

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
AND  
SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

JOINT WORKGROUP FOR SECTION 102 OF THE MODERNIZING RECREATIONAL  
FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2018

WEBINAR

September 10, 2020

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1 The Joint Workgroup for Section 102 of the Modernizing  
2 Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018 of the Gulf of  
3 Mexico Fishery Management Council and the South Atlantic Fishery  
4 Management Council convened via webinar on Thursday, September  
5 10, 2020, and was called to order by Mr. Steve Poland.

6  
7 **INTRODUCTIONS AND ADOPTION OF AGENDA**  
8 **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: MAY 18, 2020 WEBINAR**  
9

10 **CHAIRMAN STEVE POLAND:** My name is Steve Poland, Chair of the  
11 Joint Meeting of the Gulf Council and South Atlantic Council.  
12 We appreciate everyone's attendance on this webinar, and we look  
13 forward to input during this meeting.

14  
15 Notice of this meeting was provided to the Federal Register and  
16 sent via email to subscribers of the councils' press release  
17 email lists, and it was posted on the council's website.  
18 Today's meeting will include the following topics. We will  
19 adopt the agenda and approve the minutes from the May 18, 2020  
20 webinar.

21  
22 Then we'll review the scope of work, alternative approaches to  
23 collect recreational catch and effort data, review of the Gulf  
24 of Mexico Headboat Collaborative Program, and then we'll see  
25 presentations on interim analyses in the southeastern U.S., as  
26 well as evaluation of zone management in the Gulf and South  
27 Atlantic Fishery Management Council jurisdictions.

28  
29 We'll have a review of carryover and phase-in strategies, and  
30 we'll discuss conditional accountability measures. We will then  
31 take public comment and conclude the meeting with any other  
32 business that might arise.

33  
34 This webinar is open to the public, and it is being streamed  
35 live and recorded. A summary and verbatim minutes of the  
36 meeting will be produced and made available via the Gulf  
37 Council's website, and so, for the purposes of voice  
38 identification, and to ensure that you are able to mute and  
39 unmute your line, please identify yourself by stating your full  
40 name when your name is called for attendance.

41  
42 Once you have identified yourself, please re-mute your line.  
43 Please remember to identify yourself before speaking and to also  
44 re-mute your line each time you finish speaking. Thank you, and  
45 now Bernie will take attendance.

46  
47 **MS. BERNADINE ROY:** Kevin Anson.  
48

1 **MR. KEVIN ANSON:** Kevin Anson, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
2 Council.  
3  
4 **MS. ROY:** Chris Schieble.  
5  
6 **MR. CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** Chris Schieble, Gulf of Mexico Fishery  
7 Management Council.  
8  
9 **MS. ROY:** Susan Boggs.  
10  
11 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** Susan Boggs, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
12 Council.  
13  
14 **MS. ROY:** Tom Frazer.  
15  
16 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** Tom Frazer, Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management  
17 Council.  
18  
19 **MS. ROY:** Martha Guyas.  
20  
21 **MS. MARTHA GUYAS:** Martha Guyas, Gulf Council.  
22  
23 **MS. ROY:** Troy Williamson.  
24  
25 **MR. TROY WILLIAMSON:** Troy Williamson, Gulf of Mexico Fishery  
26 Management Council.  
27  
28 **MS. ROY:** Mel Bell.  
29  
30 **MR. MEL BELL:** Mel Bell, South Atlantic Fishery Management  
31 Council.  
32  
33 **MS. ROY:** Chester Brewer.  
34  
35 **MR. CHESTER BREWER:** Chester Brewer, South Atlantic Council.  
36  
37 **MS. ROY:** Jessica McCawley.  
38  
39 **MS. JESSICA MCCAWLEY:** Jessica McCawley, South Atlantic Council.  
40  
41 **MS. ROY:** Steve Poland.  
42  
43 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Steve Poland, South Atlantic Council.  
44  
45 **MS. ROY:** Spud Woodward.  
46  
47 **MR. SPUD WOODWARD:** Spud Woodward, South Atlantic Fishery  
48 Management Council.

1  
2 **MS. ROY:** John Carmichael.

3  
4 **MR. JOHN CARMICHAEL:** John Carmichael, South Atlantic Fishery  
5 Management Council.

6  
7 **MS. ROY:** Brian Cheuvront. Chip Collier.

8  
9 **DR. CHIP COLLIER:** Chip Collier, South Atlantic Fishery  
10 Management Council staff.

11  
12 **MS. ROY:** John Froeschke.

13  
14 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** John Froeschke, Gulf Council staff.

15  
16 **MS. ROY:** Ryan Rindone.

17  
18 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Ryan Rindone, Gulf Council staff.

19  
20 **MS. ROY:** Carrie Simmons.

21  
22 **DR. CARRIE SIMMONS:** Carrie Simmons, Gulf Council staff. Good  
23 morning, everyone.

24  
25 **MS. ROY:** Okay. Thank you.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Bernie. It sounds like  
28 everyone. If everyone will turn their attention to the agenda,  
29 and I don't see a need to run through introductions again, since  
30 we just did the roll call, and so I will entertain -- I guess we  
31 need to do a motion for adoption of the agenda, but, first, does  
32 anyone have any modifications to the agenda or any additions or  
33 deletions or any other business that you know of that we need to  
34 discuss? I will let the sticky notes load. Hearing no  
35 objections, I will say the agenda stands approved.

36  
37 Now everyone turn your attention to the minutes from the May 18,  
38 2020 webinar, and I'm sure that everyone reviewed the minutes in  
39 detail, all sixty pages of it, and, if you haven't, please take  
40 some time to review, but does anyone have any modifications to  
41 the minutes?

42  
43 Not hearing any, is there any objection to approval of the  
44 minutes? I am not hearing any, and so the minutes from the May  
45 18, 2020 webinar stand approved. Now we'll turn it over to Mr.  
46 Rindone, and he'll review the scope of work for this meeting.  
47 Go ahead, Ryan.

## SCOPE OF WORK

**MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, sir, and good morning, everybody. We're going to start with a discussion of alternative approaches to collect recreational catch and effort data, and we have several items being brought forward by the Gulf states pertaining to their state data collection programs, and then we have a couple of other examples that are regionally pertinent that we'll also go through.

Then you guys will be tasked with considering all of these and seeing if any of these could be used in other ways beyond their current scope, perhaps for other species or in other areas, and what sorts of species they may be most applicable to, and try and think about basically how to start thinning the herd, so that you guys can work towards some recommendations for the councils.

Then we'll have a review of the Gulf of Mexico Headboat Collaborative Program, and the Southeast Regional Office will give a little presentation on this, and I think Jessica Stephen is on the line, and so Dr. Stephen will do that, and she'll talk about the design, the implementation, results, and lessons learned, and you guys should ask questions of her. She's definitely the expert in how that went down.

Then we'll have Dr. Skyler Sagarese from the Southeast Fisheries Science Center talk about interim analyses and using Gulf red grouper as the example or guinea pig or however you would like to look at that, and they did a great job with red grouper, with putting that together for us, and so we want to thank them for that, and then Dr. Simmons will go through a presentation on the timing and use for management for interim analyses, and so you guys should consider the information presented and discuss the best ways to use this tool that's available to you to address our contemporary fishery management problems.

Interim analyses are interesting, because they have the potential to provide a lot of flexibility and responsiveness that we haven't had in the past, and so that's just something to consider when we're going through that particular item.

Then I will go through zone management in the Gulf and South Atlantic with you all, and using Coastal Migratory Pelagics Amendment 26 as an example, and this is focusing on king mackerel, and so you guys should consider the information and discuss whether zone management may be applicable to other species in the respective council's jurisdictions.

1  
2 Then we'll talk about carryover and phase-in strategies, and the  
3 background document for this is the National Standard 1  
4 Technical Guidance document that NOAA Fisheries had put  
5 together, and this is basically a tool -- Or these are tools  
6 that can be incorporated into the ABC control rules of the  
7 councils to carry over uncaught yield from the previous year to  
8 the following year, or to phase-in changes in catch limits over  
9 time, which can be particularly helpful in softening the blow,  
10 if there's going to be a reduction in catch coming out of an  
11 assessment.

12  
13 Then we'll talk a little bit about some of the deliberations  
14 that the Gulf Council had during developing its now tabled  
15 generic carryover amendment, just to give you guys some  
16 perspective, and then we'll talk about conditional  
17 accountability measures, and we'll look at the tabled allocation  
18 sharing document, as an example, for Gulf kingfish.

19  
20 There are a bunch of different ways that conditional  
21 accountability measures can be used, not just for softening the  
22 blow for when bad things happen, but also for considering  
23 increases when things are looking positive, and so we'll try to  
24 look at it from both perspectives, and so you guys should think  
25 about the pros and cons of incorporating this sort of  
26 information. Then we'll take public comment, and, if you guys  
27 have any other business items that you want to discuss, then  
28 we'll take those last. Are there questions? Mr. Chair.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. One last chance for  
31 any questions for Ryan on the scope of work. All right. I am  
32 not hearing any. Real quick, before we move into the agenda  
33 items, I just want to remind the committee that, at the  
34 conclusion of our last meeting, we did not develop a clear  
35 charge for this workgroup.

36  
37 Recall our discussion, and we still had a lot of questions about  
38 kind of how much flexibility do we have and what kind of  
39 programs are available to us that are currently out there, and,  
40 really, this workgroup meeting is really structured to provide  
41 us a lot of that additional information that we felt like we  
42 were lacking at the last meeting, and so I just want to remind  
43 the workgroup that we still have that kind of dangling issue out  
44 there of we need to develop a workgroup charge, and so just  
45 please keep that in mind today while we receive these  
46 presentations and during any of our discussions, and please kind  
47 of leave that in the front of your minds and let that kind of  
48 guide your discussions.

1  
2 Then, at the end of the meeting, I certainly don't want to  
3 conclude until we can provide staff with either enough verbal  
4 guidance or we can even get out the pen and paper and develop  
5 that ourselves, but we need to conclude this meeting with some  
6 type of workgroup charge, to just really guide our work over the  
7 coming year on this issue, and so, with that out there, unless  
8 there are any questions, we'll move into the data collection  
9 portion of our agenda, and it looks like, first up, we have a  
10 presentation from FWC staff, and so, whenever you're ready, and  
11 I'm not sure who is presenting from FWC, but please take it  
12 away. Chester.

13  
14 **MR. BREWER:** With regard to the scope of work, and, most  
15 particularly, what kind of flexibility we are afforded in  
16 managing these recreational fisheries, I was provided with the  
17 actual language from federal regs and from the -- Well, from the  
18 MSA and for the language that is in the Magnuson-Stevens Act,  
19 the actual language, and one of the things that I have been  
20 concerned about is, if we're going to be required, at the end of  
21 the day, to manage these fisheries to a pounds or per-fish ACL,  
22 I think a lot of what we're trying to do here is just going to  
23 be spitting into the wind.

24  
25 I asked some questions, and I was provided with the following,  
26 which is the actual language with regard to setting ACLs and  
27 accountability measures, and, anybody that wants it, I can give  
28 you the MSA section number, but the Act requires that we  
29 establish a mechanism for specifying annual catch limits in the  
30 plan, including a multiyear plan, implementing regulations or  
31 annual specifications at a level such that overfishing does not  
32 occur in the fishery, including measures to ensure  
33 accountability.

34  
35 Now, that language doesn't say a thing about pounds or number of  
36 fish, and it talks instead to having a plan in place so that you  
37 don't overfish, and Florida does that, through its management  
38 with the FWC, and it's been incredibly successful.

39  
40 I can name off any number of species that have been recovered,  
41 and, if in fact, and this is sort of like a question, and I  
42 don't know if Shep is on here or not, but, if in fact the  
43 language would allow us to manage to say an extraction ratio, or  
44 an SPR -- If we can do that, I think we can get a lot done with  
45 this committee.

46  
47 If not, we're going to be hampered a lot, and so, with that, I  
48 do think that it will be important for us to get a definitive



1 answer as to what our flexibility is from the standpoint of  
2 setting an ACL, and, with that, I will mute myself.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Chester. As far as  
5 that flexibility, I know that a lot of that -- Not a lot, but  
6 the National Standard 1 Guidelines do kind of touch on some of  
7 those issues, as far as looking at how to establish ACLs and  
8 ABCs and all of that, and some flexibility in there, and we will  
9 be receiving some presentations today with applying some of  
10 those different approaches that are detailed in the National  
11 Standard 1 Guidelines.

12  
13 Hopefully, through today's discussion, we can get some of your  
14 questions addressed, but, as far as numbers of fish and pounds  
15 of fish, I know that's something that has come up at our council  
16 for discussion a couple of times, and I know it's come up in  
17 other regions, and there are examples of tracking some ACLs in  
18 number of fish and in pounds of fish.

19  
20 I think we will get some information today, and so I appreciate  
21 those comments, and please hold on to those, because, if we get  
22 to the end of the meeting and you still feel like some of your  
23 questions have not been addressed, then just please communicate  
24 that to the group, so we can make sure that we can get that  
25 information. All right. Does anyone else have any questions or  
26 comments before we turn it over? It looked like Bev Sauls was  
27 on the presentation, and so is that who is speaking?

28  
29 **MS. GUYAS:** No, and it's going to be Martha.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Hi, Martha. All right. Take it away, Martha.

32  
33 **DATA COLLECTION**  
34 **ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO COLLECT RECREATIONAL CATCH AND EFFORT**  
35 **DATA**  
36 **GULF OF MEXICO STATE DATA COLLECTION PROGRAMS**  
37 **FLORIDA**

38  
39 **MS. GUYAS:** But, yes, Bev is on the cover, because a lot of this  
40 is -- She is one of the masterminds behind it, and so what I'm  
41 going to do, just very briefly, is give everyone just a brief  
42 bird's-eye view of the data collection programs that we have  
43 specifically for reef fish, recreational reef fish harvest, in  
44 Florida.

45  
46 The program that a lot of you have heard about, probably, before  
47 is our Gulf Reef Fish Survey. That program was in place for the  
48 last five years for Gulf of Mexico reef fish, and we recently

1 expanded it to a state-wide program, as of July 1, and so now we  
2 have the State Reef Fish Survey.

3  
4 This program, our goal is to improve data collection for private  
5 recreational reef fish harvest, particularly increasing  
6 precision, and we want to make sure that we have accurate  
7 numbers. Our focus is specifically on reef fish anglers, and we  
8 have a monthly mail survey of reef fish harvesters.

9  
10 We are also conducting in-person interviews at offshore access  
11 points as part of this program, and, in addition, there is an  
12 at-sea observer program on charter trips as part of the State  
13 Reef Fish Survey, and what this does, of course, is gives us  
14 estimates of the numbers of reef fish trips, catches per trip,  
15 and then catch and discard rates.

16  
17 This program is MRIP certified, and it is a supplemental program  
18 to MRIP, and so, actually, what we do is we are able to use the  
19 MRIP interviews that include reef fish as part of this, and  
20 we're really just adding onto the MRIP data that's already  
21 collected for reef fish, and so this is now a state-wide  
22 program, and I'm going to talk a little bit more about it on the  
23 next few slides.

24  
25 From the anglers' perspective of what this looks like,  
26 recreational anglers who are fishing for or possess basically  
27 our most popular reef fish when fishing on a private vessel in  
28 Florida waters have to obtain a state reef fish angler  
29 designation before they do so, and so the species that are  
30 included here are listed out on this slide.

31  
32 The ones that are highlighted in blue, mutton snapper,  
33 yellowtail snapper, and hogfish, are new to this program. As we  
34 expanded it state-wide, we thought it was important to include  
35 some of our critical south Florida species that are locally  
36 common and very important in south Florida, but are not always  
37 covered well with MRIP estimates of harvest, and so anglers can  
38 sign up for this designation anywhere FWC licenses are sold.

39  
40 It is a no-cost sign-up, and it is required for pretty much all  
41 anglers, and there are a few exceptions, but it includes anglers  
42 over sixty-five, which is different from even our licensing  
43 requirements in Florida, where resident seniors would not have  
44 to obtain a fishing license, but they have to obtain the State  
45 Reef Fish Survey designation, so that we can include them in our  
46 survey database. All the folks that sign up to get this  
47 designation, they basically populate our universe of contacts  
48 for the mail survey.

1  
2 What we've been able to do with the Gulf Reef Fish Survey and  
3 we're, of course, hoping to do with this now State Reef Fish  
4 Survey, is we have been able to provide or generate precise and  
5 timely estimates of recreational harvest that facilitate  
6 responsive management, and it gives us a little bit more  
7 confidence in tracking the harvest, and, at least in our  
8 experience of the last few years, this really has been necessary  
9 for us to be successful as FWC in managing Gulf red snapper in  
10 both state and federal waters.

11  
12 What we've been able to do, last year, is we were able to look  
13 at our Gulf Reef Fish Survey data during the summer, when that  
14 season was open, and we realized that we were under our Florida  
15 quota, and so we were able to be adaptive and add additional  
16 days in the fall, to give anglers another chance to take  
17 advantage of harvest opportunities for red snapper, and so,  
18 because of this increased precision and accuracy and these  
19 increased opportunities, we've had a lot of support from  
20 recreational stakeholders for this program and expanding it  
21 statewide.

22  
23 They feel that the longer seasons have demonstrated benefits in  
24 improved data, and folks generally are in favor of reporting  
25 when it is enhancing the data that we're using to manage the  
26 fisheries.

27  
28 I thought I would also mention the special data collection  
29 program that we have in place during the Atlantic red snapper  
30 mini-seasons for the recreational fishery, and so, if you look  
31 at the map here, there are nine inlets shown on the east coast  
32 of Florida, and, basically, what happens during the Atlantic red  
33 snapper mini-seasons is that FWC fisheries-dependent monitoring  
34 staff, and a number of other FWC staff, descend on these inlets  
35 and really do an intensive data collection during the mini-  
36 seasons.

37  
38 At each of these inlets, we have people counting boats coming  
39 and going through the inlets, and we're also doing in-person  
40 interviews of private anglers and for-hire, and that's different  
41 from the State Reef Fish Survey, which is focused primarily on  
42 private anglers, and then, also, obtaining data through charter  
43 logbooks and a telephone survey during those mini-seasons, and  
44 we use this information to generate estimates that are used by  
45 NOAA Fisheries to track recreational harvest in Florida during  
46 the Atlantic red snapper mini-season, and so I thought that I  
47 would just mention that as well.

1 We talk a lot about Gulf Reef Fish Survey, and now State Reef  
2 Fish Survey, but this is also a very important program. I think  
3 that's it, and I will be happy to take questions now, if you  
4 would like, and I also put the link to our State Reef Fish  
5 Survey website on here, if you would like to have more  
6 information, and there's also -- If you go to that link, you can  
7 also access more information on what we do with the Atlantic red  
8 snapper season too, and so thank you.

9  
10 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you, Martha. I think we can take a few  
11 quick questions, but we do have a lot of presentations in the  
12 hopper, and I don't think it would be really beneficial to  
13 anybody to wait until the very end to ask questions on any of  
14 the material presented, and so, if anyone has a question for  
15 Martha on FWC's State Reef Fish Survey, please raise your hand.

16  
17 I am not seeing any, but, Martha, I do have one question. So  
18 you said, and I can't remember if it was last year or a couple  
19 of years ago, but that FWC was able to use data from this  
20 program to extend the Gulf red snapper season, and what kind of  
21 turnaround was there between the end of the season, or the  
22 closure, and the reopening?

23  
24 **MS. GUYAS:** Thanks for that question, and so our season ended  
25 last year about mid-July, and so we have monthly waves for this  
26 program, and so at the end of each month -- Of course, we're  
27 doing the in-person interviews in real time during the season,  
28 and the mail survey goes out at the end of the month, and so we  
29 -- Typically, I would say -- Well, the reopening was in October,  
30 and I will say that, but we're able to -- Once we start getting  
31 in the results of the monthly mail survey, we can put together,  
32 I guess, a preliminary estimate, and then, once we have the MRIP  
33 wave data, which is, of course, two-month waves, and we are able  
34 to incorporate those MRIP interviews into our estimates, then we  
35 have more of a finalized estimate. Really, for us, it was  
36 waiting until the fall, and that seemed to -- Then we could look  
37 at both what happened in June and July with a little more  
38 confidence.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** At the end of the year, what were the final  
41 landings? Were they pretty much on target, or did they go over  
42 any?

43  
44 **MS. GUYAS:** Well, so, last year, we were actually -- We ended up  
45 being under, and so, the year before that, we just had a summer  
46 season, and it was a forty-day season, and we ended up going  
47 over our quota a little bit, and so we set a shorter summer  
48 season last year, to make sure that we avoided another overage,

1 and, of course, accounting for the overage in 2018, and so we  
2 were a little bit more conservative there.

3  
4 Then, when it came time -- Once we realized that we were under,  
5 and we could reopen, we also wanted to take a conservative, I  
6 guess, opening approach again, so that we didn't go over our  
7 quota, and it also had been a really long time since we, in  
8 Florida, had a fall opening of state and federal waters. We  
9 ended up doing weekend openings over a few weekends in October,  
10 and then we added more days actually in November, because of a  
11 hurricane, and so, anyway, we were under by quite a bit last  
12 year, but over the year before, and so, in the long run, we're  
13 doing okay.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Martha. I see that I've  
16 got a couple of hands raised. I've got Chester and then Mel.  
17 Go ahead, Chester.

18  
19 **MR. BREWER:** I'm sorry, and I raised my hand by accident. I  
20 will mute myself again.

21  
22 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Mel, go ahead.

23  
24 **MR. BELL:** Thanks, Martha. I appreciate the presentation, and I  
25 have a couple of quick ones. I heard you say that there is no  
26 cost for your anglers to participate in this, and so the program  
27 is paid for, and, obviously, not by them directly in that way,  
28 but how do you pay for the program, and approximately how much  
29 does that cost the state each year?

30  
31 **MS. GUYAS:** Great questions. When we were operating just in the  
32 Gulf, with the Gulf Reef Fish Survey, we had a grant that  
33 covered the cost, and, now that we're statewide, our legislature  
34 appropriated -- It's \$3 million annually to run this program,  
35 and this is our first year of that.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Any other questions for Martha?  
38 All right. Thank you, Martha, for that, and, again, we will  
39 have an opportunity at the end of this agenda to have a broader  
40 discussion, and so, if you do have any more questions for  
41 Martha, or anybody, you will have another opportunity. All  
42 right. Moving on, next, we'll receive a presentation from  
43 Alabama, and I'm not sure who is giving it. Marie Head. All  
44 right. Go ahead, whenever you're ready.

45  
46 **ALABAMA**

47  
48 **MS. MARIE HEAD:** I'm Marie Head with Alabama Marine Resources,

1 and I'm here to give a brief overview of our reef fish reporting  
2 program known as Snapper Check. Just a brief background about  
3 Alabama, and we have fifty-three miles of coastline along the  
4 Gulf of Mexico, which provides various access points for our  
5 anglers to recreationally fish from.

6  
7 In the 1980s, Alabama and local anglers invested a lot of time  
8 in creating an artificial reef complex of about a thousand  
9 square miles, and that houses about 10,000 artificial reefs  
10 estimated today, and we all know that artificial reefs are great  
11 for creating habitat, especially for reef fish, and one of our  
12 most popular reef fish to target here on the Gulf coast is red  
13 snapper.

14  
15 NOAA Fisheries manages the EEZ, Exclusive Economic Zone, in  
16 federal waters, nine miles to 200 miles, where the majority of  
17 our red snapper are found. In Alabama state waters, we manage  
18 our size and bag limits up to three miles for all reef fish,  
19 except for red snapper, which we have an extension up to nine  
20 miles.

21  
22 NOAA Fisheries stock assessments provide reference points on the  
23 status of a population, to establish maximum harvest levels, and  
24 fishery managers and scientists use this catch information  
25 gathered from federal recreational surveys, such as MRIP and  
26 MRFSS, to aid state management of our inshore species.

27  
28 Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, federal estimates of Alabama  
29 recreational red snapper landings in the Gulf are between 30 to  
30 35 percent, and, in 2006, the reauthorization of the Magnuson-  
31 Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act resulted in  
32 significant changes, which increased harvest restrictions, and I  
33 put these two graphs on here, which is from an article on NOAA's  
34 website of the history of management of the Gulf of Mexico red  
35 snapper, just to show the decrease in your bag limit and season  
36 limit comparative to size over the years from 1990 to 2011.

