRI took the lead on the last SEDAR, and I think it might have been 47, and so I'm wondering -- The SSC, to consider OFL and ABC advice, they need something that is pretty well packaged for them to do that.

The SSC isn't going to be able to take on the task of turning the indices, or the number of analysis, into that, and they need something that's already done, and is FWRI going to be able to provide an analysis that the SSC could then use to consider for that advice?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Ms. McCawley.

MS. MCCAWLEY: I will talk to Luiz about what all we can provide for that meeting.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay, and so -- Well, are there any more questions or discussion items? I mean, I think what we're hearing here is that, at the very least, right, we need to kind of introduce the SSC to the issue, and the FWC is going to provide them with kind of an update of where they are in the situation, and the discussion will go from there.

I am not sure that they're going to immediately reconsider an OFL and ABC, and I think they're going to assess the situation and have a discussion and see what they might need to do that, moving forward, and so, Ms. Bosarge.

MS. BOSARGE: Just a technical question for Jessica. The tag that you're using for these fish, is it a physical tag, or is it just you send an email to the person, and they have to have that on the boat to possess one, or what?

MS. MCCAWLEY: A physical tag.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Are there any other questions? I am not seeing any. **Is there any opposition to this motion? I am not seeing any, and I know that we've got some folks on the line, but I am not hearing any either, and so I'm going to consider the motion adopted.**

All right, and so I'm going to -- I don't think we have any other business items, unless somebody wants to bring one up, and we probably still have an opportunity for some discussion, but I will defer to the decision of the Chairman what he wants to do with this time.

MR. DIAZ: If there is any other reef fish business, we can attend to it, but you're finished with your agenda and your other business at this point, correct?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Yes, and I just was wondering, Dale, if now is an appropriate time to go back and think about what we're going to do with gag, and we've got forty-five minutes before we break, but, as the Chairman, you can make the best use of our day.

MR. DIAZ: If you have folks that want to discuss gag at this

time, you still have time left on your agenda. Whenever we do conclude the Reef Fish section for today, there is a virtual question-and-answer session that Gulf States staff and NOAA staff is going to handle, and so, once we conclude, about fifteen minutes after that, we'll start that answer session, but you still have time, if you want to try to explore that, and I think that would be okay, Tom.

FURTHER DISCUSSION OF GAG GROUPER

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: I think we should do that, Mr. Chair, just to gain some ground here, and so I will start it off by saying where I think we're going to ultimately need to ask the Science -- Excuse me, SERO, at least now or in Full Council, right, so they can come back with some information at our June meeting, so we can move forward with this request for an interim rule.

There are at least three things in my mind, right, and so, one, I know that we have to acknowledge the status of the fishery, which we obviously have -- It's overfished and undergoing overfishing, and we're going to have to take a quota reduction, and I think what we're going to struggle with, as a group, is, if that quota is expressed in FES units, how it's actually allocated, right, and so I think, at least when I think about this interim rule and trying to make progress towards a rebuilding plan, or to end overfishing, excuse me, and then I want to do that in a way, as I said before, that doesn't disadvantage unnecessarily any one of the sectors.

What I was asking earlier is what does a proportional reduction, right, and access to the quota look like, and so, when we did red grouper, for example, it was a de facto reallocation, right, and so the commercial industry lost some fish, and the recreational sector essentially gained some fish, and I realize why that happened and why we made the decision that we did, but what I'm thinking that we need, in June, right, is how do we give everybody the same haircut, and that's the analysis that I guess I would be asking the Regional Office to provide to us, and so that's one thing.

I'm assuming that we're going to ask, again because we want to minimize the impact to the fishery, people that participate in the fishery, we're going to ask for, in that table that we discussed with regard to potential start dates for the fishing season and the number of days, and there were three columns in that table, and the third one had to do with T times two, right, the rebuilding, and so the longest rebuilding time, which maximized the number of fish that we could allocate.

Then Ms. McCawley had a discussion, and I think she wanted to explore with regard to the start dates, and so I don't know the specifics of that request, necessarily, but those are the three things that I know that we're going to ask the Regional Office to pursue and provide us some feedback on in June, and so, Ms. McCawley, do you want to elaborate a little bit on the start date and the number of days?

MS. MCCAWLEY: Yes. Thank you. Right now, I'm kind of leaning towards the September 1, but August 1 or September 1, and I've tried to make some contacts to recreational folks, to see what the preference would be, and, yes, they seem to be wanting a longer season, even though it would be a different start date, but one of those two options is where it seems to be at this point, but I look forward to hearing what anybody brings up at public comment.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right. Thanks for that. Ms. Levy.

MS. LEVY: Just a question related to your same haircut analogy, and so I understand what you're saying, but do you want the result to be in line with the current options for the rebuilding plan, right, because, if you don't make the required cuts for the rebuilding plan, starting in 2023, then presumably you're going to make more cuts for 2024, right, which is a way, and so, when you talk about giving everybody the same haircut, do you want the same outcome, that you are making the necessary cuts to start the rebuilding plan in 2023?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: In my mind, the answer to that is yes. Dr. Froeschke.