37  
38 As our season length and bag limits decreased, in 2013, the  
39 federal recreational red snapper was reduced to twenty-eight  
40 days, and so the Commissioner of Alabama Conservation and  
41 Natural Resources promulgated a regulation in 2014, prior to the  
42 recreational season, that required reporting of red snapper  
43 landed in Alabama by recreational vessels. Now, these  
44 recreational vessel owners were responsible for submitting these  
45 landing reports prior to landing, and these vessels include  
46 federal for-hire, headboat, state for-hire, and private vessels.

47  
48 We offer many ways to report, either only, through a smartphone

1 app, which is compatible with either Android or Apple software,  
2 carbonless paper tickets, and we had a toll-free number through  
3 2016, but we no longer have that, and so landing report  
4 information that is recorded is date and time. Now, for paper  
5 tickets, state and time, the angler had to record, but, for  
6 electronically submitted, it's automatically stamped on the  
7 report.

8  
9 The vessel registration or conservation ID must be recorded, the  
10 number of anglers, number of fish harvested, number of released  
11 dead, county of landing, trip type, whether it was a private or  
12 charter, and the access type for private vessels and trip length  
13 for charter vessels.

14  
15 Here are some captions of our Snapper Check app, what the face  
16 looks like, and I've got some samplers here doing some recording  
17 for dockside survey validations, measuring the red snapper, and  
18 a flag and ticket box, where paper tickets were housed at select  
19 public boat ramps for anglers to submit reports there.

20  
21 Alabama Snapper Check utilizes the capture-recapture survey  
22 method for estimating rates of non-reporting, and our dockside  
23 survey, which is the capture portion, and the landing reports,  
24 which is our recapture portion, gather the same information, so  
25 that we can match trips or make comparisons to help estimate the  
26 number of non-reporting vessels.

27  
28 Dockside sampling sites are selected using the stratified  
29 probability, proportional to size, sampling methodology, using  
30 the MRIP APAIS site frame, and our dockside data is QA/QC'd  
31 after data entry. Vessel registrations from both datasets,  
32 landing reports and dockside surveys, are compared to a master  
33 list of charter vessels to validate these trip types and make  
34 sure they're recorded accurately, and above, again, are our  
35 samplers at marinas and boat ramps collecting lengths and  
36 weights and validating, hopefully, reported vessels at various  
37 sites.

38  
39 This is just a quick overview of our estimated calculation.  
40 Snapper Check is currently certified by NOAA Fisheries as a  
41 scientifically-valid survey. The data has not been used in  
42 federal stock assessments yet, and so, here in this picture, you  
43 can see what we take from our landing reports, which is the  
44 total of all the reported fish, and the information from our  
45 dockside surveys, which is we calculate the average weight, and  
46 then we add an adjustment factor and multiply that to have an  
47 estimated harvest.

1 Now, our adjustment factor is the attempt to calculate the  
2 proportion of vessels that do not report, and so the landing  
3 records and dockside surveys are compared to one another, and  
4 then a match is made by date, vessel registration, or  
5 conservation ID, whichever was reported, number of fish and  
6 anglers, and the time of interview, which has to be within a  
7 three-and-a-half hour match of the survey time, and there is an  
8 R ratio that we use for the adjustment factor.

10 Some recent developments for 2021 for Snapper Check are Alabama  
11 anglers will have to recreationally -- They have to report two  
12 additional reef fish species, which it will be our gray  
13 triggerfish and greater amberjack, at the beginning of next  
14 year.

16 Kayak and shore anglers will now have an option to report their  
17 catch, by selecting an unpowered vessel/shore mode option, which  
18 is available on the app and online.

20 We have had issues in the past with some connectivity,  
21 especially initially in the snapper season, where anglers would  
22 report online, and it would just -- A wheel would spin, and they  
23 would never know if the report went through or if it did not,  
24 and so we made some improvements with our IT department on the  
25 connectivity when reporting through the app.

27 We also streamlined reporting options down to just online and a  
28 smartphone. We are doing away with the paper tickets after this  
29 year, and we had very little reports submitted through paper  
30 tickets compared through these electronic reporting options, and  
31 so, here, I have a caption of the app and the reporting method,  
32 with the selection for powered vessel or unpowered vessel, and,  
33 for shore mode, or for vessels that are -- I'm sorry. For kayak  
34 and shore anglers, they can report using a conservation ID  
35 number, which is a six-digit number issued with their license,  
36 and that's what they will use to report. Here is a snapshot of  
37 our website when reporting, and it's consistent with our app.

39 I want to thank you for your time, and, if there are any  
40 questions, Kevin Anson is on the panel, and he would probably be  
41 the most appropriate person to ask, since he is the brains  
42 behind the Snapper Check and has created it and knows the ins  
43 and outs, and so thank you.

45 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Maria, for that  
46 presentation. I see we do have a hand up already from Mel. Go  
47 ahead, Mel.



1 **MR. BELL:** Thank you. I appreciate the presentation, and just a  
2 similar question. What does that run the state each year for  
3 that program, and where does the money come from?  
4

5 **MR. ANSON:** Mel, it runs us approximately \$60,000 to run the  
6 program, and it depends, obviously, on the length of the  
7 seasons. We have had experience here in increasing the season  
8 length, and so that would increase costs a little bit, but it's  
9 around \$60,000, and we're able to generate estimates within a  
10 week, so we can keep track in-season fairly well of our harvest  
11 and produce timely estimates.  
12

13 **MR. BELL:** Okay. A follow-up, a quick one, and so, the  
14 personnel that you have involved with this, they're already  
15 staff onboard and then do other things outside of the season, or  
16 do you hire kind of in pulses and they come and go, or how does  
17 that work?  
18

19 **MR. ANSON:** The majority of the staff we utilize are staff that  
20 are maintained or hired year-round, and they are permanent  
21 staff, and they do engage in other activities throughout the  
22 remainder of the year, and we do hire some temporary, or  
23 seasonal, laborers, usually, a handful of those, each summer,  
24 because, with our fishery-dependent sampling at least, our  
25 sampling assignments go up in the summer for all of those  
26 activities, and so, combined with Snapper Check, we need the  
27 additional staff to make sure we get those assignments covered.  
28

29 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Mel and Kevin. I am  
30 starting to notice a theme with your questions, Mel.  
31

32 **MR. BELL:** Curious.  
33

34 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Well, thank you again, Marie.  
35 Next, we're going to keep moving around the coast to  
36 Mississippi.  
37

## 38 **MISSISSIPPI**

39

40 **MR. ERIC GIGLI:** Thank you very much. My name is Eric Gigli,  
41 and I'm with the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources,  
42 and, this morning, I'm going to be giving a brief overview of  
43 our Tails 'n Scales reporting system for mandatory reporting of  
44 red snapper in Mississippi.  
45

46 In Mississippi, our red snapper fishery is based on a relatively  
47 small coastline and offshore angling community. We have the  
48 least amount of red snapper harvested in the Gulf of Mexico each

1 year, and we have a small for-hire industry and a frequent line  
2 of communication with them. We have an observer program  
3 associated with the for-hire industry.

4  
5 We have localized habitat, with state-deployed fish havens about  
6 thirty miles off the coast, and within those well-defined reef  
7 zones, we get large concentrations of our local anglers. We've  
8 got narrow passes, in order to get to those fish havens, and so  
9 we have very streamlined access, with a few public access  
10 points, which increases our effectiveness of law enforcement.

11  
12 In the black circles, you can see our main passes to get to our  
13 offshore fish havens, leaving out of Gulfport, Biloxi, and the  
14 Pascagoula area. Most of our fish havens that are heavily  
15 fished are 1, 2, and 13 in the bottom-right corner, which pushes  
16 a lot of our fishing access to the Pascagoula over towards the  
17 eastern side of the state.

18  
19 Now, in 2014, Mississippi adopted a regulatory modification to  
20 Title 22, Part 9, statistical reporting and confidentiality of  
21 statistical data for marine fisheries, requiring mandatory  
22 reporting of red snapper landed in Mississippi, and that was  
23 applied to both the recreational sector and for-hire.

24  
25 Our Tails 'n Scales reporting access is available via the App  
26 Store and Google Play for apps, and we also have a website,  
27 tailsnscales.org, and a call center helpline that this year  
28 became a fully-internalized by MDMR staff helpline for anybody  
29 who is less technologically efficient, and we can help them out  
30 there.

31  
32 In the pre-trip section, we require that each vessel must have a  
33 trip created prior to their departure. It doesn't matter which  
34 angler, if it's the person driving the boat, but just as long as  
35 they have a trip number associated with that vessel, and, within  
36 that creation, we authorize a number that can then be used for  
37 identification later by staff and enforcement.

38  
39 In the post-trip side of it, if the trip was not taken, they  
40 have an initial start, where they can decide that they did not  
41 take the trip and abandon it, with a selected code for the  
42 reasoning, based on weather, mechanical, or other. We then  
43 collect data for the number of anglers that were on the trip,  
44 the number of red snapper that were harvested, if red snapper  
45 were targeted during the trip, and the number of red snapper  
46 discards on a given habitat fished, which it's one habitat  
47 fished, whichever one they spent the most time at.

1 We also have access point intercepts for purpose of validations,  
2 and they are randomly drawn, to conduct the post-trip  
3 interviews, where we gather authorization number, as mentioned  
4 previously, the vessel number available for that boat, number of  
5 anglers that we see on the boat, the number of fish harvested we  
6 see, the number of fish released that they tell us, and the  
7 habitat fished.

8  
9 We gather a little bit more information on the habitat and the  
10 intercept validations, and we also conduct biosampling for  
11 lengths, weights, and otoliths, and we also have law enforcement  
12 intercepts, on land at public access sites mentioned earlier,  
13 and they also conduct on-the-water vessel stops, which we can  
14 use for a little bit more information towards the public and  
15 private access users, but those are strictly a corroborative  
16 measure to our biological intercept validations.

17  
18 Early in 2020, we saw an increase, and we have an increase in  
19 compliance expected for 2020, along with following the trend  
20 from 2015 on. The for-hire sector has started higher, and has  
21 continued higher, and it's pretty much flat-lined, but our  
22 private recreational has increased each year. This year,  
23 specifically, so far, and this doesn't include past July, we had  
24 3,907 trips authorized across 1,786 registered users in Tails 'n  
25 Scales.

26  
27 75 percent of those trips came from just fifteen public access  
28 sites, and seventy-eight access site interviews were conducted  
29 for the biological sampling for validations. We also had 587  
30 marine patrol violations for the corroborative side.

31  
32 We get good data out of trip collection, trip data collection.  
33 Habitat type, you can see to the right, and we know that we have  
34 some oil-and-gas platforms readily available, but the bulk of  
35 our structure that's available for fishing is artificial reefs,  
36 and our natural bottom is relatively limited, with our location.

37  
38 Also, you can see day of the week, and we have that data, and  
39 that can be very useful for projecting landings throughout a  
40 given week, for months and holidays, and apply that with weather  
41 implications, and then we also factor in and calculate catch  
42 rates over time, catch size over time, annual variations between  
43 those, so we can get as accurate of a season projection as  
44 possible early on.

45  
46 In conclusion, Tails 'n Scales represents a successful  
47 implementation of mandatory reporting. We have a high  
48 compliance and annual increases, representing increasingly high

1 accuracy of harvest estimates. We have increased season lengths  
2 with Tails 'n Scales, and, with that, the compliance rates. We  
3 have an average of 147,000 pounds of red snapper landed each  
4 year since 2017, and Tails 'n Scales reporting allows for our  
5 anglers to have increased opportunities to our fisheries.

6  
7 Thank you very much to our MDMR staff, the National Fish and  
8 Wildlife Foundation, the Mississippi Secretary of State, Alabama  
9 Marine Resources, Elemental Methods, who is our developer for  
10 our apps, and they help us out with our websites. Mississippi  
11 Interactive, along with that, and our for-hire captains and  
12 recreational anglers. Thank you.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Eric. Do we have any  
15 questions from the workgroup? I do have a quick question about  
16 compliance, and so I think it's interesting that it's  
17 statutorily required for anglers to report, and so, for non-  
18 compliance, is it a loss of fishing privilege, revocation of  
19 license, and what -- Have you all run into many issues with  
20 fishermen not complying?

21  
22 **MR. GIGLI:** We have marine patrol giving out citations for not  
23 having an authorization number. If they have fish at the time,  
24 those fish will be confiscated, and we have not seen, to my  
25 knowledge, that they continue to be caught breaking the law,  
26 but, usually, it's a one-time max, and so additional measures of  
27 removing fishing privileges or anything like that have not been  
28 needed.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Okay. I see a few hands up. We'll go to Mel.

31  
32 **MR. BELL:** Just following my pattern, thanks, Eric, and, I  
33 guess, when you started this, there were some start-up costs  
34 involved in development of the app, and do you have any idea  
35 what that kind of ran you guys to develop the app, and then what  
36 does it kind of take you a year to run the program?

37  
38 **MR. GIGLI:** Trevor Moncrief is on the call, and he might be able  
39 to speak a little bit more specifically to exact costs, but I  
40 believe the start-up value on the app and what we were doing to  
41 try and get Tails 'n Scales started would be in the range of  
42 about \$20,000 to \$45,000, somewhere in there, with a -- Once  
43 it's started, and I think you're looking for just the app on its  
44 own, and that's closer to \$10,000 to \$15,000, but one thing that  
45 we've done is we haven't really let it sit for very long.

46  
47 Each year, there's a new degree of improvements that we want to  
48 get it as user-friendly as possible, and that kind of speaks to

1 why we were able to get rid of the call center, the internal  
2 call centers, because the app got friendly enough that they  
3 weren't needing that much help, and so, if you just sat it  
4 there, it's not going to cost very much, but I think we're  
5 putting in about \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year. The program itself  
6 would have a cost, but that would be something Trevor could  
7 answer.

8  
9 **MR. TREVOR MONCRIEF:** I will speak a little bit to it, and Eric  
10 kind of hit it right on the head. The biggest part of this is  
11 the start-up costs, what it cost to develop these apps. When we  
12 first began, through NFWF funding, it was between \$50,000 to  
13 \$100,000, and then, after that, you have to add in maintenance  
14 costs, and so just updates to the codes and cleaning up  
15 anything, and, also, you have development costs on the side of  
16 that, and so, like Eric said, this whole thing has been a  
17 learning experience for us, just like it has been for every  
18 other state here.

19  
20 Every time you run into a problem or a hiccup, you have to find  
21 a new way to be able to be able to cure that hiccup or bug, and  
22 so, yes, we've probably had between \$10,000 to \$30,000 of  
23 development costs every year, and then we have maintenance costs  
24 on top of that, and then you have staff time to be able to aid  
25 in development, and so we have to have staff time to be able to  
26 test these apps and make sure the information is coming in  
27 correctly and look for bugs and look for problems, and so, yes,  
28 it stacks up pretty quick when you talk about this mandatory  
29 reporting and app usage.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Trevor. Jessica, go  
32 ahead.

33  
34 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Thanks, Steve. My question was what habitats in  
35 the drop-down menu on the app, and then, when you're doing the  
36 dockside interviews, what are the various habitats that anglers  
37 can report that they were fishing in?

38  
39 **MR. GIGLI:** We think about it in two kind of categories of that.  
40 The first one is the type of structure, and so artificial reef,  
41 oil-and-gas platform, and towers also get linked in with the  
42 oil-and-gas platform, and natural bottom. Then, within those  
43 three, we'll get more specific as to which fish haven or which  
44 tower, and they usually have some pretty designated names for  
45 the ones that are readily accessible, and so we can get a little  
46 bit more pinpoint information with specifically which structures  
47 were you fishing.

1 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** Thank you.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Martha.

4  
5 **MS. GUYAS:** Thank you. Thanks for your presentation. Just real  
6 quick, can you give me a ballpark idea of what proportion of  
7 trips are validated by some kind of dockside intercept, and then  
8 if you have a similar figure for, I guess, trips that are  
9 intercepted by law enforcement.

10  
11 **MR. GIGLI:** Sure and so, since we have made marine patrol start  
12 their -- It's been a little bit more accessible to get that  
13 information, working with them. I think, before 2016, we were  
14 getting only around fifty per year, and we didn't have a great  
15 system set up with them, but, once we got our IT department to  
16 create a system that worked better with them, and we jumped that  
17 up to about 600 per year for marine patrol intercepts. Sorry,  
18 but what was the first part of that question?

19  
20 **MS. GUYAS:** The proportion of trips that are validated by  
21 dockside intercepts, and I'm talking about specifically the  
22 Tails 'n Scales trips.

23  
24 **MR. GIGLI:** This year was a little bit more difficult for -- It  
25 didn't quite work within our normal scheduling, because of the  
26 fast-natured pace of this year and working through our season,  
27 but, normally, I believe that we're in the range of about 5  
28 percent or so of our validations to actual trips.

29  
30 **MS. GUYAS:** Thank you.

31  
32 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. I don't see any other hands up. I  
33 appreciate it, again, Eric. Good presentation.

34  
35 **MR. GIGLI:** Thank you.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Next, we're going to move on to Louisiana.  
38 You all are really working on my geography today. Nicole,  
39 whenever you're ready.

40  
41 **LOUISIANA**

42  
43 **MS. NICOLE SMITH:** Good morning. My name is Nicole Smith, and  
44 I'm a Program Manager over here at the Department of Wildlife  
45 and Fisheries, and one of my responsibilities is the LA Creel  
46 Program.

47  
48 Today, I'm going to discuss our entire program, how did we get

1 to LA Creel, the purpose of LA Creel, some design criteria and  
2 what we've looked at to try and get this started, some key  
3 elements of our program, survey methodology, which is our access  
4 point survey and our effort survey and how we do our estimates.  
5 Then timelines to generate those estimates. Then I'm going to  
6 go over some data, because everybody likes to look at data, and  
7 then we'll go into our difference in confidence limits versus  
8 MRIP when we did our benchmarking program, and then, finally, I  
9 will finish up with some benefits of LA Creel.

10  
11 So how did we get here? Louisiana has been involved with MRIP  
12 and MRFSS since the early 1980s. We began collecting MRFSS as a  
13 department in the late 1990s, and, throughout this time, the  
14 department found several issues with the survey, specifically  
15 our inability to obtain reliable landings at a basin or sub-  
16 state level, insufficient sample size, angler participation  
17 estimates far exceeded those recreational licenses that we had,  
18 and the precision of our landings estimates for many species  
19 was, and remains, poor. Then landing estimates were not timely  
20 enough to monitor our in-season quotas.

21  
22 In 2012, Louisiana proposed a regional management approach for  
23 managing the red snapper recreational fishery, and it prompted  
24 us to develop an intensive red snapper landings survey in 2013,  
25 and, while we were going through that 2013 season with our red  
26 snapper quota monitoring project, we began to develop our own  
27 recreational fishing survey, and so, in 2014, Louisiana dropped  
28 its participation with MRIP, and we began our own creel survey,  
29 LA Creel, on January 1.

30  
31 After launching LA Creel, we wanted to make sure that it could  
32 be used with our federal partners as well, and so we requested  
33 MRIP certification beginning January 7 of 2015, and we had a  
34 peer review in the summer of 2015, and that consisted of our  
35 NOAA partners and Gulf States and some consultants. We did a  
36 side-by-side survey in 2015 as well, for the purposes of  
37 benchmarking MRIP and LA Creel together, and those benchmarking  
38 evaluation and provisional MRIP were certified in 2016, and our  
39 certification was fully achieved at the end of 2017.

40  
41 We are still in the process of calibrating, and we began that  
42 discussion in the very beginning of 2014, and, currently, we  
43 have an SSC-recommended calibration ratio for LA Creel to the  
44 Coastal Household Telephone Survey in 2020.

45  
46 The purpose of LA Creel is to be able to provide statistically  
47 significant recreational fishery information to aid in  
48 management of Louisiana's valuable fishery resources. The

1 saltwater component of the recreational fishery encompasses  
2 state waters, including our marsh habitat, bays, beaches, and  
3 nearshore areas, as well as those offshore federally-managed  
4 waters of the EEZ.

5  
6 With that purpose in mind, we wanted to design a survey that we  
7 could increase the speed with which our harvest data can be  
8 compiled into landings summaries, and we wanted to create a  
9 flexible design that would be able to quickly respond to our  
10 changing needs within our department, and we wanted to provide  
11 information on area-specific harvest for all of our species  
12 landed by anglers, and we wanted to maximize survey efficiency  
13 and minimize that burden on the angler.

14  
15 Some key features of LA Creel is that we have an inshore and  
16 offshore site stratification, and we developed a recreational  
17 offshore landing permit, and we call it the ROLP, and this  
18 permit is a free permit that we offer to our anglers, and it is  
19 not tied to their license, and we did that on purpose, so we  
20 wouldn't get oversubscription. This has been a key for us to be  
21 able to identify that offshore universe and get a better  
22 landings estimate for those species.

23  
24 We separated our biological sampling program from our dockside  
25 survey, to, again, minimize that burden on the anglers, and then  
26 we can provide weekly landings estimates.

27  
28 Recreational landings are estimated separately for the private  
29 sector and the for-hire sector, and we have an access point  
30 survey to collect the harvest rate, and we do a weekly phone and  
31 email survey to estimate our total effort, and, again, like I've  
32 already mentioned, we separated out that biological sampling.

33  
34 This should give you a general idea of our access point survey,  
35 and we have our site frame activity, and so we have private  
36 inshore and offshore, for weekday and weekend, and also charter  
37 inshore and offshore, for weekday and weekend. Those  
38 assignments are divvied out by basin, based on proportional  
39 probability, and we randomly select a shift of AM or PM, and our  
40 shifts are from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. to sunset.  
41 Once we've done all that, that site distribution -- That site  
42 assignment list is given to our coastal study areas, or our  
43 field offices, that will then go out and conduct those samples.

44  
45 This is a breakdown of our weekly assignment distribution.  
46 Again, we break everything out by basin, which is also our field  
47 offices, and the Lower Barataria-Mississippi River Basin is  
48 mainly our offshore component, and it allows us to -- We



1 separated that one particular office, to be able to target more  
2 of that offshore universe. Our pressures drive our site  
3 selection within the basin, and, like I mentioned, that Lower  
4 Barataria is our offshore.

5  
6 For our effort survey, we have a two-parter, and we've got our  
7 private angler and our charters. We, again, do those weekly,  
8 and we have a stratification of our private anglers that we draw  
9 300 of our -- Let me start again. We have 1,200 that we draw  
10 from our non-ROLP strata, and so those come from our northern  
11 part of our state, southeast, southwest, and out-of-state, and  
12 so 300 each, to give us 1,200.

13  
14 Then, from our ROLP universe, we draw 400 names. During red  
15 snapper season, we up our ROLP calls to 800, and those are  
16 called weekly. We have a contractor that does that work for us,  
17 and so they will start the survey with an email, and, if the  
18 email does not get answered by a given day, then they will start  
19 phone calling the private anglers.

20  
21 For the charter side, we also randomly draw charter license  
22 captains, and we do not work off of vessels. We work off our  
23 charter captain licenses, because, in Louisiana, we have a lot  
24 of trailered vessels, and so sometimes we were finding that we  
25 were missing trips, because we would call them during MRIP, and  
26 they would tell us, well, I didn't take that boat today, and I  
27 took a different one, and do you want that information, and so  
28 we would lose that information.

29  
30 We draw 10 percent of our non-ROLP charters and 30 percent of  
31 our ROLP. During federal snapper season, we will call 100  
32 percent of those ROLP charter captains every week, and they are  
33 also given the option to answer an email, and, if they do not  
34 answer it by a given day, they are then given a phone call to  
35 get that information.

36  
37 This is just kind of some numbers for that, what I was just  
38 telling you, and our draw is 400 and 300 in our private anglers,  
39 and this is just showing you that number in the frame that get  
40 called each week. Then the same thing for our charter side.  
41 For completed surveys, these are our dockside trips, and these  
42 are the interviews that are completed each week for the effort.

43  
44 Now, how do we do our estimate calculations, and so we take our  
45 access point survey, and we use our catch per unit effort by the  
46 area fished, using ROLP and non-ROLP, for our private angler  
47 inshore and offshore and our charter inshore and offshore. We  
48 do the same thing with the effort side, with those phone and

1 emails for the angler trips, again by angler trips by the area  
2 fished for our different regions for the non-ROLP and then, of  
3 course, the ROLP for the offshore.

4  
5 All of that, with the out-of-frame proportion, is then given an  
6 estimate by area fished for, again, those four types, and we get  
7 a weekly adjusted landings estimate.

8  
9 Just to give you a timeline of how that works each week, effort  
10 surveys are given for a previous week, and so we're going to  
11 call that Week 0, in this example. On Monday of Week 1, we  
12 randomly draw our sample, and we send that out to our  
13 contractor, and we also send our charter captain list to our  
14 field offices to start making those phone calls for Week 0.

15  
16 During Week 1, the dockside surveys are being quality controlled  
17 and finalized for Week 0. On Monday afternoon, our effort  
18 emails are sent to anglers and the captains. On Wednesday,  
19 through the weekend, if no one has answered those emails, then  
20 we start making phone calls.

21  
22 Then we get to the next week, Tuesday, and our effort call and  
23 our email data is finalized, and we receive it back at the  
24 department. We are then -- Tuesday through Thursday, we are  
25 finalizing all of our QA/QC of our dockside and our effort data.  
26 Once we complete that, we notify our stock assessment office,  
27 and they run the estimates program.

28  
29 Then, by Thursday of that second week, we have generated an  
30 estimate for Week 0. Weekly estimates are provided, but they're  
31 for the fishing week for two weeks prior. In time-sensitive  
32 situations, the timeline does have some flexibility. For  
33 instance, during snapper season, we tend to push that back two  
34 days, when we have estimates done by Tuesday. For example, a  
35 red snapper that was landed during the week of May 25 would be  
36 available in our estimates by June 9.

37  
38 Now just some numbers, and so angler trips by year, and we tend  
39 to have around two-million trips each year for private angler  
40 trips. For our charter trips, we have gone from 178,000 to  
41 183,000, and last year was 168,000. It's probably a little  
42 lower because we had a flood in 2019.

43  
44 Again, with LA Creel, we're able to look at trips by basin,  
45 which helps us out greatly in our management by basin, and we're  
46 able to look and see how each area is doing. The majority of  
47 our trips, as you can tell, take place in our Barataria Basin,  
48 followed by Pontchartrain and Terrebonne.

1  
2 This is our charter effort, again broken out by basin, just to  
3 give you an idea that we can look at these things more finely.  
4 Again, our charter trips tend to go out of Barataria, and we  
5 have a little bit more of the offshore too by the charters.

6  
7 From our dockside, this is just giving you an idea, a breakdown,  
8 of what we kind of see each year. The majority of our trips are  
9 from state waters, for both private and charter, and we tend to  
10 see a little bit more of that offshore trips in the charter, and  
11 it's right about the same in the charter and the private for  
12 offshore, and so we surveyed around almost 11,000 trips last  
13 year for private anglers and 2,200 for charter.

14  
15 This is, again, just giving you another idea of how many trips  
16 we complete. Our refusals tend to stay pretty low, and we  
17 always try to look at that, to see if we need to tweak anything  
18 or if the anglers are getting frustrated, but we tend to have  
19 around a 2 percent refusal rate. We tend to look at that each  
20 year, and that, again, goes back to us keeping our survey very  
21 short and sweet and not have that burden on the anglers. They  
22 can get in and get out, and we're not wasting a lot of time,  
23 their time, trying to get an interview.

24  
25 We do have an incomplete card that we give out to fishermen if  
26 they're not done with their trip, and we do get some of those  
27 back so that we can complete that interview.

28  
29 Louisiana has two very distinct fisheries, and we have an  
30 inshore group and an offshore group, and so I just wanted to  
31 give you some numbers of what we have. Our main fisheries are  
32 spotted seatrout and red drum, is mainly what gets landed for  
33 inshore, but then we also see a lot of, obviously, red snapper  
34 and gray snapper. This is just giving you an idea of what our  
35 numbers are.

36  
37 Then this is more of a graphical representation of that previous  
38 graph that I just showed you. The main thing here is that we  
39 like to comment, that our RSE numbers are low. We're able to  
40 look at this pretty quickly each year. Again, here is some more  
41 graphical representation of our red snapper and gray snapper  
42 landings, again with some low RSE numbers.

43  
44 Here's some yellowfin tuna and greater amberjack. Yellowfin  
45 tuna, I just wanted to point that it really led to our  
46 development of that offshore landing permit that we require our  
47 offshore folks to get, and we knew, in the past, that we had  
48 higher numbers of yellowfin tuna that were being landed at our

1 docks, and we just weren't seeing it in our estimated from MRIP,  
2 and so our ROLP permit was kind of a way of starting to find out  
3 a way of finding out those fishing efforts and landings for  
4 yellowfin tuna.

5  
6 Greater amberjack, I just wanted to make a note that, in 2017,  
7 it was a mostly closed season. In 2018, we see the jump,  
8 because that's when the management changed for greater  
9 amberjack. Then here's more examples of blackfin tuna and  
10 cobia.

11  
12 Like I previously mentioned, in 2015, MRIP and LA Creel were  
13 conducted side-by-side for benchmarking purposes, and so I'm  
14 going to go over, in the next few slides, just some comparison  
15 of the two datasets.

16  
17 Here's just a graphical representation of LA Creel and MRIP's  
18 RSE. RSEs remain close for our inshore species, but, when you  
19 look at that offshore, the RSEs are much higher for MRIP than  
20 they are for LA Creel. Due to our ability to make adjustments  
21 to our survey, we have the ability to improve and lower our  
22 RSEs. For example, here, you see red snapper is around 12, and  
23 now our RSE is between 9 and 11, but we are able to focus more  
24 on that offshore, to get a little bit better numbers.

25  
26 Again, for our common inshore species of seatrout and red drum,  
27 they were pretty similar between the two programs, but, when you  
28 look at our offshore species, that's where the big change is,  
29 and, again, as I mentioned in the beginning, we were not happy  
30 with some of our offshore and what we were seeing, and we knew  
31 we had more out there. As you can clearly see with tuna and  
32 dolphin, LA Creel is showing a lot more than MRIP does.

33  
34 Here's just a combined estimate, just giving you an example,  
35 again, and MRIP tended to have higher landing estimates for  
36 common inshore species than LA Creel did. Then, for our reef  
37 fish species, we are showing more landings. Again, the same for  
38 our highly migratory species of our tunas.

39  
40 The benefits of LA Creel are the offshore and inshore strata  
41 provide more representative and precise landing estimates, and  
42 our saltwater license anglers and ROLP permittees surveyed for  
43 effort results in greater precision and provides efficiency in  
44 collection of our estimates. We have near-real-time estimates  
45 weekly, which provides timely management information. The  
46 increased estimate precision provides confidence in our  
47 estimates.

1 Basin-level estimates provide regional management options. We  
2 have a flexible and efficient survey design, and, with our  
3 ability to manage on a weekly level, we are able to see  
4 different changes. Like, when we had the flood in 2019, we were  
5 able to see those changes. Actually, with COVID this year, we  
6 saw a spike in our fishing effort, and we're able to really get  
7 an idea of what's going on, because we're able to turn around  
8 our estimates so quickly.

10 Finally, we have representative biological sampling by  
11 separating out the biological from our creel survey. I will  
12 make note that we do -- It's not that we do not collect  
13 biological sampling during LA Creel, and we do that if the time  
14 allows, but it's not a priority for our field staff. With that,  
15 I will take any questions, and I'm sorry if it sounded like I  
16 ran through that.

18 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Nicole. Does anyone  
19 have any questions? I've got one quick question, while they're  
20 pulling up the sticky notes. Discards, are discard information  
21 collected in the LA Creel survey, and, if so, how is it  
22 collected?

24 **MS. SMITH:** Yes, and so we started collecting discards in I  
25 believe it was in 2016 or 2017, and we started at the request of  
26 NOAA. It is done dockside, just kind of like MRIP, and we have  
27 a list of twelve species now that we collect that for, and it's  
28 just, when they come back to the dock, we have the same kind of  
29 -- It's what you used for bait, outside of season, and  
30 throwbacks. We collect that now.

32 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. I see Mel has his hand up. Go  
33 ahead, Mel.

35 **MR. BELL:** Thanks, Nicole. That was great. If I'm  
36 understanding this, in 2014, you started this effort. In 2015,  
37 you did a side-by-side MRIP, and then your LA Creel, and so I  
38 guess now you're just running LA Creel, which looks like a state  
39 kind of version, and it does the things that MRIP does, but it  
40 maybe does it a little bit more state focused and timely. What  
41 does that run you, in terms of personnel and annual costs to  
42 keep that running?

44 **MS. SMITH:** In 2014 we started, in 2015 we benchmarked, and  
45 then, in 2016, we just kept going with LA Creel. We use all of  
46 our current staff that we have, and we did not need to add  
47 anybody different, because, when we dropped with MRIP, it was  
48 the same staff that we used for MRIP that we use for LA Creel.

1  
2 Our staff tend to do everything, and we don't have dedicated  
3 creelers. They kind of do everything they need to do in-house.  
4 The program runs about \$2 million a year, and we have federal  
5 funding from Gulf States, and then we also, a few years ago,  
6 requested an increase of our saltwater fishing license, and that  
7 has helped greatly in aiding the program.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thanks, Nicole. Any more questions from the  
10 group? I do have one additional question, Nicole. So your  
11 side-by-side calibrations were done in 2015, and I think that's  
12 when MRIP was still doing the Coastal Household Telephone  
13 Survey.

14  
15 **MS. SMITH:** Correct.

16  
17 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Have you all had any discussion, or any  
18 consideration, of calibrating to the FES, or is that a concern?

19  
20 **MS. SMITH:** I think that's on the table for down the road. I  
21 think, right now, everyone is trying to get the calibration  
22 completed, but we know, at some point, we will need to re-  
23 benchmark again, and Chris can correct me if I'm wrong on that,  
24 but we know that we probably need to do it again, just because  
25 they moved to the FES after we did the benchmark.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Okay. I see Tom Frazer has his hand up. Go  
28 ahead, Tom.

29  
30 **DR. FRAZER:** I enjoyed the presentation, Nicole, and so my quick  
31 question is this. If the biological data are just  
32 opportunistically collected, how do you ensure that they're  
33 representative of the catch?

34  
35 **MS. SMITH:** We have -- Our stock assessment office has set up a  
36 quota system for us that we follow that, and so they are  
37 collected a lot of times from LA Creel, but we just don't make  
38 it a requirement, and so they will still go out when they need  
39 to collect recreational samples, and the stock assessment office  
40 has created a draw where they look at proportions and  
41 probabilities that this is the best site you need to go to to  
42 get this species, and we have been able to meet quotas and meet  
43 what our stock assessment office needs. For red snapper, in  
44 particular, that, they get no matter what. If they're out with  
45 LA Creel, they have to get red snapper, but, so far, it has not  
46 affected our catch rates. Chris, if I've misspoken, please  
47 correct me.

1 **DR. FRAZER:** Okay. Thanks.

2  
3 **MS. SMITH:** We have the ability, and all of our data is sent to  
4 Gulf States for NOAA's use. We worked closely with them to make  
5 it tie as closely as possible, and we have recently, in the last  
6 few years, added the ability to tie LA Creel to the biological  
7 sampling, if it's collected, and so we will collect the control  
8 number and the trip number, and that gets sent with the  
9 biological data, so that you can tie the two together if it's  
10 there.

11  
12 **DR. FRAZER:** Thank you.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Nicole. Great  
15 presentation. All right. We'll move on to our last Gulf state,  
16 Texas.

17  
18 **MS. ROY:** Excuse me, Steve, but Chris Schieble would like to  
19 speak.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Sorry. Go ahead, Chris.

22  
23 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** It's just to add to the point that Nicole just  
24 answered the question for. A lot of times, our staff end up  
25 being doubled up at creel assignments, with one staff assigned  
26 to collect biological data independent of the survey, and so  
27 they're down there just for that job, while the survey person is  
28 conducting the survey, and so the biological sampling is not  
29 impacting the ability to do the survey, I guess is more likely,  
30 and so, as you know from creel assignments, boats tend to all  
31 come back in at about the same time, and so you don't want to  
32 hamstring your survey person by having them trying to collect  
33 otoliths while they would be missing intercepts, if that makes  
34 sense.

35  
36 **DR. FRAZER:** Chris, I get it. Thank you.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks for that follow-up. All  
39 right. Whoever is presenting for Texas, take it away.

40  
41 **TEXAS**

42  
43 **MR. MARK FISHER:** We're going to do a tag-team presentation.  
44 I'm going to start off and just give a basic overview of our  
45 creel, and then, in about five or six slides, I'm going to hand  
46 it off to our partner at A&M Corpus, Tara Topping, who will  
47 cover the iSnapper portion of our presentation.

1 We started our creel survey way back in 1974, and we pre-date  
2 the old MRFSS by five years, actually. As far as I know, it's  
3 the longest-running, longest-continuous-running, marine  
4 recreational fishing survey in the United States.

5  
6 If you will check the map, you will see that Texas is divided  
7 into these nice, neat little discrete bay systems, which just  
8 natural lends itself to stratified sampling, and that's exactly  
9 what we do. Each bay system is a standalone sampling unit, and  
10 we have a field station at every bay system, and they do their  
11 own creel surveys within that bay system only.

12  
13 Of course, just like everybody else, our intercept is the  
14 species sought, the species composition numbers and size, trip  
15 length, where they were fishing, bait and gear used, mode,  
16 whether it's private or charter, residence of anglers, and we  
17 intercept all trips, and it's not just fishing. We also get the  
18 duck hunters and the pleasure boaters and the other folks using  
19 the resource.

20  
21 Just like a lot of others, we have -- Really, it's a two-part  
22 survey. We have our onsite survey, which we intercept trips  
23 coming back to the docks, to get their trip-specific information  
24 by things you can't get elsewhere, like lengths and species of  
25 fish and things like that, and the other part is our roving  
26 survey count, and that's how we get our expanded efforts.

27  
28 We count empty boat trailers and empty wet slips at every marina  
29 and boat ramp along the coast in the state, and that's what we  
30 use in our expansion, and this is in lieu of the MRIP, where  
31 they use the Coastal Household Telephone Survey. We don't do a  
32 telephone survey or a mail survey. We are depending on actual  
33 counts from that roving survey.

34  
35 Another key difference is that, instead of dividing into two-  
36 month waves, like MRIP or MRFSS is, instead, we just divide the  
37 year into two distinct seasons, and we call one the high use,  
38 May 15 through November 20, and, as implies, that's where most  
39 of the fishing effort landings occur, and then low use, which is  
40 during the lesser season, from November 21 to May 15.

41  
42 We also further stratify by day type, weekends versus weekdays  
43 and holidays, and, as I mentioned before, we are stratifying by  
44 bay system. There is roughly 260 boat access sites along the  
45 coast, and they are surveyed in proportion to fishing pressure,  
46 and so those that get a lot of fishing effort are sampled more  
47 often than those with less effort, and surveys are conducted  
48 from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. every day, and previous work has



1 indicated that roughly 93 or 94 percent of all trips end between  
2 10:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., and that gives us the most bang for  
3 our eight-hour day.

4  
5 Coastwide, we do a total of 1,050 survey days, which means that,  
6 during any day of the year, we've got at least one survey  
7 running somewhere along the Texas coast, and we're divided into  
8 two-thirds on weekdays and one-third on weekends, and this  
9 amount of sampling effort yields approximately 15,000 fishing  
10 trips intercepted every year.

11  
12 Now, despite our long shoreline and 260 boat access sites,  
13 really, there's only about twenty-five, and so less than 10  
14 percent are used by anglers to access the open Gulf of Mexico,  
15 and the rest of them they are spending time in our bay systems,  
16 and so we do extra sampling of these twenty-five boat ramps, to  
17 ensure that we get adequate numbers of intercepts of anglers  
18 fishing in the Gulf of Mexico. Starting on May 15, 2015, we  
19 tripled the number of Gulf-only survey days, to just make doubly  
20 sure that we get adequate numbers of Gulf fishing trips.

21  
22 With that, I will turn it over to our partner, Tara Topping, and  
23 she will cover, in detail, the iSnapper application, which is  
24 used in conjunction with our routine field survey.

25  
26 **MS. TARA TOPPING:** Thanks, Mark. My name is Tara Topping, and  
27 I'm the Program Coordinator for iSnapper. I have been fortunate  
28 enough to be doing this position since 2014, and so I think a  
29 majority of you already know me and the program, but, for those  
30 that don't, iSnapper is a voluntary electronic reporting app  
31 that is designed to collect catch and effort data from the  
32 recreational fishery sector.

33  
34 Just a really brief history about iSnapper, and so, initially,  
35 back in 2011, the app was piloted, and it might be hard to  
36 believe, but we didn't even know if any kind of smart device  
37 could be used to collect fisheries data, and so we piloted the  
38 app for the charter/for-hire fishery, and it included sixteen  
39 vessels throughout the Gulf of Mexico, and we realized that it  
40 was actually quite successful.

41  
42 In 2014, we received an MRIP grant to redesign the app and  
43 include both the charter/for-hire as well as the private sector,  
44 and, during these early planning phases, we had MRIP set up a  
45 workshop, in which we all go together, all of the Gulf of Mexico  
46 states, to discuss kind of the plans for red snapper harvest,  
47 kind of crystal ball looking into the future and knowing that we  
48 were probably going to have to do something specific to red

1 snapper.

2  
3 iSnapper was presented to the MRIP statisticians, and we had the  
4 benefit of talking to Dr. Lynne Stokes, and she basically  
5 validated our survey design, and she has been a great resource  
6 for us that we've been using over the years, and so, with that,  
7 in 2018, in working with her, we redesigned kind of our harvest  
8 methodologies and sampling, and we were able to reduce our error  
9 rates, by looking at kind of how we were sampling.

10  
11 This is, really quickly, just how iSnapper works. Again, it's a  
12 mobile app, as well as on the website, but most people are using  
13 the app. It's a quick three screens for anglers to walk  
14 through, and the data collected are similar to all the rest of  
15 the apps that we have already seen. It's day and time, effort  
16 information, how many anglers, catch, how many fish were  
17 harvested and released. One thing that is unique is that,  
18 specifically for red snapper, we do ask what depth anglers were  
19 fishing, and so we do kind of have a record of depth as well as  
20 discard.

21  
22 Then, for iSnapper, we also saw kind of the need for some kind  
23 of socioeconomic data, and so we created a survey in which  
24 anglers can go ahead and fill out some questions regarding  
25 household income, what the trip cost, how far they were coming  
26 from, and this data actually has been very interesting to see  
27 over the years.

28  
29 Then just a quick overview of how the harvest is estimated, and  
30 so we have a very similar design to Alabama where it's a  
31 capture-recapture method, and our data was actually presented  
32 and published in Lui et al. 2017, in which this design was used,  
33 and so I went ahead and, as I said, Dr. Stokes has been integral  
34 in this project, and she essentially presented this at the AFS  
35 conference in 2015, where you have the number of vessels or  
36 fish, and it's broken down into just a couple of cells, have  
37 those been reported or not reported, and have the -- You have  
38 the number of vessels or trips that are reported, and then, for  
39 the creel survey, we go ahead and -- Excuse me. Parks and  
40 Wildlife, as well as us, go and interview these anglers, and  
41 that's how we get our validation.

42  
43 We use these basic stats to come up with our overall estimate,  
44 and, as Mark said, they have the roving creel survey, and that  
45 is what they use for the pressure estimates, and they have been  
46 wonderful partners as well, and they have provided that to us,  
47 and then, the creel data, we have several people that go out  
48 during the summer and creel at various boat ramps, and we add

1 those to the Parks and Wildlife data and come up with a total  
2 number of anglers and trips and use those for our validation.

3  
4 One thing that we have encountered over the years is reporting  
5 rate of less than 5 percent throughout the time. Our highest  
6 reporting rate was actually 4.3 percent in 2015, and this was  
7 after a big push of news releases and articles and TV spots and  
8 all kinds of outreach that we could do, and it was four-and-a-  
9 half percent, and then, as of 2019, it's 2.2 percent, and so we  
10 have seen it go down, but we also saw state management come into  
11 play in 2019 as well, and so I think anglers are happier with  
12 kind of seeing more fish, a little bit more leeway, and so  
13 they've been less likely to report to us.

14  
15 Then, finally, just to kind of compare the two methods, iSnapper  
16 is in dark blue, and Parks and Wildlife is in orange, and you  
17 have pounds harvested on the Y-axis and year on the X, and you  
18 can see that, pretty much, iSnapper has been systematically  
19 higher than Parks and Wildlife, aside from last year.

20  
21 We attributed the higher numbers to the fact that anglers could  
22 report outside of the 6:00 p.m. timeline, and so, if they got  
23 back from their trip late, they could still report, as well as  
24 any anglers that were launching from their own private dock  
25 could also go ahead and report their catch.

26  
27 Now, obviously, 2019 is a little bit different, but one of the  
28 things that could be happening is more individuals are using  
29 these public marinas, or that they are just going out and  
30 catching their fish and coming back, meaning that they are  
31 getting creeled before the creelers leave at 6:00 p.m., and so  
32 it's possible that we're just doing a better job capturing all  
33 the pressure.

34  
35 That's all we have. Mel, before you ask, I will go ahead and  
36 tell you that the cost to redesign iSnapper was about \$100,000,  
37 and then, as previously mentioned, modification and running  
38 costs are around \$20,000 to \$40,000 a year, and so we've been  
39 grant funded the entire time, and approximately \$150,000 a year  
40 goes to the iSnapper project.

41  
42 **MR. FISHER:** Mel, Parks and Wildlife, with our additional Gulf  
43 survey sampling, it costs us an additional \$100,000 a year.

44  
45 **MS. TOPPING:** With that, we would be happy to take some  
46 questions.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Fantastic. Thank you, both, and I

1 was actually going to ask Mel's question, just to save us a  
2 little bit of time, and so I appreciate you going ahead and  
3 addressing that, but I still see that Mel has his hand up. Go  
4 ahead, Mel.

5  
6 **MR. BELL:** You all hit it. Am I that obvious? Thank you. That  
7 was very nicely done.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** You would make a bad car salesman, Mel. I do  
10 have one quick question for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Marine  
11 Recreational Fishing Survey, and so, in North Carolina, we have  
12 a similar survey, and it's an anadromous creel survey, and we do  
13 it up the rivers during certain parts of the year, to get effort  
14 on some of the anadromous species that we manage jointly with  
15 not only the state agency, but other federal entities, and one  
16 of the issues we have is access from private land and private  
17 land owners, and that's always something that we have trouble  
18 capturing.

19  
20 I don't know if you have similar issues in Texas, with people  
21 accessing the rivers and the lagoons from private land, and not  
22 necessarily even from a private dock in like a neighborhood, but  
23 just an individual dock or a boat ramp on private land, and are  
24 there any adjustments in the survey to account for that?

25  
26 **MR. FISHER:** Probably the biggest issue on the coast are people  
27 who launch from their own backyard docks, on those canals, the  
28 neighborhoods with the canals, and, no, we do not. We don't do  
29 anything to adjust for them.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Okay. I feel like that's certainly -- Even in  
32 the federal fishery world, that's something that some of our  
33 states will have to address, because I know there is plenty of  
34 canals and stuff in Florida where people can launch and come  
35 back, and likewise here in North Carolina, and so it's not only  
36 some of our state fisheries, but it's certainly some of the  
37 federal fisheries, where folks can come and go from private and  
38 never, ever be intercepted. Do we have any more questions for  
39 Texas? All right. I am not seeing any. Again, thanks to both  
40 of you.

41  
42 **MS. ROY:** Excuse me. Susan Boggs' hand is up.

43  
44 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Sorry, Susan. Go ahead.

45  
46 **MS. BOGGS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question for  
47 everyone, but maybe one person could answer it, but is reporting  
48 required year-round or only during the fishing season, but then,

1 specifically to Mississippi, do you only collect data for red  
2 snapper, because it seems like other states either collect it  
3 for all or various species, but I'm just curious, and how does  
4 each state collect? Is it during the specific season, or is it  
5 year-round, even when the season is closed, in order to capture  
6 discards?

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Good question. Can anyone -- I don't think  
9 there's anyone that can answer the question for the entire Gulf,  
10 and so I guess just somebody from each state, if they can really  
11 quickly address that. I see Trevor has his hand up. Go ahead.