DR. FROESCHKE: Just when Ms. McCawley mentioned the August or September to think about, the September is the start of the wave, and, in situations where you have short recreational data systems, the data seems more robust when it doesn't split waves.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Good point, and so I guess that would go into the analysis. Are there other things that people might be thinking about in the shorter term for the interim rule? Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: I don't have anything additional, per se, but just clarification on what you just summarized would be your goals, and that would be the analysis would apply to just the third option you said there, or would you still want to have the Regional Office provide analysis for the other two options with

what you were describing, relative to the split and trying to take care of that, so there's no undue pain, if you will, on one sector or the other?

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: In my mind, again, we're trying to simplify it and make as little work as possible on the Regional Office, and I would go with that third scenario. Andy.

MR. STRELCHECK: A couple of thoughts. In terms of the proportional reduction, I think we could look at, obviously, kind of recent trends in landings for both sectors, and not kind of utilization of the catch limits, and determine what would that proportional reduction look like, to bring it down in line with that Tmin times two rebuilding scenario.

In terms of Jessica's comments about the season, you know, certainly we can bring back more discussion around that. I will be very -- How do I want to say it? I was trying to emphasize, with that analysis, that there is a lot of uncertainty surrounding those estimates and the issue of effort shifting, especially if we keep the fishery closed from June 1 until whatever that new start date is, and there's more availability and abundance of fish to be caught once the season opens, and so, yes, the later in the year you go, the longer the season gets, but I think we're going to have to do some analysis to determine are those seasons in line with what we would expect or would they be shorter, given effort shifting and shifting of abundance, based on availability.

Then the last thing I will note is, way back in Amendment 32, we specified the gag quota, which is less than the gag catch limit, and that provides the buffer, which then allows us to create this multiuse between red grouper and gag, and so, in order to maintain that multiuse, we're going to have to specify a quota that's less than the catch limit for the commercial sector, and so I think we'll have to bring back some information to you in June and kind of clearly show how that gets calculated, but it's something we just discovered, based on the conversation that happened this afternoon.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thanks, Andy. Mr. Anson.

MR. ANSON: Just to follow-up with a point that Andy brought up relative to the start date and some of the unknowns with the fishery, and we move the start date, and potentially there may be more fish to catch in those projections, and I'm just wondering if, in what they bring to us in June, if there can be some verbiage in there as to whether or not catch can be

constrained before the end of the year, because, in my mind, it might be that, if you choose September or October, it just might be -- It might go through the end of December, and you get what you get on the backend, and so I'm just wondering if there is the ability -- If they will be able to analyze the catch at some interim before the end of the year, just to kind of, you know, provide some stocks in there, and that's all. I just wanted to see if they can provide some information about that.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. I'm going to go to Mara and just make sure that SERO captured Kevin's comments and they feel like they're able to do that.

MS. LEVY: I just wanted to point out that, I mean, the seasons are going to be short enough, it looks like, that NMFS is going to have to do a projection, right, and they're not going to have time to get the MRIP wave and look at it and decide whether there was a need to close, and so, again, in thinking about the seasons and shifting them, the more uncertainty there is about what that projection would be, the more likelihood that it's going to be harder to constrain that catch, right, because you don't have as much information for the projection, and I'm sure Andy and his staff can speak to that, but I don't see how there's going to be any type of in-season monitoring with those very short seasons.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Thanks, Ms. Levy. Andy, is your hand up again?

MR. STRELCHECK: No, it isn't.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Ms. Bosarge and then Dr. Simmons.

MS. BOSARGE: To that point, what Mara just said, it harkens back to what I said earlier. If you truly want to constrain the catch, the last thing that you want to do, especially in the interim rule, is to go and shift more of the allocation toward the sector that you're really not sure if you can constrain their catch or not.

I mean, we're down pretty low on gag, and where is John Froeschke? Our MSST, we're way below that on gag, and what percentage are we at? I mean, I think it's in single digits on this biomass at this point.

DR. FROESCHKE: I think it's 0.83 in the MSST, if I recall.

MS. BOSARGE: There you go, and so we're way below MSST, at this

point, and we have to make sure that, whatever we put in place as a catch level recommendation, we actually achieve that or less, and so this idea of, in an interim rule, trying to make sure that we shift more fish to the sector that we don't have as much certainly that we can actually constrain their catch, makes no sense to me if the ultimate goal is to make sure that we reduce fishing pressure.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Okay. Dr. Simmons.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Don't get mad at me, but I do think we need a motion for this by Full Council, because we don't want to mess this up. We don't have any time to go back, and I think, by Thursday, we can put something in the report and help get us there, but I do think we need a motion before we leave here.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: Before we leave here today or before we leave Full Council?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS: Before we leave Full Council.

CHAIRMAN FRAZER: All right. We can do that. All right. I'm looking around to see what else might need to be in that motion, and so, if anybody else has any ideas, now is the time. All right. I appreciate everybody for the input, and I will draft a motion prior to Full Council, and then we'll revisit this again, and so, Mr. Chair, I'm going to turn it back to you.

(Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on April 5, 2022.)

- - -