12  
13 **MR. MONCRIEF:** We require reporting during the season, and it's  
14 intended to report on the harvest of red snapper. Therefore, we  
15 get our estimates from in-season only. I am trying to think  
16 back to the other part of the question. Other species. For  
17 other species, we actually began experimenting and asking some  
18 supplemental questions about triggerfish and amberjack, similar  
19 to what Alabama is proposing to do, and these have not been put  
20 into regulations or anything else like that, and it's just an  
21 attempt at beginning to look at how anglers will report other  
22 species, and that's all I've got from Mississippi.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you. Martha.

25  
26 **MS. GUYAS:** Our State Reef Fish Survey is a year-round program,  
27 and we're collecting data on thirteen different species, and  
28 they were on that slide, but, generally, snappers and groupers  
29 and amberjacks and triggerfish and hogfish, but, of course, the  
30 landings for red snapper slide that I showed, Susan, that was  
31 just the data collection for that mini-season, and so the  
32 discards for Atlantic red snapper come -- They have come from  
33 MRIP.

34  
35 Now that we have expanded the State Reef Fish Survey, now that  
36 it's a statewide program, we'll be collecting discards for the  
37 Atlantic coast now too, although MRIP will still be operating  
38 over there too, and so I guess it remains to be seen how that  
39 data is handled in the Atlantic red snapper assessment, when  
40 they get to that.

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Martha. Nicole.

43  
44 **MS. SMITH:** Louisiana, like I said, we collect for every species  
45 that we encounter. I didn't go into it, but our ROLP does have  
46 the option of reporting, electronic reporting, but it's only for  
47 red snapper right now, and it's not mandatory. It's voluntary,  
48 but we do -- For LA Creel, we do collect every species we

1 encounter.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Nicole. Tara.

4  
5 **MS. TOPPING:** Just to reiterate, iSnapper is voluntary, and  
6 we're collecting data year-round, and something that I forgot to  
7 mention is you can report any species that you can catch in the  
8 Gulf of Mexico with iSnapper, and so it's not just a red snapper  
9 app. However, we've kind of geared it that way, but all species  
10 can be reported. Thank you.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you, Tara. Kevin.

13  
14 **MR. ANSON:** For Snapper Check, we -- The app is open essentially  
15 during the season for each of the species, and so we do not  
16 gather discard information, dead discard information, outside of  
17 the seasons, but we're looking at ways of how we might be able  
18 to do that, but rely upon the MRIP survey to cover for the  
19 annual discarded catch information.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Kevin. Nicole.

22  
23 **MS. SMITH:** I didn't have anything else.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, everybody. That  
26 concludes the presentations from the Gulf states. Next, we'll  
27 move into some federal catch reporting programs, but I'm going  
28 to suggest that we take a very quick five-minute biological  
29 break, and so it's 10:55. Let's be back at 11:00.

30  
31 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

32  
33 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Let's go ahead and get back to it. We still  
34 have quite a bit of agenda to cover before our scheduled lunch,  
35 and so we might have to kick some things to after lunch, but I  
36 do want to try to get through as much as we can before lunch,  
37 because I want plenty of opportunity after lunch to have some  
38 good group discussion, and, again, come up with a workgroup  
39 charge before we adjourn today. Next up on the agenda, we have  
40 Dr. Hutt, and he's going to give us a quick presentation on HMS  
41 catch reporting, angler catch reporting. Whenever you're ready  
42 and the presentation is up, take it away.

43  
44 **MR. RINDONE:** Dr. Hutt, can you speak? Steve, do you want to  
45 circle back? He might be having issues.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Yes, we can circle back. He might be having  
48 issues on his end.

1  
2 **MR. RINDONE:** I will try to chase him down.  
3

4 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Next, we've got Ken Brennan, and  
5 he's going to give us a for-hire reporting report.  
6

7 **FOR-HIRE REPORTING**  
8

9 **MR. KEN BRENNAN:** I am Ken Brennan with NOAA Fisheries, and I  
10 coordinate the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, which is  
11 administered by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center. I would  
12 like to go over the for-hire data collection programs, primarily  
13 the ER, electronic reporting, in the South Atlantic and Gulf of  
14 Mexico.  
15

16 I will start with the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, which  
17 was started on the Atlantic coast in 1972, and so we're going on  
18 fifty years, and it was started in the Gulf of Mexico in 1986,  
19 and so it's a long time series, and it's extensively used in  
20 stock assessments and management measures and research and many  
21 other data uses.  
22

23 The headboat survey collects three main pieces of information,  
24 the bioprofile data, and these are dockside samples collected by  
25 port agents, which include as the fish are offloaded from  
26 headboats, the port agents intercept them at the docks and  
27 collect lengths and weights and otoliths and other parts,  
28 spines, and, in some cases, gonads.  
29

30 These are used in stock assessments. Vessel trip reports, this  
31 is trip-level reporting, and so the captain submits the trips  
32 and provides information on the species that they're catching,  
33 number of fish caught, number released, how many anglers were on  
34 the trip, and we also collect the primary fishing location. The  
35 length of the trip is important for calculation, and we also  
36 collect primary depth fished and then some additional  
37 socioeconomic information, fuel used, and price that the captain  
38 paid per gallon.  
39

40 Then the last important component is the headboat activity  
41 report, and this is more of an internal report, where the port  
42 agents independently collect available information on the vessel  
43 activity for use in validating effort and compliance, and these  
44 are physical observations, whether the boat is out fishing, and  
45 we'll talk to the ticket office or check websites, and we've  
46 even see a lot of webcams now that are useful for this purpose,  
47 and so these are primary data components of the headboat survey.  
48

1 I would like to point out some recent events that I think are  
2 worth mentioning. In the electronic reporting for the headboat  
3 survey, it was implemented in January of 2013 in the South  
4 Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. This consisted of a web portal  
5 and mobile app from the start, and it was supported by Bluefin  
6 Data, and so this has been ongoing, and there are very few  
7 interruptions, other than scheduled updates, and we're getting  
8 ready to update the app in January, and so we will do our  
9 outreach prior to that, and hopefully that goes smoothly.

10  
11 In 2012, we transitioned to an Oracle database, which was  
12 extremely important, as far as streamlining our data processing  
13 and data management. That enabled us to handle the data and  
14 work with the data more efficiently, and this was a key step in  
15 the data processing.

16  
17 In 2015, we transitioned from annual landings and effort  
18 estimates to wave estimates, and this was made entirely possible  
19 by electronic reporting, where we weren't handling paper and  
20 sending paper to data entry and all the other logistics involved  
21 with paper logbooks, and so this is another benefit of the  
22 electronic reporting.

23  
24 Also, I wanted to mention that we're currently incorporating the  
25 headboat database structure and compliance monitoring capacity  
26 into the SEFHIER program, and so, things that are working for  
27 us, we're making those available to the SEFHIER program, to  
28 reduce costs and also to increase efficiency in that program.

29  
30 Then I wanted to point out an example of alternative management  
31 that the headboat survey was involved with. In 2014, the  
32 Southeast Fisheries Science Center and the Southeast Regional  
33 Office conducted the Headboat Collaborative Project in the Gulf  
34 of Mexico, where twenty headboats participated in this two-year  
35 IFQ pilot project, and, by all accounts, the project was a  
36 success.

37  
38 I would like to summarize what electronic reporting has done for  
39 the headboat survey. It has improved and increased reliability.  
40 The captains have a reliable reporting platform available, and,  
41 as I mentioned, there's been very little interruptions. It's  
42 fully supported by our staff and Bluefin Data, and so it's been  
43 reliable since we went live.

44  
45 Then accuracy is also improved. With these reporting platforms,  
46 you can set parameters and error checks and QA/QC checks on the  
47 frontend of the program, to eliminate errors that might occur  
48 initially when the captain is entering a value or a piece of



1 information, and so it never makes it to the next level, and  
2 that's key to reducing errors or problems with the data.

3  
4 Also, the ability of the captain to enter the data easily has  
5 reduced recall bias, and so that has improved accuracy, and then  
6 compliance has increased significantly. This has had many  
7 benefits. We are able to monitor compliance better, and we're  
8 not waiting on paper. The trip is entered, and we know it's  
9 entered, and we check it against the headboat activity report,  
10 if there was vessel activity, and so, right now, we're up around  
11 98 percent in the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico, and so  
12 this is a significant improvement, and I attribute that to  
13 electronic reporting as well.

14  
15 Then, as I mentioned, timeliness has improved, the ability to  
16 turn data around, in either raw data or estimated landings and  
17 effort estimates, and we also do -- We're involved with ACL  
18 monitoring and other in-season monitoring, and so this is all  
19 made possible by electronic reporting, and I just wanted to  
20 point that out.

21  
22 I would like to now give an overview and an update for the  
23 Southeast For-Hire Integrated Electronic Reporting Program,  
24 otherwise known as SEFHIER. This effort has been a  
25 collaboration with NOAA Fisheries, the South Atlantic, and Gulf  
26 of Mexico Councils and commissions, and also many other  
27 partners, the FINs, GulfFIN, ACCSP, and we work with state  
28 partners, and so it's been a collaborative effort since 2016,  
29 when the working group was formed.

30  
31 This program is designed to collect trip-level catch and effort  
32 data, using electronic reporting, similar to how the headboat  
33 survey is collecting it, and there are some differences, but,  
34 basically, the structure of the program is very similar to the  
35 headboat survey.

36  
37 This program applies to all Southeast federally-permitted  
38 charter boats and headboats, regardless of where they are  
39 fishing. The requirements are different by region, and the  
40 trip-level logbook reporting and submission will be required in  
41 the Gulf and the South Atlantic, but there is additional  
42 requirements in the Gulf. The hail-out, or trip declaration, is  
43 required prior to leaving on any trip in the Gulf, and then a  
44 location tracking device affixed to the vessel is also required  
45 in the Gulf, but not the Atlantic.

46  
47 Then, for dually-permitted vessels, they must follow the more  
48 restrictive requirements, which in this case is the Gulf,

1 regardless of where they are fishing, and so that's basically  
2 the new requirements that are going to be implemented for  
3 charter boats, and, in some cases, some headboats that aren't in  
4 the headboat survey.

5  
6 The program requirements will be implemented in two phases. The  
7 first phase, the trip declaration and logbook reporting will be  
8 effective on January 5, 2021 for the Gulf-permitted vessels,  
9 and, for the South Atlantic vessels, logbook reporting will be  
10 effective on January 4, 2021 of the coming year, and so we're  
11 working through the approval process with vendors.

12  
13 Currently, eTRIPS and VESL software are in review as reporting  
14 platforms for the for-hire program, and other vendors are  
15 starting to come forward and request technical specifications  
16 and requirements for the program, and so there will be other  
17 vendors that are applying for approval.

18  
19 Then, also, I wanted to point out that the existing reporting  
20 platforms, such as Tails 'n Scales, have been provided the  
21 technical specifications, to see if that could be expanded and  
22 used as a reporting platform, and so we're opening that up to  
23 the states that already have reporting ER programs in place.

24  
25 Phase 2 of the implementation process is the VMS, or GPS,  
26 requirement that will be announced at a later date, and this  
27 should help captains and others adjust to Phase 1 before a full  
28 implementation of these requirements in the Gulf. We are  
29 reviewing cellular and satellite VMS systems with and without  
30 reporting forms currently, and that's another option to VESL and  
31 eTRIPS, where the captain, if they have a VMS system, it may be  
32 compatible with a tablet app that reporting can be done within  
33 that one system, rather than having a VMS and a separate  
34 reporting app, and so that's in the works now.

35  
36 Then there are also several approved commercial VMS units that  
37 are in the approval process for the for-hire fishery, and so  
38 those are possible options, or alternatives, for the captain as  
39 well, if they're approved. That is basically what's happening  
40 with both programs, and one has been in existence for quite a  
41 while, and one is about to go live, and so a lot is happening  
42 with for-hire reporting in the Southeast Region. I will take  
43 any questions, Steve.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Ken. I appreciate that.  
46 At least the headboat component, I feel like that's probably one  
47 of the very first for-hire recreational surveys that utilized  
48 electronic reporting, and I know I've been to quite a few SEDARs

1 and stuff where that data has come in very useful. Does anyone  
2 have any questions? I see Martha has her hand up. Martha.

3  
4 **MS. GUYAS:** Thanks, Steve. Thank you for that presentation,  
5 Ken. It was great, and so I've got a question. With the  
6 SEFHIER program, I think, at the Gulf Council table, we've  
7 talked about how, once that program gets off the ground and runs  
8 for probably a couple of years, it will have to go through a  
9 certification process, and then probably calibration, and so my  
10 question is about the headboat survey, if it had to go through  
11 some certification process with MRIP, and then, if so, what that  
12 looked like, and then, when the headboat survey went to an  
13 electronic logbook platform, was there any sort of calibration  
14 or adjustment that occurred at that time?

15  
16 **MR. BRENNAN:** Thanks, Martha. The first question, we are in the  
17 process of completing a dockside estimation project, which will  
18 feed into MRIP certification. As of now, the survey hasn't been  
19 MRIP certified, and we've kind of been running in parallel for a  
20 long time, and that is our goal, is to get it certified, once  
21 that estimation project has been peer reviewed and approved, and  
22 that should happen within the next year, and then we'll  
23 implement the dockside estimation protocols to validate the  
24 logbooks. That will be key in getting it certified, and so,  
25 yes, we're working on that.

26  
27 Then, calibration of the logbook with ER, we did not calibrate.  
28 We didn't change any of the fields, and we basically just  
29 changed the reporting method, and none of the data fields  
30 changed, and the protocols basically remained the same, that the  
31 reporting requirements were the same, and the captains had  
32 already been well versed on reporting, and so there was -- In  
33 discussions and advice by analysts and other folks within the  
34 Science Center and S&T, there was no compelling reason why to  
35 calibrate to those estimates.

36  
37 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. I've got Kevin Anson up next.  
38 Kevin, go ahead.

39  
40 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, Steve. Ken, that was a good  
41 presentation. Thank you. Martha asked one of the questions,  
42 but your response that you provided -- I was just curious, and I  
43 need some more clarification. In regard to the compliance issue  
44 and non-response for captains participating in the headboat  
45 survey, have you adjusted estimates for non-response in the  
46 past, or have you recently done that, or is that something that  
47 you're including as a new element in this certification  
48 document, or procedures, that you described?

1  
2 **MR. BRENNAN:** No, that has always been part of the estimation  
3 process to account for non-reporting, and we call it a  
4 correction factor, or a K factor, where the estimated trips, or  
5 estimated effort, is divided by reported effort, which gives us  
6 a ratio that we apply to the reported catch, and that's how we  
7 adjust up to the estimated landings, and that accounts for the  
8 non-reporting, or compliance, if there is an issue with non-  
9 compliance.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Ken. Any follow-up,  
12 Kevin?

13  
14 **MR. ANSON:** No, and that answers my question. Thank you.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Again, Ken, great presentation. I  
17 really appreciate it. We're going to move on, or maybe circle  
18 back to Dr. Hutt and see if he's available.

19  
20 **DR. CLIFFORD HUTT:** I'm back. Sorry about that. I was on the  
21 line, but my computer just decided to pitch a fit, and so I'm  
22 back on, through the phone line this time.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you. Take it away whenever  
25 you're ready.

26  
27 **HMS ANGLER REPORTS**

28  
29 **DR. HUTT:** Thank you. I'm Clifford Hutt with the Atlantic HMS  
30 Management Division, and I'm one of our Recreational Data  
31 Specialists. As many of you are familiar, Atlantic HMS manages  
32 -- As you're aware, we are responsible for managing tunas,  
33 sharks, swordfish, and billfish species in the Atlantic, Gulf of  
34 Mexico, and Caribbean.

35  
36 Six of these species, bluefin tuna, swordfish, blue and white  
37 marlin, sailfish, and roundscale spearfish require twenty-four-  
38 hour catch reporting for our recreational angler permit holders.  
39 This reporting is used to help us support ICCAT reporting and  
40 in-season management of several recreational quotas. We manage  
41 three regional trophy bluefin tuna quotas, and, basically, this  
42 covers bluefin tuna over seventy-three inches curved fork  
43 length, and we have a trophy north quota that covers the  
44 Atlantic north of that latitude in northern New Jersey. We have  
45 a trophy south, which covers the rest of Atlantic south of that  
46 latitude in New Jersey, and we have a trophy Gulf of Mexico  
47 quota.

1 We also have the school bluefin angling quota, which is bluefin  
2 tuna under seventy-three inches fork length, and we report  
3 bluefin tuna dead discards to ICCAT, and we have a swordfish  
4 incidental quota, which combines recreational and commercial  
5 discards, and we have a 250-fish annual catch limit for the  
6 marlin species, which includes blue and white marlin and  
7 roundscale spearfish.

8  
9 For those who aren't familiar, roundscale spearfish is a species  
10 of billfish that was described about a decade ago, and they are  
11 pretty difficult to distinguish from white marlin by the  
12 untrained eye, and so we kind of lump them together.

13  
14 For HMS catch reporting, our HMS angling and charter/headboat  
15 vessels are required to report all bluefin tuna landings and  
16 dead discards, as well as non-tournament landings of swordfish  
17 and the billfish species, with the tournament landings being  
18 reported by tournament operators. Reports are due within  
19 twenty-four hours of trip completion. Anglers with non-  
20 tournament landings of billfish and swordfish caught in the  
21 State of Florida are also required by the state to report their  
22 landings to the HMS system.

23  
24 They have a number of options for conducting their reporting,  
25 and they can either do it online, via our HMS permits shop,  
26 where they purchase their permits, or we also provide an HMS  
27 catch reporting app that can be used on both iPhone and Android  
28 smartphones.

29  
30 There is a call-in number by phone, which is how the system used  
31 to work, primarily, and now it's kind of a minor reporting  
32 option, but we still have a handful of old guys who still rely  
33 on it, and, in the states of Maryland and North Carolina, HMS  
34 anglers are required to report their catch via state catch card  
35 programs, where they actually have to report the fish through a  
36 catch card at the dock, and the states share that data with us  
37 on a weekly basis. Maryland also requires reporting of sharks  
38 via that program.

39  
40 We also are currently working with GARFO and ACCSP to  
41 incorporate HMS catch reporting elements into the eVTR and  
42 eTRIPS systems by 2021, to reduce any need for duplicate  
43 reporting burden, particularly with all the new for-hire logbook  
44 programs that are being established.

45  
46 For tournament reporting, all HMS landed as part of registered  
47 HMS tournaments are required to be reported by the tournament  
48 director. Prior to 2019, we only selected billfish and

1 swordfish tournaments for this reporting, but, beginning in  
2 2019, we started selecting all registered tournaments for catch  
3 reporting, as we moved to an online reporting system.  
4 Tournament catch reports are submitted to the online Atlantic  
5 tournament registration reporting system.

6  
7 Bluefin tuna landed in tournaments must still be reported by the  
8 vessel. Tournament reports are due within seven days of the  
9 completion of the tournament, but, given the small size of the  
10 bluefin trophy quotas, we still require the vessels to report  
11 those within twenty-four hours. That kind of is it for my  
12 presentation, and I have provided some links to some of our  
13 different resources, if anybody wants to have a look at them,  
14 and I'm happy to take questions.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you. I appreciate that. A  
17 quick question, just I guess for clarification, and so everyone  
18 is on the same page, and so HMS recreational reporting takes the  
19 place of any other recreational catch estimate surveys, like  
20 MRIP and such, for quota tracking and quota monitoring of that  
21 sector, correct?

22  
23 **DR. HUTT:** To some extent. We do have accounting protocols,  
24 where we combine reports that are submitted through this system  
25 through our tournament reporting system, as well as reports  
26 submitted to the large pelagic survey, which is a targeted  
27 survey, similar to MRIP, for these fisheries from Maine to  
28 Virginia in the summer and fall, and also reports submitted to  
29 APAIS, although, for these species, those reports are fairly  
30 rare, but we do have an accounting protocol that combines all of  
31 those, recognizing that no reporting system is going to achieve  
32 100 percent compliance.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you. Do we have any  
35 questions from the workgroup? Kevin Anson, go ahead.

36  
37 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. Thank you for the presentation, Dr.  
38 Hutt. In regard to the compliance issue then, do any of those  
39 surveys, LPS or other targeted surveys, do they have a mechanism  
40 where compliance, or non-compliance, is estimated and that is  
41 added to the final estimate, or is there no accounting for non-  
42 compliance in the estimate?

43  
44 **DR. HUTT:** I do believe that there is some accounting for non-  
45 compliance with using those as a backcheck, and we do, for like  
46 -- In addition to anglers reporting through this system, for  
47 example, our rod-and-reel commercial bluefin tuna fishery also  
48 has to report through this system, as do our harpoon fishermen,

1 and those fish are also reported through our dealer reporting  
2 systems, and we find that we have had increasing compliance with  
3 that over the years, but we do kind of account for that in our  
4 accounting, as I said before, when we're bringing in data from  
5 the LPS and MRIP and comparing and estimating from that.

6  
7 **MR. ANSON:** All right. Thank you.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. I don't see any more questions.  
10 Again, thank you, Dr. Hutt, for that.

11  
12 **DR. HUTT:** You're welcome.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Moving on, we're going to receive a  
15 presentation from Mr. Carmichael on creel cards.

16  
17 **CREEL CARDS**

18  
19 **MR. CARMICHAEL:** I don't have a PowerPoint on this, and just a  
20 few comments to make, and it won't take too long, and so we  
21 won't get in the way of impending lunch, hopefully, but I was  
22 asked to talk about creel cards.

23  
24 I think one way to look at these, how they distinguish from  
25 general reporting and a lot of the stuff that we've talked about  
26 so far is that they're often a focus on maybe one or a couple of  
27 species, and so they're used in instances where an agency is  
28 trying to find out information about some particular species,  
29 rather than the overall fishery and monitoring of all species,  
30 as we've heard a lot about here.

31  
32 In a way, the HMS was a good precursor to this, because that is  
33 an effort, and it's electronic, but it's getting information on  
34 a narrow group of species, and creel cards traditionally would  
35 have been paper cards that were filled out by fishermen with  
36 their catch, and potentially deposited in some cases, and put on  
37 their licenses and all, and now it's increasingly an electronic  
38 tool.

39  
40 I'm going to give an overview of a few examples, and it seems to  
41 be used largely on the west coast, particularly in the Pacific  
42 Northwest, for keeping up with information on salmon.  
43 Washington State and Alaska both use things like this for  
44 recording angler information kind of in real time on salmon and  
45 then reporting that back out, and so, in the State of  
46 Washington, they have what's called catch record cards.

47  
48 It's given with the licenses, and, in fact, I sort of offered to

1 talk about this because I have fished out in some of those areas  
2 for salmon and experienced this, and so, when you get a license,  
3 printed on the back of it is a little table where you would  
4 enter the waterbody you're fishing in and the species of salmon,  
5 and the idea is that, when you catch one, if you keep it and  
6 don't immediately throw it in the water, you write it down on  
7 the back of your license, on that table.

8  
9 If the law enforcement comes down there, and you've got a fish  
10 that you're keeping, and you have not entered it on that  
11 license, they enforce that pretty strictly and give out tickets  
12 on it and watch people from afar, to see how they're doing and  
13 if they're actually following the rules.

14  
15 They have some online in Washington, but most of it is still  
16 paper, and they have a Dungeness crab program that does catch  
17 cards, and that's done online, and another thing that they use  
18 them for is there are species with annual limits, and so using  
19 this aids them in enforcing those annual limits for species like  
20 sturgeon, and they allow people to keep two sturgeon per year,  
21 and so you enter your sturgeon on this, and it's a way of having  
22 enforcement know if you have kept your sturgeon and you can't be  
23 allowed to keep any more.

24  
25 In some cases, if you have met your limit on a species, you may  
26 not even be allowed to fish for that species, and that's  
27 certainly the case in say Alaska, where they have it if you keep  
28 a salmon in a specific river, and you can keep one a day, and,  
29 once you've kept one, that's it, and you don't fish in that  
30 whole river system, and so you enter that on your card, and they  
31 see that you caught a fish, and you shouldn't be fishing  
32 anymore. It sort of works with the data collection as well as  
33 the enforcement.

34  
35 California has a program, and they call theirs report cards, and  
36 they cover sturgeon, abalone, salmon, steelhead, and spiny  
37 lobster, and so I didn't realize they had a spiny lobster  
38 fishery out there, in researching this, and so that was  
39 certainly interesting, and theirs is largely geared toward  
40 online reporting, and it's a similar thing. You enter these  
41 fish once it happens, and by the end of your trip report in what  
42 you've done.

43  
44 California is something we may want to look at, in terms of  
45 alternative management things in a bigger picture view, because  
46 California has a very large coastline, and they have divided it  
47 up into five regional management areas, and there is depth  
48 limits, and so you have areas that are open at particular times



1 and out to particular depths, and that's the way they've dealt  
2 with rebuilding that rockfish population out there, and managing  
3 the discard losses in very deep water, along with seasons and  
4 bags, and so, maybe at a future meeting, we'll want to dig into  
5 California in-depth.

6  
7 Another example that gets a little bit away from fish is what's  
8 known as the HIP, the Hunter Information Program, for waterfowl,  
9 and those of you who waterfowl hunt know that you have to report  
10 whatever you harvested last year, and it's sort of a twenty-  
11 thousand-foot view. They ask you how many trips did you take,  
12 how many ducks did you kill, how many geese did you kill, how  
13 many doves did you kill, and so it's really kind of a big-  
14 picture view.

15  
16 You have to report what you did last year to get your new HIP  
17 number this year, and, if you don't have a valid HIP number,  
18 then you're in violation of migratory waterfowl laws, which come  
19 with some pretty strict sentences for doing that and fines.

20  
21 It's also tied to each state license. If you hunt in multiple  
22 states, you're going to have multiple HIP numbers, and, really,  
23 what it gives you is that big-picture view, sort of what is the  
24 overall gross trend, and it's a good way that they can get a  
25 handle on the magnitude of some of the more refined things.  
26 They do other efforts to try and refine that, and this is just  
27 gives them something from everybody. In a way, it's sort of a  
28 parallel information source that can give you some picture of  
29 what's going on, and it's, obviously, angler reported and such,  
30 but it is required from everybody.

31  
32 Another fishery example goes to the Potomac River Fishery  
33 Commission, and maybe folks, particularly down here, aren't  
34 familiar with that, but the Potomac River is between Virginia  
35 and Maryland, and it's a large river, and there is fishermen  
36 from both states, and so there's a lot of reciprocity on  
37 licenses, and the commission was founded I think in the very  
38 early 1900s, back when oyster wars were a really big deal up  
39 there in the Chesapeake, and it sets regulations and collects  
40 data for fishing activity in the Potomac River.

41  
42 When the striped bass moratorium was lifted back in the early  
43 1990s, they had a permit to catch striped bass, and you could  
44 get a recreational boat permit that would cover everybody on  
45 your boat, and it included a catch log, and it continues to this  
46 day, and so the condition of the permit is that you record your  
47 catches each day, and, at the end of the season, you report that  
48 back to the PRFC.

1  
2 If you don't report that back, then you can't get a license,  
3 potentially, for the next year, and so it's another way of just  
4 having fishermen tell them how many striped bass did you catch,  
5 and so this area is covered by things like MRIP, but this gives  
6 them a more focused piece of information of the guys that they  
7 permit, that they know are fishing in the main stem of the  
8 Potomac, or at least very close in the tributaries, and it's  
9 another parallel source of information.

10  
11 To me, that's one of the important things about what these catch  
12 cards seem to do. You know, all these fish are going to be  
13 covered by other monitoring programs, but this gives you a  
14 parallel, or potentially supplementary, data stream, and that  
15 can be really useful, because, as we're seeing, no one program  
16 is going to be perfect for the many uses we have, and I think  
17 something the group may wish to consider is, rather than can we  
18 make one program cover everything, can we have a couple of  
19 programs that solve particular problems that collectively give  
20 us a better handle for what's going on in these fisheries and  
21 then open up for us more management tools, and so, in that vein,  
22 the catch cards potentially open up an annual limit per angler  
23 that could be considered.

24  
25 Another use for us is I think they improve the catch info for  
26 maybe rare, at-risk, or high-profile species, and a key thing  
27 about this you're not asking anglers to report every trip and  
28 every fish. You're not putting that burden on them, but, if we  
29 did something like this that affected say snapper grouper  
30 fishing, or deepwater complexes or something like that, where we  
31 know the MRIP data are not meeting our needs, you know our rare-  
32 event species, then something like this may be more palatable to  
33 the fishermen, and it's also a potential enforcement tool, as I  
34 mentioned, when you have a potential opportunity to have a per-  
35 person annual limit.

36  
37 I think, in many cases, this works well with say a stamp or an  
38 endorsement, in which case then you have a way of identifying  
39 the effective effort universe, at say a species or maybe a  
40 species grouping level, which, again, is very useful for better  
41 understanding the MRIP effort as well as giving another parallel  
42 data stream that could potentially supplement MRIP and give us  
43 some better information on some of these problem areas.

44  
45 You know, you take something like, as we deal with in the South  
46 Atlantic with red snapper, a very short open season, and we know  
47 that there's no way that MRIP can give us information for a  
48 four-day season, but something like this, a catch card on red

1 snapper, potentially could. That's a quick overview of what  
2 these are all about and sort of how I see them fitting into what  
3 we are doing, and so, Mr. Chair, I will be glad to take any  
4 questions.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you for that, John, and you hit on a few  
7 good nuggets right there, and, really, our charge for at least  
8 this section of the agenda is to review these programs and have  
9 a broader discussion on kind of what the workgroup feels is a  
10 logical step forward.

11  
12 I mean, do we want a complete replacement for MRIP, or can we  
13 take examples from some of the other states or some other  
14 federal programs and focus in on a few fisheries, individual  
15 fish or complexes, like that, and it seems like there are a lot  
16 of examples out there where it's been put into practice, and a  
17 lot of what you were hitting on, John, especially with your  
18 examples of salmon and sturgeon on the west coast, is very  
19 similar to how wildlife and big game are managed in a lot of the  
20 states, with permits and license endorsements and that kind of  
21 stuff, and that seems to be a system that works.

22  
23 I'm certainly not qualified to say if it works well or not, but,  
24 in my experience, at least here in North Carolina and other  
25 states that I have traveled to to hunt, it's very similar, as  
26 far as you have tags or some type of report card or something  
27 like that, and you get your animals, you get your game, and you  
28 punch the card, or report it, and that's it. That's what you  
29 get for the season, and so there's some examples there, and I  
30 know that Mr. Rindone is going to touch on that later on, and so  
31 any questions for John? I don't see any hands raised. Again,  
32 thank you for that, John.

33  
34 **MR. CARMICHAEL:** All right. Thanks, Steve.

35  
36 **NORTH CAROLINA FLOUNDER PANELS**

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Next, I'm on the agenda, and I'm  
39 going to provide the workgroup a very quick update on the North  
40 Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries Catch U Later Program. I  
41 asked staff to send out a three-page summary that division staff  
42 had compiled for our commission, our state commission, meeting  
43 last month.

44  
45 This is a new program that North Carolina is still -- I think  
46 we're still in the testing beta phase of this, but it's an  
47 electronic reporting program for our flounder fishery. There is  
48 four objectives for this program.

1  
2 The first is to collect length information on discarded catch  
3 and also determine the angling public's ability to identify  
4 flounder species, and we have three flounder species that occur  
5 here in North Carolina, southern, summer, and Gulf. Currently,  
6 the southern flounder stock is overfished, and overfishing is  
7 occurring in North Carolina and three states south of us on the  
8 South Atlantic, or on the Atlantic side.

9  
10 Our state commission recently approved a rebuilding plan for the  
11 species, which took the recreational season from year-round  
12 access to forty-five days, and, because we have the three  
13 flounder species, it's a forty-five-day season for all three  
14 species.

15  
16 Summer flounder and Gulf flounder -- Gulf is an unassessed  
17 species, and summer flounder is managed by the Atlantic States  
18 and Mid-Atlantic. Summer flounder right now, the stock is,  
19 compared to southern flounder, doing fine, and so there was a  
20 lot of interest from stakeholders in the state to break the  
21 management of those species out, to allow access to summer and  
22 Gulf during the southern flounder closure, but, historically,  
23 North Carolina has never managed the three species separately,  
24 because there's identification issues, and, really, in the past,  
25 when there were all three open, it really wasn't that big of a  
26 concern.

27  
28 Staff have developed this reporting app, with a lot of help and  
29 support from the South Atlantic and ACCSP, to collect  
30 information on not only discarded fish in the fishery, because  
31 discards, especially from the recreational sectors, for some  
32 years, can account for about 90 percent of the flounder catch,  
33 recreational catch, and so there's a lot of discards for this  
34 species, and we also collect information on the public's ability  
35 to identify these flounder.

36  
37 There is also some educational materials in the app to help  
38 educate anglers on the difference between the three flounder  
39 species, and then there is also a panel survey of anglers to  
40 kind of get a little bit more information and validate not only  
41 the anglers' ability to differentiate between the three species,  
42 but to get a little bit more fine-scale information on effort,  
43 effort for flounder.

44  
45 This is a -- Again, this is still in the preliminary stages,  
46 but, for the panel survey, it will be a survey of all CRFL  
47 license holders, and CRFL is our coastal recreational fishing  
48 license, and it's our state fishing license. We'll survey all

1 CRFL license holders to determine a population of anglers who  
2 routinely target flounder, and then, from that, samples will be  
3 stratified based on not only the geographic location of these  
4 anglers, but also the proportion of anglers targeting flounder.

5  
6 Again, all of this is reviewed in the summary that was sent  
7 around earlier this morning, and I apologize that I didn't get  
8 it out to the workgroup sooner, but, really, what the division  
9 hopes to gain from this is to provide some information on the  
10 species-specific discards for our three flounder species for  
11 future stock assessments and evaluate self-reporting of discard  
12 data and dockside intercepts, just to see if this might be a  
13 reliable mechanism to collect information on discards from our  
14 recreational sector and, again, educate the public on flounder  
15 identification and to just improve, in general, our flounder  
16 discard estimate calculations.

17  
18 This is really the Division of Marine Fisheries' first attempt,  
19 or first foray, into using electronic reporting, and this app is  
20 built around or is very similar to the South Atlantic Council's  
21 scamp discard app, and a lot of the same features, and there's a  
22 lot of cross-walking with the South Atlantic Council staff on  
23 the development of that.

24  
25 Hopefully, we will see how this goes, and I'm not 100 percent  
26 sure on when we'll go live yet, and I still think that's up in  
27 the air, but certainly, within the next calendar year, this app  
28 will be available to the angling public, and figures crossed  
29 that, if all goes well, this might be a platform that the  
30 division can jump off of and venture into other avenues of  
31 recreational reporting, not only for discards but maybe  
32 reporting for catch in the future.

33  
34 That's my two-minute overview of our North Carolina Catch U  
35 Later program, and so I will take questions, but just be  
36 forewarned that I will probably say that I will get back to you  
37 on those questions, because I am not that involved with this  
38 program yet. It looks like I did a really good job of  
39 explaining it very thoroughly, and I see no hands raised. We  
40 will move on to -- It looks like Chip Collier is going to give  
41 us a quick presentation on the MyFishCount app, and this is the  
42 South Atlantic Council's voluntary catch reporting app, and so  
43 whenever you're ready, Chip.

44  
45 **VOLUNTARY ANGLER REPORTING APPLICATIONS**  
46 **MYFISHCOUNT**  
47

48 **DR. COLLIER:** Thanks, Steve. MyFishCount is a little bit

1 different than the programs you've been hearing about today.  
2 The goal of MyFishCount is not necessarily to estimate total  
3 catch, but it's to provide additional information to managers.

4  
5 MyFishCount is a program, and it's an app and a web portal,  
6 where fishermen can create a trip, log their catch, and also  
7 supply that information to managers, and, when this app was  
8 being developed, it was really developed with two masters in  
9 mind. It was designed for managers, and it was trying to get  
10 information that they would find useful, but it was also  
11 designed for fishermen, too. We wanted to design it so that  
12 fishermen could use this to log their catch and discover trends  
13 in their own personal fishing and hopefully lead to better  
14 fishing experiences.

15  
16 MyFishCount really came from a brainchild of Brett Fitzgerald,  
17 and also working with our past Executive Director, Gregg Waugh,  
18 where they wanted to improve information for some of the  
19 deepwater species as well as red snapper that was going to have  
20 a mini-season, and we were hoping to start this up in 2018,  
21 except there was an emergency action to open up in 2017 for red  
22 snapper with a mini-season, and so MyFishCount started with a  
23 web page, where fishermen were able to report just for red  
24 snapper that first year.

25  
26 Given the experiences from that, we were able to kind of take  
27 what Tails 'n Scales was, as well as iSnapper, and redesign it  
28 into MyFishCount that could potentially be used on the east  
29 coast, and it was designed to cover a variety of species for  
30 anglers from Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and South  
31 Carolina. This program is really an opt-in, self-reported data  
32 collection program that fishermen join into, and it requires a  
33 lot of outreach and education on why we're doing this.

34  
35 As I mentioned, it started off with the data collection in that  
36 first mini-season in 2017 with just information on red snapper.  
37 After that pilot, we expanded it to year-round fishing, and it  
38 started in 2018, I believe in June of 2018, and it was available  
39 as an app and included multiple species in there, and, more  
40 recently, we've expanded to not only coastal counties, but we  
41 also wanted to provide it to inland counties.

42  
43 We noticed that several of the fishermen that were coming down  
44 to fish weren't just living on the coast, and they were actually  
45 coming from inland, and we wanted them to have the chance to  
46 make a logging habit, and, by providing some of the more inland  
47 counties, fishermen are able to use this more often, and  
48 therefore make it an opportunity to report for their fishing

1 trip and overall catch experiences.

2  
3 Most recently, we've added an improvement to send an email  
4 reminder to close a trip, and this just makes sure that  
5 fishermen know that they have reported everything for that trip  
6 after they have completed it.

7  
8 I just wanted to give some examples of information that are  
9 available through MyFishCount. Two pieces of information right  
10 now are being considered for use in SEDAR 73, which is the South  
11 Atlantic red snapper stock assessment, and this will include  
12 length of released fish, although, in this presentation, I will  
13 provide both kept and released fish.

14  
15 It will also be considered for estimates of discard mortality,  
16 and so we do have treatment of released fish, whether or not  
17 they're vented or descended or no treatment, and we also have  
18 depth information that the fishermen can supply at the same  
19 time.

20  
21 Another important piece of information, to help validate some of  
22 your catch estimates and things from self-reported data, is  
23 trying to make sure that the information that you're collecting  
24 is representative of the actual fishery, and so I provide some  
25 of that information.

26  
27 Then, finally, I call out of the pieces of information that's  
28 already been used in management from MyFishCount, which is the  
29 reason for cancelling trips. In 2017, when there was an  
30 emergency action to open the red snapper season, we had it open  
31 for two weekends, and, one of the weekends, the wind was blowing  
32 a gale, and we had several fishermen actually report that they  
33 were unable to go fishing, and, if you looked at the relative  
34 number of people that were unable to go fishing, you could see  
35 that it was maybe 1 percent of the fishermen that indicated that  
36 they were able to go out, and, therefore, they were able to open  
37 an additional weekend, to provide fishermen additional access.

38  
39 We have several other pieces of information that are available,  
40 and we have one report that's been developed, and we're  
41 finalizing the second report that should be done later this  
42 year.

43  
44 Here's just a length distribution of red snapper that's going to  
45 be provided to SEDAR 73. In blue, you can see the length, or  
46 the percent, of releases, and then, in red, you can see the kept  
47 fish, and this is all total length. You can see, generally, as  
48 you would expect, the releases tend to be smaller than the kept

1 fish, but, because releases occur throughout the year, you can  
2 actually have some very large fish being released, and this  
3 provides some information that could be useful in estimating the  
4 selectivity for a stock assessment, just to confirm exactly what  
5 they're seeing and make sure it's matching up properly.

6  
7 One thing that I do want to point out here is one thing we try  
8 to do with MyFishCount is try to keep these all in proportions,  
9 rather than total numbers. Once again, we're not trying to  
10 estimate catch. We're trying to fill gaps, and so these  
11 relative proportions could be useful when you're looking at  
12 potential changes in size limits. If you want to do a  
13 reduction, how much do you need to reduce over your total catch,  
14 and that was reported through MRIP, and these could be useful in  
15 order to determine what kind of reduction you would get for  
16 determining a management action.

17  
18 This is something new that hasn't really been available for many  
19 data collection programs, but it's the actual treatment of  
20 released fish, and we enable fishermen to choose a variety of  
21 things that they are able to release for or how they're treating  
22 released fish, and they're actually able to report if they  
23 didn't treat an animal.

24  
25 Within this slide, you can see that 53 percent of the fish that  
26 were released, as reported through MyFishCount, were either  
27 descended or vented, and 40 percent were not treated, and this  
28 is just for fish that actually reported a treatment level, and  
29 this can also be combined with depth information, and we can see  
30 -- I don't have a graph of this here, but what we have noticed  
31 is, when fishermen tend to fish in deeper waters, there is a  
32 higher percent of fish being descended or vented, indicating  
33 that fishermen are recognizing the signs of barotrauma and  
34 actually trying to mitigate those impacts.

35  
36 Finally, this is just giving a relative effort of red snapper  
37 and the departure locations for red snapper fishing in the South  
38 Atlantic, and northeast Florida is the hotspot for red snapper  
39 fishing, and you can see that MyFishCount is actually picking  
40 that up, with a secondary blip in South Carolina, Charleston,  
41 South Carolina, which is where a lot of our outreach effort has  
42 been going on, and so we're seeing two things.

43  
44 One is we're seeing the abundance of red snapper where we should  
45 see it, but we're also seeing the dedicated efforts of outreach  
46 can actually lead to benefits of reporting, and these are just  
47 two of our council members kind of mentioning and supporting the  
48 app.



1  
2 Then the upcoming steps for MyFishCount, one thing that it's  
3 going to be doing it it's going to transition over to the Angler  
4 Action Foundation only, and Angler Action was one of the  
5 partners that we started this pilot program with, and they are  
6 going to take sole responsibility of it.

7  
8 Before we give it over, what we want to do is continue  
9 collecting data, and we also want to really develop these QA/QC  
10 checks, to make sure that the information that's being reported  
11 is going to be valid and useful for management, and then,  
12 finally, continue the uploads to ACCSP, which is the Atlantic  
13 Coast Cooperative Statistics Program, and that is a regional  
14 database for landings on the east coast.

15  
16 That is it for today. If you have any questions, I will be  
17 happy to answer them, but I wanted to thank our partners, NOAA  
18 for funding it, Angler Action Foundation for helping us really  
19 keep the fishermen in mind when we were developing the program,  
20 Elemental Methods for helping design the app, and all the  
21 fishermen that have been involved. Thank you.

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Chip. I am actually  
24 going to ask everyone to hold off on any questions, because  
25 we're at 12:05 now, and I know there were a few workgroup  
26 members that had to jump off at noon to get on another call, and  
27 so I'm going to suggest that we go ahead and break for lunch,  
28 and then we'll meet back at 1:00 and continue through the next  
29 few agenda items. I hear no objections, and so I will see you  
30 all after lunch.

31  
32 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on September 10,  
33 2020.)

34  
35 - - -

36  
37 September 10, 2020

38  
39 THURSDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

40  
41 - - -

42  
43 The Joint Workgroup for Section 102 of the Modernizing  
44 Recreational Fisheries Management Act of 2018 of the Gulf of  
45 Mexico Fishery Management Council and the South Atlantic Fishery  
46 Management Council reconvened via webinar on Thursday afternoon,  
47 September 10, 2020, and was called to order by Mr. Steve Poland.

48  
49 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Welcome back. We'll go ahead and get started.

1 In the interest of time, I think we're going to forego the fish  
2 tag discussion that Ryan was going to provide, and this is  
3 something that many of us have discussed at one point or  
4 another, either individually or around our respective council  
5 tables, and this really isn't a new idea among resource  
6 management, and John Carmichael touched on it briefly during his  
7 agenda item.

8  
9 Ryan provided a PowerPoint from my sister agency, the North  
10 Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, that provides a summary  
11 of our big game harvest report card system here in North  
12 Carolina and how that physical punch card works with the online  
13 or telephone reporting, and so please take a moment, when you  
14 have time, and review that presentation.

15  
16 We last left with Chip, and he had given us an update on the  
17 MyFishCount program, and I wanted to open the floor to any  
18 questions for Chip Collier, if anyone had any questions after  
19 that presentation on MyFishCount. I am not seeing any. Good  
20 job, Chip. So we'll move on. We've got Emily Muehlstein and  
21 Lisa Hollensead, and they will be giving us a quick presentation  
22 on Something's Fishy from the Gulf. Emily and Lisa, take it  
23 away whenever you're ready.

#### 24 25 **SOMETHING'S FISHY**

26  
27 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you. This is Emily, a staff member  
28 with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, and I'm  
29 going to be presenting on another -- An effort that the council  
30 has been doing that is actually quite a bit different than all  
31 the programs that we've discussed so far this morning, and it  
32 differs mostly because the programs that we've heard today have  
33 focused on harvest data and collecting information about what  
34 anglers are catching.

35  
36 This Something's Fishy tool that the council is responsible for  
37 sort of does something a little bit different. Instead of  
38 asking what you're catching, it's asking what you're observing,  
39 and so this presentation is about crowdsourcing qualitative  
40 stakeholder observations to enhance our scientific understanding  
41 of fish stocks.

42  
43 Crowdsourcing is sort of one of those buzzwords, and so I  
44 figured I would kind of demystify that, and the best way to do  
45 that, I think, is to look in the dictionary, and it said that it  
46 is the practice of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content  
47 by soliciting contributions from a large group of people, and  
48 especially from the online community, rather than from

1 traditional employees or supplies, and that definition really  
2 sort of embodies what we're doing here.

3  
4 We are sending out a tool over the internet to sort of the  
5 broadest range of people we can find to get information from  
6 people that don't usually participate in the fisheries  
7 management process, or at least not in the fisheries science  
8 part of it.

9  
10 Why, and like why are we even doing this? First of all,  
11 regional fishery management councils, part of our goal is to  
12 encourage local-level knowledge in federal fisheries management,  
13 and we already have a ton of stakeholders that have on-the-water  
14 knowledge and are engaged in our council process, but that's  
15 sort of the management side of things and not the science side  
16 of things, and we figured that maybe there was a way for us to  
17 leverage that.

18  
19 Traditionally, participation in the scientific aspects of  
20 resource management require a lot of involvement, and so  
21 cooperative research programs, or citizen science programs,  
22 where you really have to be revisiting things in sort of part of  
23 a training program, or at least spending a lot of time and  
24 effort to be a part of that.

25  
26 Finally, crowdsourcing observations from our council folks, the  
27 fishermen that deal with the council process, gives a really  
28 good opportunity for a lot of people to share their individual  
29 perspectives, and it takes a very little amount of time and  
30 effort in order to do this through this tool.

31  
32 Part of the other reason that we're gathering this information  
33 is because some of our stock assessments end up having data  
34 gaps, or they sort of lag in real-time data, right, and the  
35 terminal year of the assessment might be a number of years  
36 behind what's happening on the water, and so the current on-the-  
37 water knowledge from our stakeholders that we gather through  
38 this tool can be, and has been already, used to groundtruth  
39 observed trends in the assessments, to explain some anomalies,  
40 and also to, in some cases, inform projections from the  
41 assessments. So far, we've had really good feedback from the  
42 stock assessment scientists, who find this tool to be quite  
43 useful.

44  
45 How does it work? Well, the first thing that we do is we  
46 solicit feedback through an online tool, and we ask three simple  
47 things. First is the association with the fishery, and so what  
48 is your sector that you identify with, and, second, we just ask

1 for a general observation, and then, third, we ask for them to  
2 identify the location where they're making this observation.

3  
4 As you can imagine, this produces quite a bit of sort of  
5 unfiltered text, right, because there is no multiple choice,  
6 right, or it's really just a textual answer, and so we analyze  
7 the comments that we receive in two ways. We analyze them  
8 manually, and we also analyze them through automated analysis,  
9 and what we do is, through both of those types of analyses, we  
10 classify each comment as either being positive, neutral, or  
11 negative in the sentiment that they're expressing about the fish  
12 that we're asking for, and it is important, I guess, for me to  
13 say that we do launch one of these tools prior to each stock  
14 assessment, and they are species specific.

15  
16 During our manual analysis, two individuals classify sentiment  
17 separately of one another, and then we get together and resolve  
18 our discrepancies, and, during automated analysis, we use our  
19 statistical software, the TidyText package, using a revised Bing  
20 lexicon library, and that automatically classifies sentiment  
21 based on the words that are within that comment.

22  
23 Once we analyze it, then we share it, and we can sort of make  
24 some conclusions about it, and we generate a report, and we  
25 share that to first the stock assessment panel, because that was  
26 sort of the original point, was to share this with stock  
27 assessment folks, so, like I said, they can sort of ground some  
28 of the trends that they are seeing or try and use that  
29 information in ways in the assessment to explain anomalies, or  
30 maybe even to inform projections for the assessment.

31  
32 Second, once the stock assessment is complete, we share the  
33 Something's Fishy results each time an assessment is delivered  
34 to our Scientific and Statistical Committee or to a relevant  
35 advisory panel. Finally, we share it with the council, and then  
36 we circle back with our respondents and stakeholders and say,  
37 you know, here's what we asked, here's what the stock assessment  
38 said, here's what you said, and now here's where we're going to  
39 go from here.

40  
41 Just a quick example of sort of what these outputs look like,  
42 this is for cobia, and we performed this one in January of 2019.  
43 We received 586 responses to the tool, and you can see they are  
44 broken down by sector, and this was mostly private anglers that  
45 responded to this one, and then, response by location, you can  
46 see that most of our responses were received up in the sort of  
47 Panhandle area of Florida, and in Alabama as well.

1 The manual analysis and the automated analysis are sort of  
2 compared to one another, and the reason that we're doing that is  
3 because there's a chance that, when we get to a higher number of  
4 respondents, it's going to be harder and harder for us to do the  
5 manual analysis, and so we're kind of running these parallel to  
6 one another, just to start to really hone our automated analysis  
7 process, and because, so far, we haven't had so many respondents  
8 that we need to stop doing the manual analysis.

9  
10 You can see them compared to one another in overall sentiment,  
11 and then, if you look at the bottom, you can see that there is a  
12 little bit of a response sentiment broken up by the different  
13 locations, or the different regions, and so that sort of helps  
14 us understand where the comments are coming from, and it could  
15 actually inform the assessment scientists about maybe where  
16 trends in abundance are changing in different areas of the Gulf.

17  
18 Then, through manual analysis, we're able to sort of pull out  
19 themes, just as we read the comments, and then automated  
20 analysis can generate things like what you're seeing here, which  
21 is the words that were most frequently used to contribute to the  
22 sentiment, and then you can see the word cloud there, which it  
23 just displays the exact same information as the bar chart on top  
24 of that.

25  
26 We have performed this for a number of species so far, and you  
27 can see the associated assessment, and also the number of  
28 respondents, and, obviously, because we're crowdsourcing, the  
29 more respondents that we get, the more useful it is, and we are  
30 working, sort of on the backend, to try and promote this tool  
31 and to get our partner agencies to promote it as well, because,  
32 as I mentioned, it has already proven itself to be a useful tool  
33 for the scientists, and also, sort of secondarily, to the  
34 managers. Next up, we're planning one for red snapper and also  
35 for gag grouper.

36  
37 Finally, sort of the future of this, I think, at least  
38 internally, we've decided that this is an effort that is  
39 worthwhile, and we're getting good feedback from it, and so  
40 we're going to continue to complete a Something's Fishy effort  
41 for each stock assessment. We are currently working on  
42 formalizing our sort of standard operating procedures for how  
43 we're writing our reviews and how we are doing these, and we are  
44 producing a technical guidance document.

45  
46 Finally, we are sort of trying to figure out how best to work  
47 within the Paperwork Reduction Act. Specifically, sometimes,  
48 now that the assessment scientists are aware that we are doing

1 this, they will ask us if we can ask specific questions, for  
2 example, the magnitude that a red tide might affected that  
3 species.

4  
5 At this point, our guidance from the Paperwork Reduction Act is  
6 that we cannot ask specific questions like that, and so I'm sort  
7 of working on finding a way to get general approval, and then,  
8 when we have specific questions we want to ask, we can expedite  
9 some approval, so that we can actually start asking more  
10 specific questions, and so I think, with that, that's all I had,  
11 and I'm happy to take any questions.

#### 12 13 **WORKGROUP DISCUSSION**

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Emily. Does anyone  
16 from the workgroup have any questions for Emily? I'm not seeing  
17 any hands, and so you fully explained everything well, and I  
18 appreciate it, Emily.

19  
20 That is the last presentation under the current agenda item.  
21 Does anyone have any general comments or any discussion  
22 questions for the group? As you recall, Ryan reviewed the scope  
23 of work at the beginning of the meeting, and the primary points  
24 for this first agenda item was to go over a lot of the different  
25 data collections programs out there at the state level and at  
26 the federal level for collecting either supplemental  
27 recreational catch data or recreational catch data to use in  
28 place of current recreational surveys.

29  
30 As a workgroup, again, we still don't have our charge, but our  
31 general focus is to look at the data collection activities that  
32 are occurring in both regions and just kind of see if any of  
33 these programs could be utilized for us to provide the councils,  
34 eventually, some recommendations on how to incorporate those  
35 Section 102 mandates for the Modernizing Fish Act, and so  
36 looking at alternative ways to manage the recreational fishery,  
37 and so I will pose the question to the group.

38  
39 Are there any of these programs that really jump out as a good  
40 basis that we might want to move forward and consider a little  
41 further to dive into, or are there parts of the programs that  
42 groups see some utility in investigating? Is there a pretty  
43 obvious nexus between data collection and how we could  
44 potentially manage recreational fisheries under our current  
45 Magnuson mandates? I see Ryan has his hand up. Go ahead, Ryan.

46  
47 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just going to echo  
48 that, just to try to encourage the workgroup to start thinking

1 about the kinds of advice that they would want to pass along to  
2 the councils, and even, if you wanted to take a little bit of a  
3 different tact, are there things that we've reviewed so far that  
4 you don't want to explore any further or that we can take off  
5 the list, at least thin the herd a little bit, and that would  
6 also be helpful, just anything to start to refine the scope of  
7 what we're looking at, from everything down to hopefully just a  
8 couple of things, or a few things, and what species they may be  
9 applied to.

10  
11 Another consideration on that, like when we're thinking about  
12 which species, also be thinking about the probability of  
13 actually learning something from trying something different, and  
14 so what I mean by that is like I will pick on vermilion snapper  
15 in the Gulf right now, and we just had our -- We had SEDAR 67  
16 for Gulf vermilion snapper, which showed that the stock was  
17 quite healthy, and I think they grow like weeds was a comment  
18 that was heard at one point.

19  
20 If we were to try something alternative with vermilion snapper,  
21 there might be a lower risk that we end up -- The easiest way to  
22 say this is there's a lower risk of screwing something up when a  
23 stock is that healthy, but, if there is a low risk like that,  
24 then it might be difficult to learn whether or not the different  
25 thing that we're trying is actually doing anything functionally  
26 different, from a biology perspective.

27  
28 If there is no limitation on harvest, then it might be difficult  
29 to see if we've improved anything, and so the opposite side of  
30 that being something like -- I will pick on Atlantic red  
31 snapper, which the season is going to be quite short, and so, if  
32 something alternative was tried with Atlantic red snapper, then  
33 there may be -- There is likely a much higher probability of  
34 seeing an effect one way or another, both biologically and from  
35 a social and economic standpoint, and so that's just food for  
36 thought.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you for that, Ryan. One perspective I  
39 see is, at least at the state level, the Gulf states are well  
40 ahead of the South Atlantic states, excluding Florida, in  
41 developing state-based surveys, but it is interesting that each  
42 state is kind of going at it and kind of forging their own path  
43 forward, which certainly has its advantages, as far as tailoring  
44 those programs to the state-specific needs, but I certainly see  
45 -- Not necessarily a disadvantage, but creating some hurdles for  
46 when all of that has to be pulled together for regional-based  
47 management.

1 At least over here in the Atlantic, and I can speak for my state  
2 in particular, North Carolina, and there just hasn't been a lot  
3 of interest at the state level of developing something like a  
4 mandatory catch reporting program for any of our federal  
5 species, and it just hasn't been something that stakeholders in  
6 the states have pushed for, and I'm not saying that there aren't  
7 voices here in the state that are advocating for it, but, just  
8 in general, there hasn't been that push that has really got our  
9 state managers to really embrace the idea, or even our state  
10 legislature to invest in that.

11  
12 From my perspective, I was really interested to hear how all the  
13 Gulf states developed their programs and kind of how those  
14 programs came to be, how they're funded, types of data  
15 collection, the programs that are also collecting data on state-  
16 managed species, and that's very interesting, but expanding out  
17 to a broader South Atlantic region -- I mean, there is certainly  
18 plenty of examples here of where some of the Gulf states have  
19 focused their data collection efforts on a few species, a few  
20 marquee species, and how that has really kind of changed the  
21 management landscape for those species.

22  
23 I can certainly see some utility, over here on the South  
24 Atlantic side, for trying that with something like Atlantic red  
25 snapper, and then, for the current federal programs, I mean, it  
26 certainly shows that there is already some framework in place  
27 for this type of electronic data collection, not only for HMS  
28 but for charter boats in the region, and so it's not something  
29 new and foreign, but the real hurdle is going to be the  
30 management side and kind of having those discussions and finally  
31 striking the iron on moving towards something like a red snapper  
32 tag or a red snapper endorsement or something to that effect.

33  
34 With that in mind, again, I'm going to pose to the workgroup,  
35 out of everything we heard today, what are kind of -- As Ryan  
36 said, what are the things that we feel like we've got all the  
37 information we need to make some informed recommendations to the  
38 council?

39  
40 We can go ahead and pull those out, and then, if there's any  
41 others left that we feel like we want to dive into a little  
42 more, please speak up. If we want to wait until we hear or get  
43 through all the agenda items today, and have a more a general  
44 discussion at the end of the meeting, we can certainly do that  
45 too, but, right now, this information is fresh, or the first one  
46 is about four hours old, but still, before we move on, any  
47 general comments from anybody would be appreciated. Mel Bell,  
48 go ahead.



1  
2 **MR. BELL:** I was just going to say that, what we've talked about  
3 so far, I really appreciate everybody's reviews of the different  
4 programs and things, and, like what you said, I mean, there's  
5 just a bunch of different things going on in different states,  
6 and everybody is taking different approaches, and so I've  
7 learned a lot.

8  
9 I mean, the one reason that I kept asking about cost and all, is  
10 that's a practical consideration, whether you're at the state  
11 level or you're working together, and so, I mean, at this point,  
12 I don't have anything specifically, I guess, to say about any of  
13 them, in terms of digging a little deeper or something, but I  
14 just kind of view this as sort of an overview of what all is  
15 going on, and you learn a little bit from all of them.

16  
17 If there is some sort of a perfect program or initiative at some  
18 place, and you take a little of this and a little of that maybe,  
19 but I'm not really, I guess, prepared, at this point, to sort of  
20 hone-down on any particular recommendation or something from any  
21 of those, and maybe hearing a couple of other presentations or  
22 something will give me a little time to think about that, but I  
23 did learn a lot from that so far, and it kind of blew me away.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Mel. Martha.

26  
27 **MS. GUYAS:** Thanks, Steve. I guess my observation for the day  
28 would be we've heard a lot about various data collection  
29 programs that were designed for I would say very diverse needs  
30 and priorities, both from the states and different parts of the  
31 agency, and I think a lot of those were developed to deal with  
32 very different management hurdles.

33  
34 They may be designed based on geography and season structure, or  
35 cost, as Mel as mentioned a few times, is certainly a factor,  
36 and so, in Florida, just to go back to my presentation, I guess,  
37 our approach with the Atlantic red snapper season certainly  
38 wouldn't work for the Gulf, for a number of reasons, and  
39 geography is one of them, and cost and scalability.

40  
41 Even with the Atlantic red snapper program that we have now,  
42 where it's very intensive, if that season ends up being a forty-  
43 day season, like our Gulf season, that probability wouldn't be  
44 feasible for us either, and so I guess what I'm seeing here is  
45 at least the need for data collection systems to be adaptive to  
46 the management systems, and that's really where a lot of these  
47 data collection programs seem to come from. Thanks.

1 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thanks, Martha, and thanks for that  
2 observation. I mean, we got presented a bunch of different  
3 tools that we can stick in our toolbox and maybe bring out at a  
4 later date, when we're ready to try them out, and so I  
5 appreciate that comment. All right. If no one else has  
6 anything to discuss, so we can keep the meeting moving, we're  
7 going to move on and receive a review on the Gulf of Mexico  
8 Headboat Collaborative Program.

9  
10 **MR. RINDONE:** I have Chester wanting to speak.

11  
12 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Sorry. Go ahead, Chester.

13  
14 **MR. BREWER:** Assimilating everything that we saw this morning,  
15 and having the privilege to be at a couple of Gulf Council  
16 meetings, I remember that one that I went to, probably a year or  
17 so ago, or maybe a little less, and the states had taken over,  
18 essentially, managing their red snapper populations for their  
19 state, at least from the standpoint of setting seasons and  
20 getting information as to what the magnitude of the catch was.

21  
22 The Gulf states were talking about seasons that ran from like  
23 sixty to -- Kevin can correct me on this, but it seems like it  
24 was between sixty and a hundred days, and, when I was sitting at  
25 that meeting, I was sitting there thinking, in the South  
26 Atlantic, we're wondering, right now, if we're even going to  
27 have a season, and, if it's less than four days, then we're not  
28 going to have one at all. The difference between those  
29 different positions really struck me.

30  
31 At least on the South Atlantic side, I know that there is a lot  
32 of dissatisfaction on the part of our fishermen with the  
33 management of red snapper. They see a situation whereby they  
34 can't get their baits down to get to the grouper because the  
35 snapper are taking it, and having snapper come up and hit  
36 trolled baits, and yet they're told that we can only have a  
37 three-day season, or a four-day season.

38  
39 I think that, as we talk about different ways of managing  
40 recreational fishermen, certainly the South Atlantic red snapper  
41 could be -- That could be a really good place to go, and, also,  
42 from a PR standpoint, we have been hamstrung by hard pounds,  
43 hard fish, ACLs, and bycatch mortality, such that we are caught  
44 in almost a do-loop, and I would like to see us perhaps focus on  
45 South Atlantic red snapper, as it's certainly one of the  
46 potential fisheries that we would be making suggestions with  
47 regard to different ways to manage it, and, with that, I will  
48 mute myself.

1  
2 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Chester. I mean, as far  
3 as red snapper in the South Atlantic, kind of the dichotomy we  
4 have between what goes on in the Gulf management-wise and what  
5 goes on here is -- We all recognize that it's certainly  
6 frustrating for not only the managers, but especially the  
7 stakeholders.

8  
9 I'm glad that you mentioned discards, because that was something  
10 that kept running through my mind during the presentations, is,  
11 as far as like improved data collection, anything that we can do  
12 to improve recreational catch estimates on top of the MRIP  
13 program -- To me, that issue of discards, really characterizing  
14 the discards, and kind of getting past not only characterizing  
15 the number, but length and disposition and that kind of stuff.

16  
17 I really see a utility in these programs to collect that  
18 additional on-the-water information, because, certainly for most  
19 of our species, discards, if it's not already, is quickly  
20 becoming one of the primary management issues, and that's a  
21 source of a lot of fishing mortality that we would love to get a  
22 handle on and to put those fish back in the water, or at least  
23 to count how many of those fish are not going back to the water  
24 and surviving, so we can adjust management to provide that  
25 access for stakeholders.

26  
27 I was really interested to hear some of the other programs that  
28 were looking at collecting additional discard information on top  
29 of MRIP, but, as far as the issue with red snapper in  
30 particular, it's a rebuilding stock here in the South Atlantic,  
31 and it's kind of one of those conundrums that you run into with  
32 a rebuilding stock, is abundance increases, and that's what you  
33 want.

34  
35 You want abundance increases, but there's a time lag in  
36 management catching up to that, and it is certainly frustrating,  
37 but, later on down this agenda, we'll receive some presentations  
38 on things like interim analyses and stuff like that, where you  
39 can incorporate either a fishery abundance index or removals, to  
40 kind of adjust ACLs in the short term.

41  
42 That might be something that we could really sink our teeth into  
43 and have some good discussions, and maybe some recommendations  
44 come out of this, to consider for species like red snapper,  
45 where they are in a rebuilding plan and all of our fishery-  
46 independent information is suggesting that, yes, they are  
47 becoming more and more abundant, and maybe provide a little bit  
48 of additional access in between assessments or broad changes in

1 the management strategy for those species. I see Jessica has  
2 her hand up. Go ahead, Jessica.

3  
4 **MS. MCCAWLEY:** I was just going to say that I agree with what  
5 you and Martha were suggesting, and so a couple of things. I  
6 guess, whether it happens today or at a future one of these  
7 meetings, I was hoping that this workgroup could talk about  
8 maybe certain paths forward for data collection, and those data  
9 collection techniques might be different for each council.

10  
11 Martha mentioned that these various programs were tailored to  
12 meet certain management needs, and so I was wondering if this  
13 workgroup is partly charged with determining where some of these  
14 data gaps are and then figuring out maybe some tools in the  
15 toolbox, especially based on what we saw this morning, that we  
16 would like to try for different issues that we're experiencing  
17 at both the Gulf and South Atlantic Council.

18  
19 It might be different per council, based on the management needs  
20 and where each council is at this point, and so I saw this group  
21 as thinking not just about the management, but also about data  
22 deficiencies and ways to get at those data deficiencies, and so  
23 I saw it as kind of all rolled into one, and I think that that  
24 was kind of where Martha might have been alluding to, and that  
25 seemed to be what you were talking about as well, and I don't  
26 know -- Based on all of these data presentations that we're  
27 getting today, I don't know that we'll be able to get down in  
28 the weeds by the end of the day, but maybe that's part of what  
29 we also discuss at a future meeting.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thanks for that, Jessica. Thanks for that  
32 input, and thanks for giving our workgroup a charge, and I was  
33 able to pick that out of your comments, and so I appreciate it.  
34 We're getting there, but, yes, I mean, I agree.

35  
36 I see any type of improvements to the data collection, anything  
37 that will eventually get us to a point where we can manage  
38 recreational fisheries differently than we currently are, if  
39 needed, and certainly it is a case-by-case and region-by-region  
40 basis, but I agree, Jessica, and I appreciate that. I see  
41 Jessica Stephen has her hand up. Go ahead, or are you just  
42 ready to provide your presentation?

43  
44 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** Sorry. I didn't even realize that I had  
45 clicked on it. I'm good, and I have no comment yet.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Is there any more discussion  
48 before we move on to Jessica? Again, I appreciate all the

1 feedback, and I appreciate all the presenters and the  
2 information. All right. If not, Jessica, if you're ready, take  
3 it away.

4  
5 **REVIEW OF THE GULF OF MEXICO HEADBOAT COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM**  
6

7 **DR. STEPHEN:** All right. Thank you. Today, I want to talk  
8 about what Ken Brennan touched on in his presentation earlier  
9 about for-hire electronic reporting, and we did have a  
10 recreational for-hire catch share program, and, today, I'm just  
11 going to go over some of the design elements that we used in it  
12 and the achievements.

13  
14 Just to give you a little history of how this happened, there  
15 was an exempted fishing permit requested by a couple of the  
16 headboat operators that wanted to experience and try out using  
17 an allocation-based management, and their goals in doing this  
18 was to see if there could be an alternative management scheme  
19 that would help them still achieve resource conservation and  
20 also have economic stability within it.

21  
22 They wanted to also evaluate, at the time, how electronic  
23 reporting was going, and particularly the idea of real-time  
24 electronic reporting. When we started this program, the only  
25 electronic reporting was in the headboat survey at the time.

26  
27 Then the other item that they wanted to look into was whether we  
28 could use fish numbers instead of fish weight, and, when you  
29 think about being on a headboat, you have a lot of fish, with a  
30 large number of people, and it's a lot easier to count fish than  
31 to try and estimate weight or actually weigh them all out. For  
32 this EFP, we ran it for two years, 2014 to 2015, and we only  
33 picked two species, gag and red snapper, and it was done in a  
34 collaborative style.

35  
36 I just want to cover what the exempted fishing permit exempted  
37 them from, and so people participating in the program were  
38 exempted from the recreational season closures for both species,  
39 and, at that time, we did have very short red snapper seasons,  
40 and, when the closure for gag was reached, they were exempted  
41 from gag being closed.

42  
43 Because of the way that red snapper is written in the Gulf of  
44 Mexico, if the red snapper harvest was determined to have been  
45 met, they would have shut down even if they still had allocation  
46 left in the program, and the things that they were not exempted  
47 from were the size and bag limits for both species as well as  
48 the February to March shallow-water closure at greater than 120

1 feet.

2  
3 I am going to go over how we designed and worked through this,  
4 and this was a little bit different than traditional catch share  
5 programs, and so we had kind of three different aspects to it in  
6 order to create the design.

7  
8 The federal aspects, you had to have, in order to participate, a  
9 federal Gulf for-hire permit, you had to have been in the  
10 Southeast Headboat Regional Survey program already, and have  
11 been in there for at least three years, and, because it's an  
12 EFP, there could be no one who had any civil or criminal  
13 actions.

14  
15 On top of that, the Headboat Collaborative added some additional  
16 kind of participation requirements. They went through an annual  
17 application process, and they wanted to select vessels that were  
18 from across the Gulf, and they had to sign a waiver that they  
19 were going to allow the headboat manager in charge of this  
20 program to view everyone's data. The other thing that they  
21 agreed to was to retain all legal-sized fish that appeared to be  
22 mortally injured, and so kind of playing around with the idea of  
23 maximum retention, and then the vessel would have to cease  
24 targeting those two species in the program when they had no  
25 remaining quota.

26  
27 The EFP added just a few more additional participation  
28 requirements, and one of them was very important, and that is  
29 that the vessel could not join or leave mid-year in the program,  
30 and so you were in for the entire year or you were out for the  
31 entire year. You had to display the EFP prominently on your  
32 boat, and remember they were fishing, a lot of times, outside of  
33 the season of other for-hire vessels, and, if any single EFP  
34 participant violated the terms or conditions, the entire EFP  
35 would be cancelled, and so this was a lot of kind of working  
36 together to make sure they are attesting in good faith.

37  
38 We had a little bit of a short time period to put this in place,  
39 and so what we did is we took the existing catch share system  
40 that we use for the commercial industry and modified that  
41 structure to be able to handle the collaborative program. We  
42 created new roles, so that we had a headboat manager who was  
43 able to look at all the different vessels, and we had the  
44 headboat vessel accounts. For those of you guys familiar with  
45 the Gulf IFQ programs, what you see missing in here is that  
46 shareholder-level account.

47  
48 We also had to modify the system to report numbers of fish

1 instead of weights of fish, and we had to link it to this  
2 headboat survey data, because a lot of our data was actually  
3 flowing through their system into ours. We added additional  
4 reporting requirements, and there was a VMS requirement that had  
5 a hail-out, and, similar to the Gulf commercial programs, they  
6 did need to do an advance notice of landing, but what's a little  
7 different is we gave them one hour, and so, one hour out from  
8 landing, you had to tell us where you were landing at and only  
9 land at pre-approved locations and put in there a fairly strong  
10 estimate of what you had caught onboard for the two catch share  
11 species in the program.

12  
13 They also were required to allow dockside sampling, and so the  
14 port samplers were there, and they had to participate in that,  
15 and they submitted all their landing reports daily.

16  
17 One interesting thing that came out of the program, which I  
18 think highlights the really wonderful nature of a collaborative  
19 working together, is that they wanted to have some way to kind  
20 of help identify the fish, and so the collaborative instituted a  
21 fish tag on each of the fish caught within the program, and it  
22 could be labeled that way. If law enforcement or port samplers  
23 were there, it was very obvious that they were in the headboat  
24 collaborative program, and that's why had catch outside of the  
25 season, and, when the people were walking away with the fish  
26 that they had harvested, there, again, was a little bit of proof  
27 of where it came from.

28  
29 We also had to determine how to handle the quota within this,  
30 and it was a little bit complicated. NOAA took the first  
31 portion of determining quota, and we looked at all the  
32 historical landings of the vessels that were going to be  
33 participating, and we did some ratios, and so we had the  
34 participant's ratio based on historical landings to the  
35 recreational. We then converted that from fish weight to fish  
36 number, just using an average weight and by region and by  
37 species moving forward.

38  
39 One thing to keep in mind is that, if the quota in pounds was  
40 reached, but there was still remaining allocation, that they  
41 would have to stop harvesting, and so that would be, if we had  
42 gotten the conversion wrong, there would be what appeared to be  
43 allocation in the accounts, but harvest would have to stop, and  
44 the other main thing is that we didn't have shares within this  
45 system.

46  
47 Again, being a collaborative nature, rather than a more typical  
48 catch share program, the Headboat Collaborative determined how

1 they were going to distribute the allocation, and they opted to  
2 use some historical landings, and what they also did is held  
3 back a 5 percent buffer of all the allocation distributed at the  
4 start of the year.

5  
6 This was done for a couple of reasons. One was to make sure  
7 that that fish weight to fish pound conversion was appropriate,  
8 and another one was to ensure that, if someone miscounted their  
9 allocation and went over a little bit, that there might be some  
10 available to them from the pool of the collaborative as a whole.

11  
12 When it came to management and monitoring, we did a lot of quota  
13 monitoring at the Regional Office. We had VMS tracking, and we  
14 had daily reporting and dockside validation and daily data  
15 audits. We put a lot of effort into this, and we had about  
16 seventeen to nineteen vessels participating in the two different  
17 years, but we actually put, full-time, about two people staffed  
18 towards it, and so it was a little intensive. Part of that was  
19 the nature of how we had built it, and I think some of that  
20 manpower could be reduced if this would ever be scaled up to a  
21 larger project.

22  
23 The other thing that we did is we constantly monitored the pre-  
24 season ratios from fish number to fish weight by looking at in-  
25 season ratios, and we updated that every fifteen to thirty days.  
26 That was really critical, to make sure that we weren't going to  
27 come close to the end of the calendar year and that there had  
28 been too much allocation used, due to a wrong conversion, and we  
29 updated the headboat manager with that information every fifteen  
30 to thirty days and released it to the public.

31  
32 Now I kind of want to go into some of the results that we found  
33 from this program, and so here are a couple of graphs that we  
34 went through, both the red snapper and the gag species.  
35 Overall, they had around 3,100 to 3,500 trips per year across  
36 the two different years, with about 50 to 60 percent of all  
37 those trips landing these HBC species. We had around an average  
38 of thirty-eight red snapper per trip and about four gag per  
39 trip.

40  
41 What you can see in the graphs here is that the total amount of  
42 trips taken in the upper corner, in the blue line, and then the  
43 trips with the headboat species, and we see a very similar  
44 pattern, and so there wasn't a lot of adjustment overall for  
45 their trips and specifically targeting just these species or  
46 not.

47  
48 Then, when we look at where there were landings in the time of



1 the month, we see patterns that we're pretty familiar with in  
2 the Gulf, with red snapper having a peak season in June and  
3 July, with a lot of emphasis being on people coming down for  
4 vacation and going out red snapper fishing, and then we see that  
5 gag has a little bit different, with more of the winter months  
6 having higher landings, and I do want to point out there's a  
7 little more variability in the gag from year to year than what  
8 we saw within the red snapper.

10 One of our things that we really wanted to look into was  
11 compliance within the program. As we said, if anyone had  
12 violated the terms, the EFP would be ended, and so we had a  
13 strong validation, and one of the concerns was how well do  
14 people report, and so we had port samplers down there validating  
15 trips, and we had about 24 percent of all the trips validated.

17 The really interesting part is that, out of all the trips  
18 validated, we only had thirty trips with discrepancies, and most  
19 of those discrepancies ended up being just a difference of one  
20 or two fish, and so you can imagine, if you're counting fifty-  
21 some fish on deck, that you might get it off by one or two  
22 counts.

24 The discrepancy is also significantly decreased in the second  
25 year, showing that there was a learning curve within this  
26 program. That learning curve had a lot to do with the errors in  
27 general, and we had sometimes captains swapping out on the  
28 boats, and they were a little bit unfamiliar with the protocols,  
29 and so there needed to be a little handholding and training of  
30 that.

32 There was occasionally a species selection error, and we were  
33 getting our data from the headboat survey program, and I  
34 believe, one time, we looked at data and red porgy was  
35 accidentally selected, instead of red snapper, and, again, that  
36 is what you would typically see if you have a drop-down list and  
37 you're moving quickly, and those were readily caught within a  
38 day of those trips being submitted, and so one of the nice  
39 things was the QA/QC could happen immediately.

41 The other issue we looked at was occasional transposing of  
42 numbers, a twelve that accidentally got transposed to a twenty-  
43 one, or vice versa, and, again, those were obvious right away,  
44 because we had landings reported both in the pre-landing  
45 notification and the logbook, and so you could see where it was  
46 an honest mistake and not a mistake that was meant to willfully  
47 violate the rules of the program.

1 The last one is confounding the same day, and we had some  
2 vessels that went on two trips a day, but they were only allowed  
3 to report by the end of the day, and so, if they waited until  
4 the end of the day to submit both trips, occasionally we found  
5 that they misreported which trip happened on which part of the  
6 day.

7  
8 The area we were really concerned in is how well the fish weight  
9 conversion would work, and, when you look at this, you see that  
10 we actually did really good in using our pre-season average  
11 weights and comparing to what happened in-season. You do see a  
12 difference in years, but there was typically a minimal  
13 difference within this, and we did see a larger difference,  
14 again, in gag, and there were bigger species at times, and you  
15 could see where some of those differences would occur, but  
16 neither one of these differences affected the ability to use the  
17 quota in the end.

18  
19 This is taken from Josh Abbott's work, and he worked on this and  
20 contributed to the other background material articles that are  
21 delivered in your briefing book, and he looked at how the trip  
22 length changed over time, and what he saw is that we had an  
23 increase in number of vessels participating in this program  
24 moving to a full-day trip, and there is potential economic  
25 savings in a full-day trip, if you just think about running out  
26 and then coming back in, and the fuel used right there is  
27 automatically a type of economic savings. This was a fairly  
28 significant change, overall, between the program and prior to  
29 the program.

30  
31 Josh Abbott also looked at the retention of the species within  
32 the program, and we found that trips were retaining these  
33 headboat collaborative species more spread out over time and  
34 that the vessels that were also increasing the number of trips  
35 retaining headboat species.

36  
37 Some of this kind of makes logical sense. With a very short red  
38 snapper season, which is the graph shown here, if you caught it  
39 outside of it, and you weren't in the program, you had to  
40 discard it. Now, the fishermen were fishing year-round, just  
41 they do normally, but they were able to retain the red snapper  
42 outside of that very short season.

43  
44 I'm going to come up here on the conclusions and  
45 recommendations, and so, when we looked at what the objectives  
46 were of achieving resource conservation, we found that the  
47 landings were actually less than the quota. We increased access  
48 for anglers altogether, and the anglers who went out on the

1 headboat trips had more trips to choose from, and more anglers  
2 were actually retaining these two species.

3  
4 Now, I want to caution you that a lot of this was influenced by  
5 different captain-imposed options that were available on their  
6 trip. We did have some captains who said, if you're coming out  
7 with us outside of the normal season, instead of a two-bag  
8 limit, we're going to restrict you to a one-bag limit. Also,  
9 there were some vessels that were potentially just limiting the  
10 target of the HBC species, and so, at certain points in time,  
11 you pay a little more to go on a trip that was targeting these  
12 two species, versus a regular price for the rest of the trips.

13  
14 I do want to mention that this was not consistent throughout the  
15 program. Each captain did what they thought was best, and they  
16 might have changed it a little bit over time. Overall, we saw  
17 that there was, in general, less discard of these two species  
18 throughout the program. For economic stability, there were more  
19 total trips and more full-day trips, which directly translated  
20 into economic increase for the captains of these vessels.

21  
22 In looking at electronic report, we found that electronic  
23 reporting did work pretty well. There were some changes that  
24 we'll probably need if this was ever brought up to a more  
25 scalable program. As I said, we were getting our data directly  
26 from the headboat survey, and there were some issues in getting  
27 that. Moving towards this, we probably -- If this ever becomes  
28 an option again, we'll look at how our SEFHIER program is doing  
29 electronic reporting and build in some of the lessons learned  
30 from that into any potential type of future program.

31  
32 Then, with the fish numbers, there was a very minimal difference  
33 between pre-season and in-season weight, but I do want to  
34 caution that, if this is, again, another scalable project, where  
35 you're moving past the small number of vessels we had, there  
36 were problems when we were looking at in-season weights of  
37 sample size or getting an appropriate number or at a certain  
38 time or season. One big fish being weighed, versus a lot of  
39 small ones, will really change that average.

40  
41 The other thing we would want to think about, if this ever moved  
42 forward, would be a conversion metric for allocation transfers  
43 between different regions, and so each region has a very  
44 specific average weight for that region, and there were some  
45 people who fished deeper water and were catching larger fish,  
46 and so a little higher average weight, and the idea would be to  
47 eventually build in some kind of conversion metric, and so,  
48 while you're trading fish, you're still equating well with

1 pounds and not being likely to go over the quota.

2  
3 Then, finally, as I mentioned before, scalability will be an  
4 issue with this. It's not impossible to be done, but I think we  
5 would need to look really closely at the lessons learned and  
6 allow sufficient time to build any type of scalability, if this  
7 would ever be increased to a larger program, but the really  
8 important kind of take-home message was that a recreational  
9 catch share program in the for-hire industry really can allow  
10 each of those vessel operators to adapt its offerings and its  
11 price and its marketing approach to reflect what their local  
12 customers want, and that does change from region to region.

13  
14 By offering a year-round harvest, they are able to target the  
15 customers that they want to target in the way they want to and  
16 have more flexibility. I believe that is my last slide, and the  
17 only other comment I want to make is that was a catch share  
18 program based on a landings history.

19  
20 Those of you in the Gulf are well aware that we did look at the  
21 charter industry and potential catch share programs, and not  
22 having a landings history does create some issues, but there are  
23 avenues around that, going with a more adaptive type of catch  
24 share program, where the amount that you are given changes over  
25 time, or you could handle that in a collaborative, where the  
26 collaborative decides who gets what amount of allocation each  
27 year, such as was done in this program, and I will take any  
28 questions.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you, Jessica. Are there any questions  
31 from the workgroup members? I know a few of the workgroup  
32 members have some direct experience with this program, and I  
33 really did enjoy, as odd as that sounds, reading the final  
34 report. Susan, go ahead.

35  
36 **MS. BOGGS:** I was a part, or my husband was a part, of this  
37 collaborative program, and the one thing I would like to mention  
38 that was kind of different about this from most of the programs  
39 we've seen is there was financial input by those that  
40 participated, and I say that because the collaborative members,  
41 those participating, were required to purchase a VMS for their  
42 vessel, and the tags that were mentioned -- The collaborative  
43 members were also required to purchase the tags.

44  
45 When I say that, my husband being the managing member of the  
46 collaborative, we basically -- We would order them, and then we  
47 would distribute them, and each collaborative member would pay  
48 for the number of tags, if you will, that were issued, based on

1 the number of fish that they were allocated, and so it was a  
2 little unique, in the fact that there was some buy-in, if you  
3 will, by the participants, which you don't see that in a lot of  
4 the -- Or any of the programs right now that we're discussing,  
5 and I'm not sure how it will play in when we do the  
6 implementation of the Gulf and South Atlantic ELBs, but I just  
7 wanted to share that information.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you, Susan. I was really interested to  
10 see how a harvest tag program was administered, and it seems  
11 like it was administered successfully, and I do see some  
12 utility, not necessarily in the specifics of this program, but  
13 how an EFP can be used to try some of these alternative  
14 management approaches and kind of test the waters to see how  
15 applicable it really is in a real-world setting and to learn  
16 some lessons from that, and so I think this provides a pretty  
17 good example on how councils and stakeholders can brings some  
18 ideas forward and test them out to see if they work. Chester, I  
19 see you have your hand up. Go ahead.

20  
21 **MR. BREWER:** I do. Steve, just so you will know, this program,  
22 along with the program, or the EFP, I should say, this EFP,  
23 along with the EFP that was tried to be put in place with regard  
24 to harvesting swordfish in the closed area off of Florida almost  
25 caused a situation in the reauthorization where EFPs were  
26 essentially going to be done away with.

27  
28 Ryan asked that we say those things, or talk about those things,  
29 that we feel that, that speaker feels, really do not warrant  
30 further exploration, and I think that, when it comes to catch  
31 shares in the recreational side of things, that's the  
32 posterchild.

33  
34 The Gulf Council wrestled, for years, with that issue in the  
35 recreational side. They got sector separation done, but then,  
36 when it came time to actually start talking about catch shares,  
37 and that was under Amendment 41 and 42, they're still  
38 languishing over there.

39  
40 We had a real push, within the South Atlantic Council, and,  
41 Steve, this was before you came on the council, but to try to go  
42 forward with catch shares in the recreational sector, and we  
43 went round and round and round the rosby for two or two-and-a-  
44 half years over that, and, finally, the council decided that,  
45 no, we were not going to do that, and so, if we want to come up  
46 with something that would really be detrimental to our going  
47 forward, this is a perfect example of what you would do, because  
48 you would spend years, and it would be a bloody and ugly battle,

1 and I will mute myself.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you for those comments,  
4 Chester, and, just to clarify my comments on that, certainly the  
5 catch share component of this is certainly a heated and hotly-  
6 debated issue, but I look at this more from the utility of just  
7 using an EFP to further a new management program, and so say,  
8 for example, if the South Atlantic Council wanted to consider a  
9 harvest tag program for our deepwater species, since those ACLs  
10 are so low.

11  
12 I could certainly see the utility of just trying that with an  
13 EFP, or something that to that regard, and not necessarily  
14 endorsing or advocating a catch-share style program, but we have  
15 that tool of EFPs, where we as a workgroup, or, when we take  
16 these recommendations back and discuss it at our respective  
17 councils, to try these things out, either at a sector level or  
18 an entire fishery level, and we do have that ability to use EFPs  
19 to test any type of program in the short term. With that, I see  
20 that, Susan, you have your hand up again. Go ahead.

21  
22 **MS. BOGGS:** I appreciate Chester's comments, and, yes, Amendment  
23 41 and 42 didn't cut the mustard at this time, but a question  
24 that I've been struggling with, coming into this meeting today,  
25 and I was reading some of the documents, and I don't know who to  
26 pose this question to, but, with red snapper, it seems to be a  
27 division in the Gulf, because of the sector separation, and I  
28 would also like to remind everyone that we started with  
29 Amendment 39 for regional management of red snapper.

30  
31 It took us to get to Amendment 50, after a two-year EFP, and so  
32 we're still doing a catch share, because we have the sector  
33 separation, and we now have states managing separate from the  
34 charter/for-hire, but the question here is this. Talking and  
35 trying to answer part of Steve's question about what is our  
36 charge, when we talk about recreational fishing, are we trying  
37 to solve, I guess is the best word I can come up with right now,  
38 the private recreational sector's issues, or, when we talk about  
39 recreational, are we trying to resolve all recreational fishing  
40 issues, which would be charter/for and private recreational?

41  
42 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thanks for those comments, Susan, and, really,  
43 the answer to that question is probably going to be different  
44 depending on if you're on the Gulf Council or the South Atlantic  
45 Council.

46  
47 Over on the Atlantic side, the recreational sector is managed as  
48 private and for-hire and everything. It all comes out of that

1 side of the pot, but certainly I'm aware that, over there in the  
2 Gulf, there is some sector separation within that, and so I  
3 think an answer to that question would just be it's really  
4 dependent on the council region.

5  
6 Certainly over here, and I can only speak for myself, but, when  
7 I make comments and consider things, I have to consider the  
8 entire recreational sector over here in the Atlantic, which  
9 includes the for-hire sector, but that certainly might be  
10 different for yourself and your Gulf Council colleagues. I  
11 would be interested to hear from a few other workgroup members  
12 relative to that question, because there certainly are unique  
13 challenges between regular private recreational fishermen and a  
14 for-hire business and a headboat. Roy, go ahead.

15  
16 **DR. ROY CRABTREE:** Good afternoon, everyone. Well, I think,  
17 when you're looking at the issues in the Gulf and the South  
18 Atlantic, you have to look at what was the problem that resulted  
19 in what happened, and the Gulf is a very, very different  
20 situation than the South Atlantic.

21  
22 The problem you have with red snapper in the South Atlantic is  
23 basically you don't have any fish to catch, and the ACL is so  
24 low, and so that's an issue, and it's not likely one that state  
25 management or any of that is going to change. The Gulf was  
26 completely different. We had lots of fish to catch, and the  
27 quotas now are very high in the Gulf, and that's really a  
28 difference in productivity of the Gulf versus the South Atlantic  
29 for red snapper.

30  
31 Now, you can make the case that productivity has been  
32 underestimated for South Atlantic red snapper, and that's a  
33 different discussion, but, at least with the current  
34 assessments, they are extremely different, in terms of  
35 productivity.

36  
37 The other thing about the Gulf was the jurisdictional issues in  
38 the Gulf were very different, because, well, ten years ago,  
39 Texas and Florida had nine-mile jurisdictions, but now all the  
40 Gulf states have nine-mile jurisdictions, and that led to a  
41 whole host of different problems, and so sector separation arose  
42 in the Gulf because the problem we had was the states were  
43 opening up state-water seasons for red snapper, and the federal  
44 season was getting shorter and shorter, because the quota was  
45 being progressively caught up in state waters.

46  
47 The federally-permitted charter boats have to abide by the  
48 federal season, even in state waters, and so they were getting

1 squeezed out of the fishery, and that's why we had sector  
2 separation come along, was to preserve their allocation of the  
3 fishery and keep them from being basically squeezed out.

4  
5 State management in the Gulf was a solution to the  
6 jurisdictional problem we had, where we had state-water seasons  
7 that were huge compared to the federal season, and we wanted to  
8 get everybody on the same page, because we couldn't enforce the  
9 nine-mile boundary anywhere, and so state management, in my view  
10 at least, was to try and resolve some of those jurisdictional  
11 issues.

12  
13 We don't have those problems in the South Atlantic, because  
14 everyone in the South Atlantic has three-mile jurisdictions, and  
15 so it's just a very different situation, and that's what led to  
16 a lot of the differences between the Gulf and the South  
17 Atlantic, and I think you have to keep that in mind when you  
18 start comparing these two areas, because what might make sense  
19 in the Gulf probably may not make any sense to do in the South  
20 Atlantic.

21  
22 I will say too that the state management of red snapper in the  
23 Gulf has a lot of problems right now, and a lot of issues going  
24 on, and I think you're going to see some really difficult  
25 decisions in front of the Gulf Council over the next few  
26 meetings to try and deal with those, and so it has some good  
27 points, but it also has some really difficult issues that are  
28 going to have to be dealt with.

29  
30 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you for that, Roy, and, before I go to  
31 Spud, I just wanted to say that I certainly foresee whatever  
32 recommendations come out of this workgroup to be tailored to the  
33 two respective councils, because I agree that what works over  
34 here isn't going to work in the Gulf, and vice versa.

35  
36 There certainly might be some things that can be applied in both  
37 regions, but I certainly envision our table of recommendations  
38 to certainly be split down the middle between ones tailored for  
39 the Gulf and ones tailored for the South Atlantic. With that,  
40 I'm going to go to Spud. Go ahead, Spud.

41  
42 **MR. WOODWARD:** Thanks, Steve. You had asked about other  
43 perspectives about what constitutes the recreational sector,  
44 and, from my personal point of view, it's the charter/for-hire  
45 and the private recreational together.

46  
47 Personally, I don't believe that sector separation creates the  
48 intended benefits that outweigh the potential negative



1 unintended consequences, and I have made that no secret, and I  
2 have voted accordingly, and I don't believe that we should  
3 consider sector separation and catch shares based in the South  
4 Atlantic.

5  
6 As Roy has stated, we have a very different situation, and, to  
7 me, our responsibility here is to look at the language mandated  
8 in the Modernizing Recreational Fishing Act and see are there  
9 alternatives to the way we're doing things now, and the way  
10 we're doing things now is quantity-based metrics, either numbers  
11 or weight of fish, as an indicator of whether or not we're  
12 overfishing. Are there opportunities to do things different  
13 than that? If so, we need to fully explore those, but that's  
14 just my perspective. Thank you.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you for that, Spud, and I was able to  
17 maybe tease out some draft charge language out of your comment,  
18 and so I appreciate that, but, yes, absolutely. I mean, our  
19 charge is to fully consider what alternative management measures  
20 are feasible, based off of the direction we have from the  
21 Modernizing Fish Act, and so I appreciate that. Do we have any  
22 other further questions for Jessica, or any further discussion?  
23 This has been a really good discussion. Chester, go ahead.

24  
25 **MR. BREWER:** I want to go back, just for a moment, to what Spud  
26 said, and I agree with him 100 percent. I think we need to go  
27 to the -- Number one, we are here because of the MFA, and we  
28 ought to go to the language that is the MFA that talks about  
29 what we are doing and what we're supposed to do.

30  
31 You will see, in that language, there are examples used of  
32 alternative management techniques, such as extraction rates, Fs,  
33 and several other different potential vehicles, and I think we  
34 need to be looking at those vehicles to see what might be viable  
35 in the Gulf or what might be viable in the South Atlantic,  
36 because Roy is right that they are very different animals.

37  
38 I would propose that we kind of go back to the language that's  
39 in the MFA and take a look at that and let that be our guiding  
40 light as to what we are supposed to be doing and accomplishing,  
41 and I will mute myself at that point.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you, Chester. Just to be clear, that's  
44 your input, as far as what the charge of this group is?

45  
46 **MR. BREWER:** Yes.

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Okay. Thank you. Really, a lot of what we're

1 going to hear in the next agenda item, the stock biomass  
2 assessment, is really going to touch on extraction rates and  
3 fishing mortality targets and such and how that is currently  
4 used in the fishery management process here in the federal  
5 fishery management councils, and so certainly, from this  
6 upcoming presentation, maybe we can all gain a little better  
7 clarity on how those rates are currently used and maybe some  
8 potential on how to utilize them differently in the future.

10 With that, I think that's a good segue into our next agenda  
11 item. Again, thank you, Jessica. That was a good presentation.  
12 We appreciate it. All right. Who is available from the Science  
13 Center that will be giving the presentation?

15 **MR. RINDONE:** Skyler Sagarese.

17 **STOCK BIOMASS ASSESSMENT**  
18 **INTERIM ANALYSES IN THE SOUTHEASTERN U.S.**  
19 **PRESENTATION**

21 **DR. SKYLER SAGARESE:** Just as background, my name is Skyler  
22 Sagarese, and I work at the Southeast Fisheries Science Center  
23 in Miami. Today, we have a presentation introducing the interim  
24 analysis approach, and I'm going to talk us through the first  
25 pilot study we've done for Gulf of Mexico red grouper.

27 Just a quick background, and the interim assessments, or interim  
28 analyses, essentially, it's a way to quantitatively adjust catch  
29 advice between stock assessments, and so, generally, we have a  
30 SEDAR stock assessment, it gets reviewed, and then, within those  
31 years between those full-blown assessments, the interim analysis  
32 would be one way where we could sort of monitor, in closer real  
33 time, what's going on in the fishery and what's going on with  
34 the stock, and we could make adjustments as necessary.

36 In this case, at least in the Gulf of Mexico, the interim  
37 analyses that we've done and that we're pursuing often rely on  
38 an index of abundance, preferably from a fishery-independent  
39 survey that's been designed to provide a representation of the  
40 stock abundance throughout the range, and, ideally, we would  
41 want to conduct a management strategy evaluation to ensure that  
42 this whole process is up and running and is meeting all of the  
43 performance metrics which would be determined.

45 For red grouper, I kind of wanted to talk you through basically  
46 the assessment history, the recent assessment history, how the  
47 interim analyses came into play, talk about the data that we  
48 need to be able to conduct the interim analysis and to talk

1 about the method that's been used and that was accepted by the  
2 SSC, but just note that it's one method of many that could  
3 potentially be evaluated, and there's a lot of work that can be  
4 done with simulation testing.

5  
6 Just kind of a conceptual diagram, basically, the top-left is  
7 just kind of showing your traditional stock assessment that goes  
8 through the SEDAR process, and I believe the new terminology is  
9 operational assessment, and so we get updated inputs, including  
10 catches, relative abundance from surveys, biology, size  
11 composition, age composition, and we basically get all of the  
12 available data and update it through a terminal year.

13  
14 Most stock assessment models use a diagnostic, and we go through  
15 iterative processes of reviewing that, to ensure that the model  
16 is performing well, and, ultimately, from that assessment, it  
17 gets reviewed by the SSC, and, from there, stock status is  
18 determined from the results, as well as the assessment produces  
19 the overfishing limit from which the SSC derives the acceptable  
20 biological catch.

21  
22 Basically, how we have operated in the past is, maybe every  
23 three to five years, we do a full-blown stock assessment, and  
24 then the projections kind of are used, and we don't really go in  
25 there to see what's going on. The purpose of the interim  
26 analysis is, each year, we're continuing to collect data.

27  
28 The fishery-independent surveys that are out there are  
29 collecting abundance, and they're collecting size, and we have  
30 catch estimates that come in, and so, as we collect additional  
31 information, then we can actually use, for example, a trend from  
32 the index of abundance to say here's where we thought we would  
33 be, and are we doing well, or do we need to make a change, and  
34 so, basically, the concept of the interim analysis is, if that  
35 index were increasing, you would say that things were looking  
36 up, and we could potentially increase the ABC above what the  
37 stock had produced, and vice versa.

38  
39 Say there is a decline. If the index is dropping, then the SSC  
40 could use this analysis to reduce the ABC, and so kind of a more  
41 real-time being able to see what happens and making management  
42 decisions while incorporating recent information.

43  
44 Here is where I think red grouper was a great pilot study to  
45 start with. This is just brief assessment history. The SEDAR  
46 42 assessment was completed in 2015. At the time, the  
47 assessment model recommended a large increase in the OFL, which  
48 led to an increase in the ABC, up to about fourteen million

1 pounds gutted weight.

2  
3 Once that went into place, a couple of years down the road, it  
4 was very difficult for fishermen to even get near their quotas,  
5 and there was a lot of concern, and there were concerns that  
6 that was set too high, and so an interim analysis was requested  
7 in 2018, and it was presented to the SSC in October, I believe.

8  
9 Basically, at the time, this was sort of a pilot study of the  
10 interim analysis that was presented to the SSC for review, and  
11 the SSC suggested, or recommended, that it was suitable. The  
12 results were suitable for management, and the council could use  
13 it to set the 2019 ACL at 4.6 million pounds, which was the  
14 result of the interim analysis.

15  
16 At the time, this recommendation -- They did not recommend  
17 changing the ABC, because, at the time, the results had not been  
18 simulation tested, and it was really was just kind of a real-  
19 world application of we have the data, and we have a method, and  
20 we wanted to see what was going on with the stock, and so the  
21 perception of the stock in poor shape was correct, and the  
22 interim analysis showed that that should have come down, that  
23 the ACL should come down.

24  
25 The reason for the interim analysis was, at the time, the SEDAR  
26 61 assessment was ongoing, and those results were not available  
27 until mid-2019, and, in this case, and I will talk about it a  
28 little bit more in the next few slides, but one of the  
29 challenges of the SEDAR 61 assessment was we had the 2018 red  
30 tide event that, at the time, we didn't know severe and how  
31 large of an impact it had on the stock, and so there was a lot  
32 of uncertainty.

33  
34 Ultimately, when we went back to the Gulf SSC in January of  
35 2020, we were able to bring an interim analysis to say here's  
36 what the SEDAR 61 assessment has said, and we were able to  
37 provide additional support, with that interim analysis, that the  
38 assumptions that we made were on par with what the SSC thought  
39 and what we showed evidence for.

40  
41 Basically, the first interim analysis was conducted before SEDAR  
42 61 was completed and over concerns about the ABC had initially  
43 been set too high, and it turns out that that SEDAR 42  
44 assessment, when those results were done, there was a -- There  
45 were a lot of modifications made at the review workshop, which  
46 led to an error in how the initial equilibrium catches were  
47 being estimated in the model, and so, basically, that model was  
48 estimating a much higher stock biomass, and, hence, the huge

1 increase in the OFL.

2  
3 That is something that we did catch with SEDAR 61, and we had a  
4 lot of time to kind of go back and thoroughly review everything,  
5 but, at the time, that SEDAR 42 model changed so much overnight  
6 at the review workshop, and so that's one of the reasons for  
7 that huge spike.

8  
9 The benefit of the interim analysis is we were able to  
10 reevaluate some of those issues, and, in particular, for SEDAR  
11 61, the terminal year was 2017, and the red tide that occurred  
12 was in 2018, and, at the time, we just really didn't have enough  
13 quantitative data to support how we were going to parameterize  
14 that 2018 red tide event, and so, in 2005, there was a really  
15 severe event that killed about 30 percent of the red grouper  
16 population, and what kind of impact did it have in 2018, and we  
17 just didn't know.

18  
19 In order to complete SEDAR 61, where we were projecting the  
20 first level of catches, the first year of OFLs that could go  
21 into place were 2020, and we had to make assumptions throughout  
22 the assessment process of what that red tide might have done,  
23 and so, in the figure on the right, it's just kind of showing  
24 you the five scenarios for projections that we ran for red  
25 grouper.

26  
27 Basically, the red line is assuming 2018 had no -- That the red  
28 tide had no effect on red grouper, and then it went up in  
29 increasing severity, and so the green line assumed that it was  
30 about half the 2014 event, that mostly hit the Big Bend area,  
31 and so orange was that it was similar to 2014, and then the blue  
32 was it was similar to the 2005 event, which was very severe on  
33 the West Florida Shelf.

34  
35 Ultimately, that's the scenario the SSC supported, and that was  
36 largely due to some of the additional data we presented when  
37 showing the projections, as well as some input from FWRI, from  
38 the harmful algal bloom experts in their lab, and so there was  
39 some supporting information to kind of say we think this is what  
40 happened, but, at the time, we were really just making  
41 assumptions and hoping for the best.

42  
43 SEDAR 61, we were wrapping up about mid-2019, and here's where  
44 the interim analysis comes into play. For red grouper, we used  
45 the index of abundance derived from the NMFS bottom longline  
46 survey, and many of the reasons why this is done that, for red  
47 grouper, they tend to capture quite a bit of the population, and  
48 that survey covers most of the Gulf that's needed, in this case

1 the eastern Gulf for red grouper, and it's got a consistent  
2 sampling design, and, basically, the analyst from Pascagoula was  
3 able to update that bottom longline index through 2019, and so,  
4 here in the figure, we're just showing you the index that was  
5 presented for SEDAR 61, in I guess orange.

6  
7 You will note that that index ended in 2017, and so the benefit  
8 of an interim analysis is we update that index through the most  
9 recent year, which, at the time, was 2019, and one thing to note  
10 with red grouper is the data from the surveys is used from  
11 August and September, and so we do have the capability of  
12 updating this index later on in the year and being able to use  
13 it for an interim analysis at the beginning of the year, like we  
14 did for the most recent interim analysis.

15  
16 The way that this interim analysis worked for red grouper is we  
17 had an updated index through 2019, which we call basically our  
18 observed index value, and it's coming from the data and coming  
19 from the actual survey, and we also have a forecasted index  
20 value, and so, from the stock assessment, from the SEDAR 61  
21 stock assessment, when you run the projections, it's basically  
22 projecting, or forecasting, what it thinks the relative  
23 abundance would be for that survey, as well as all the other  
24 data inputs.

25  
26 We kind of know -- I should point out here, and it's very  
27 important, that the SEDAR 61 forecast was assuming that the 2018  
28 red tide was similar in magnitude to the 2005, and so these  
29 results were assuming that, in 2018, there was a big negative  
30 impact from that red tide on the population.

31  
32 When we compare -- Basically, we compare where we wanted to be  
33 and where we are, and we can see, from this trend, that we were  
34 pretty similar, in terms of what the model thought was going to  
35 happen and what we're actually seeing from the survey. At  
36 least, for this most recent interim analysis, this was fairly  
37 important, and it would further support that that 2018 red tide  
38 likely did have an impact on the red grouper stock.

39  
40 Once we have the ABC, and so we have the catch advice that comes  
41 out of the stock assessment, and we have our updated index of  
42 abundance, and we plugged it into the harvest control rule,  
43 which was presented in October of 2018 and was accepted by the  
44 SSC, and, basically, how it works is we -- For this year, we  
45 want to calculate the ABC, and, basically, it's adjusted, and  
46 it's this function of the ABC that the SSC selected, following  
47 the review of SEDAR 61, which note in this evaluation that it's  
48 at 4.9 million pounds gutted weight, and that ABC is based on

1 the assumption of using the current allocation as 76 percent  
2 commercial and 24 percent recreational.

3  
4 What we do is we adjust that ABC value based on the ratio of our  
5 observed index over our forecasted index, while also accounting  
6 for the scalar, and so this data is essentially a scalar that  
7 determines the responsiveness, which I will show -- It's easier  
8 to see when you visualize what that actually does, but it's a  
9 function of that scalar and also the standard error of the  
10 index.

11  
12 One thing to note from the first interim analysis is there was a  
13 lot of discussion about, for example, how often would you want  
14 to see a change in ABC, and you don't want to see a change every  
15 year, and that's too variable, but, in this evaluation, we are  
16 implementing changes every other year, and so the ABC that comes  
17 out of this would stay on the books for the following year, and  
18 then it would be readjusted.

19  
20 Again, a lot of these decisions are things that could be pursued  
21 when doing a simulation analysis and a management strategy  
22 evaluation, which I will touch on later.

23  
24 Here, it's kind of visualizing -- There's a lot going on, and I  
25 just wanted to, again, caveat that the interim analysis that we  
26 presented in January of 2020 -- Again, it's based on the SEDAR  
27 61 assessment results that were reviewed by the SSC, at their  
28 September 2019 meeting, using the allocation of 76 percent  
29 commercial and 24 percent recreational.

30  
31 I wanted to reiterate, in the first interim analysis, that the  
32 SSC had a lot of discussion about some of the decisions that I  
33 am showing up here on the first bullet point, and, essentially,  
34 the first decision at that time, in 2018, before SEDAR 61 was  
35 completed, was whether to use that increase in ABC following  
36 SEDAR 42 or whether to not use it, and so, in the figure, and  
37 this is just showing what I'm calling here the total allowable  
38 catch, millions of pounds gutted weight, basically, the catch  
39 level over time, and the black thick line is essentially the ABC  
40 over time.

41  
42 You can see that it jumps in 2016, and that large increase was  
43 the result of SEDAR 42, and so the first thing the SSC had  
44 discussed was whether to use that value or not, and they  
45 ultimately decided to not use that value, and so the first  
46 interim analysis operated off the original ABC without that  
47 large jump.

1 The second thing that I wanted to highlight is that the scaling  
2 is the parameter of beta. In this figure, it's just  
3 demonstrating how that influences the ABC, the adjusted ABC,  
4 that would come out of this method, and so each of the colors --  
5 Red starts with a beta of one, down to purple is a beta of nine,  
6 and so what you see here is, the higher the beta, basically the  
7 purple line, you can see that it's the closest to that original  
8 black line, and so there's not a lot of an adjustment in the  
9 ABC. It's really staying closer to the ABC.

10  
11 In contrast, the red line is a beta of one, and so you see that  
12 there's much more variability. It's increasing higher because  
13 it's tracking that index of abundance, and so the choice of beta  
14 -- At the time, the beta of one was selected by the SSC, and  
15 this is another one of those decision points that ideally would  
16 be tested in a simulation framework, but, at least for this  
17 application, for Gulf red grouper, we did keep those decisions  
18 consistent from the first interim analysis, but, again, this is  
19 really just to kind of give you an idea of what the process  
20 would look like.

21  
22 Here, in the top-right, it's just showing the adjusted catches,  
23 and so, basically, depending upon that beta value, you can see  
24 that, using the same approach, that the ABC from the interim  
25 analysis would suggest a slight increase over the 4.9 million  
26 pounds, and that is largely to do because that observed index in  
27 the 2019 was just slightly above where we thought we would be.

28  
29 Just to note that the Gulf red grouper example -- We kind of had  
30 a limited time, in terms of developing this as we went along,  
31 and one of the questions -- There are many questions that could  
32 potentially be looked at through using a management strategy  
33 evaluation, and I know that's the end goal for each of these  
34 interim analyses, is we want to use this approach to kind of  
35 test and thoroughly vet all those decisions and see how they  
36 would affect the result.

37  
38 For example, one thing of interest is how often would we need to  
39 do full-blown stock assessments, and is it every three years,  
40 every five years, or is it even every ten years, and so those  
41 are the kinds of questions that the MSE would be able to  
42 address, and, here, we're envisioning a desk MSE for this  
43 purpose.

44  
45 Generally, the term "management strategy evaluation" encompasses  
46 an enormous amount of work, and lots of workshops with  
47 stakeholders and scientists and federal employees and states,  
48 and, basically, everyone comes together at multiple workshops



1 and kind of talks things through. I think, in terms of what we  
2 envision for these analyses, because we have so many stocks to  
3 be assessed, that a desk MSE may be what's done in the future.

4  
5 Some of the other questions that could be addressed with this  
6 sort of simulation approach is how much of the uncertainty in  
7 the index -- How much uncertainty in the index could there be,  
8 and how would that affect the catch advice coming out of it?

9  
10 For red grouper, we know the bottom longline survey -- The  
11 standard error is about 0.36, which is fairly high, and so we  
12 would be interested in knowing, number one, how does that  
13 uncertainty affect the results, as well as, number two, is that  
14 index suitable for the interim analysis?

15  
16 At least, in the case of red grouper, the only other fishery-  
17 independent survey we have that samples adults is the combined  
18 video survey, and one of the challenges is, when using the  
19 combined video survey, we're waiting on data from three  
20 different labs. They have the video that has to be read, and  
21 the index has to be developed, and so it takes a lot more time,  
22 and so that's one of the concerns, but it's certainly something,  
23 with red grouper -- We did not complete an MSE yet, but it's  
24 definitely one of those things that we, ideally, want to.

25  
26 It's important to point out that this MSE approach does need to  
27 be done every time an interim analysis is conducted, and it  
28 really should be done upfront, so then you know that the  
29 decisions that have been made are defensible, and then you can  
30 update the application of the interim analysis, potentially  
31 every few years, or even every other year, depending upon data  
32 availability and resources.

33  
34 That leads us into the first -- Again, the Gulf red grouper was  
35 really an application of the harvest control rule and how  
36 uncertain events were impacting the stock and what kind of  
37 information we could get. The first pilot MSE is actually going  
38 to be presented next week, at the Gulf SSC meeting, for gray  
39 triggerfish, and so that's going to be a pretty exciting  
40 application.

41  
42 The last thing to touch on here is the timelines for future  
43 interim analyses, and, basically, it will start with the SEFSC  
44 receiving a request from the council for an interim analysis.  
45 It will require about three to six months to develop the MSE  
46 tool, assuming that that species hasn't been done yet, and so,  
47 basically, step one is to customize the MSE tool, to test some  
48 of the indices that are available, to test some of the

1 assumptions, and then to show the results and make sure that the  
2 harvest control rule is defensible and can move to the next  
3 stage.

4  
5 Then, once those decisions are made, then the interim analysis  
6 really can be fairly quick, depending upon the data inputs. As  
7 I mentioned, at least with the bottom longline survey, it's  
8 fairly quick to update that index, and, in terms of, for  
9 example, the video survey, it takes a lot longer, because  
10 there's a lot more data processing and such that needs to go on,  
11 and so the timeline is really going to be dependent upon the  
12 species and the index, as well as any of the other  
13 customizations that may have to go into the MSE tool, but it's  
14 very exciting to be able to show the results next week for  
15 triggerfish, and I think that's it. Any questions?

16  
17 By the way, Katie Siegfried is on the call, and she's more than  
18 happy, if anyone has questions, or if she wants to chime in, but  
19 I just want to make sure that she can speak as well.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Skyler. That was  
22 fantastic. You really -- There was a lot of information there,  
23 and you walked us through it very well, and I appreciate that.  
24 Does anyone from the workgroup have any questions? Kevin Anson,  
25 go ahead.

26  
27 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Sagarese, for the  
28 presentation. You may have said it and I didn't catch it, but  
29 can you -- Do you recall what the reason for the large increase  
30 in the ABC was? Do you know, or were there a couple of reasons?  
31 Was there a change in the SPR or some other biological function,  
32 or was it a change in the data?

33  
34 **DR. SAGARESE:** You mean for SEDAR 42?

35  
36 **MR. ANSON:** Yes.

37  
38 **DR. SAGARESE:** For the SEDAR 42 stock assessment, the assessment  
39 that was developed following the input from the review workshop  
40 -- There were major modifications to the structure of the model,  
41 and so the recreational fleet was initially separated, and it  
42 needed to be combined, and there was a lot of analyses that were  
43 being done overnight, basically to get that model for the end of  
44 the review.

45  
46 What ended up happening is the initial equilibrium catches --  
47 Because, in the red grouper stock assessment, we can't assume  
48 virgin condition from the catch data, and we really only have a

1 very good idea of catch data starting in 1986 for commercial,  
2 when they separated the species.

3  
4 What happened was, when we initialized the model, and we put in  
5 an initial equilibrium catch, it was essentially five-times  
6 higher than it should have been, where we should have used an  
7 average of those initial catches from let's say the first five  
8 years of 1986 through 1990, and, basically, we used a five-year  
9 average.

10  
11 What ended up happening is there was -- Basically, the stock was  
12 starting off at a much, much, much larger point, and, therefore,  
13 all the results were scaled up and the model was saying that the  
14 population was much larger, and, therefore, that it could  
15 sustain more landings, and, therefore, the OFL basically  
16 doubled. In general, red grouper stock assessments in the Gulf  
17 generally come out with an MSY, or an MSY proxy, of catch in  
18 terms of about seven million pounds, and I think that assessment  
19 led to about fifteen million, and so it was mostly due to that  
20 issue.

21  
22 Another thing to bring up was there was also some issues in  
23 terms of the data for the commercial discards, and so, at the  
24 time, at least for SEDAR 61, there was a lot of work done to  
25 improve how we're estimating commercial discards, and so, for  
26 SEDAR 46, what we think happened is we were providing estimates  
27 of discards that were much higher than they should have been,  
28 and so those factors really led to that huge spike in the catch  
29 advice that came out of that model, and it turns out that  
30 recommended OFL coming out of the assessment was higher than any  
31 catch that had ever been on record, and so it really -- It was  
32 just an error that wasn't caught, but, luckily, at least for  
33 SEDAR 61, we were able to make that change.

34  
35 I do caution that it was just something that happened at the  
36 last minute, and we really should not have allowed that many  
37 changes. We should have sent the model back to Miami for a  
38 thorough review and diagnostics and all of that, and so was just  
39 a timing issue.

40  
41 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. I've got Spud. Go ahead.

44  
45 **MR. WOODWARD:** Thank you, Steve. That was a great presentation.  
46 I think all of us have yearned for something to fill the gap  
47 between relatively infrequent stock assessments that could give  
48 us critical advice on whether we're accomplishing our management

1 goals or not.

2  
3 I guess my question is, if we can get through the growing pains  
4 of interim analyses, and we establish a list of priority species  
5 for which we will apply them, do we have the resources we need  
6 to do these, on top of everything else that we're expecting the  
7 Science Center and the individual states and the council staff  
8 to do, because that's -- I mean, I'm excited about this, and I  
9 think it offers great potential for us to match up what is seen  
10 on the water and fishermen experiences with management advice  
11 and management practices, but I am also hesitant to create, in  
12 my mind, unrealistic expectations for them to do this, and so I  
13 know it's probably a little bit out of your wheelhouse, but I  
14 appreciate any perspective you have on that.

15  
16 **DR. SAGARESE:** I may let Katie step in and address this. I  
17 mean, I think that it's certainly a high priority for the  
18 Science Center to find the resources to do this kind of work,  
19 and I know it seems like a lot of work upfront, requiring the  
20 MSE or trying to decide -- Some of the decision points can take  
21 some time, but, as the Center works towards more efficient data  
22 processing and modeling, and hopefully better documentation, we  
23 will be able to ultimately be able to apply these methods fairly  
24 quickly again, depending upon the data and whether we have the  
25 index available or not and how long that would take.

26  
27 I think the hope is that, as we get better and better with our  
28 coding and documentation, that we'll be able to hopefully get  
29 these things out more frequently, but please, Katie, jump in if  
30 you have any more insight.

31  
32 **DR. KATIE SIEGFRIED:** I agree, Skyler. One thing I wanted to  
33 say, Spud, is we're -- A big goal of ours is to increase  
34 throughput, and we see these interim assessments as a way to do  
35 that, really without suffering any loss of transparency. Once  
36 we get through this initial step of the MSEs for them, then it  
37 will be clear what we're doing each time, and we can crank these  
38 things out a lot more easily.

39  
40 It is important though to allocate an analyst to do this, and  
41 so, if that person, if that space of an analyst, can be filled  
42 with three to six interims a year, instead of one assessment, I  
43 think that would be fantastic, and that is really where we're  
44 trying to get to. We just don't want to go too fast and use the  
45 wrong indices and use the wrong assumptions and have to  
46 backtrack and figure out errors, because we were trying to go  
47 too fast towards that increased throughput.

1 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you, Katie and Skyler, and great  
2 question, Spud. I tend to agree that this is something that I  
3 see a lot of promise and a lot of utility in, and, along the  
4 same lines of resources and kind of getting this put in place, I  
5 also think there will have to be some work done on the  
6 management side.

7  
8 For example, if we do an interim analysis and we need to adjust  
9 the ABC, we need to make sure that the plans are such that we  
10 can go ahead and respond and increase that ABC, and subsequently  
11 ACL, for those species, and so that might take some plan  
12 amendments to adjust the framework procedures and that kind of  
13 stuff, so that we're not necessarily having to do a framework  
14 amendment every single time an interim analysis is completed,  
15 and that fills in two or three meetings in between. If there's  
16 a way that we can speed it up on our end, you know, I certainly  
17 think that needs to be considered, at least around the council  
18 table. Katie, I see you have your hand up again. Go ahead.

19  
20 **DR. SIEGFRIED:** It would be great place if you all had so much  
21 advice that you were trying to figure out how to keep up with  
22 it. I think that would be a nice place to be.

23  
24 One thing that I wanted to add to what I said earlier is, for  
25 gray triggerfish, and I don't want to steal the thunder from  
26 next week, but one thing that we had to do, in order to get the  
27 gray triggerfish interim assessment completed, is work really  
28 close with Kevin Thompson and others at the State of Florida,  
29 and I think to get the video index standardized.

30  
31 I am really hoping, because that's such a good source of  
32 abundance information, that we can continue that, and perhaps  
33 figure out ways to, on a regular schedule, maybe even get  
34 interim setups, so that they can take advantage of the video  
35 index with the most recent terminal year, and I know we have  
36 some Florida folks on the phone, and so I just wanted to give a  
37 shoutout for Kevin and just the combined index has been  
38 fantastic.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thanks, Katie. Chester, go ahead.

41  
42 **MR. BREWER:** My hand-raising thing has gone on the -- It's  
43 messed up, and I didn't raise my hand, and so I don't have  
44 anything to say. Sorry.

45  
46 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Well, I could just sense that you wanted to  
47 say something, Chester.

1 **MR. BREWER:** Normally you would be right.

2  
3 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Again, this is great, and I see a lot of  
4 opportunity for these interim assessments. I do share the  
5 concern of resources, and I think that's just a broader  
6 discussion between the Science Center and the councils, as far  
7 as how to prioritize these relative to our stock assessment  
8 schedules, but I certainly see -- Especially if the utility is  
9 the rubber meets the road on this one and how the councils could  
10 certainly be really interested in this.

11  
12 To kind of circle back to an example used earlier in the meeting  
13 for red snapper, this could certainly be a way for South  
14 Atlantic red snapper, if we see a kind of consistent increasing  
15 trend in the fishery-independent indices for red snapper, this  
16 might allow some additional fish, year after year, or whatever  
17 the timeframe is in between the interims.

18  
19 However, with an overfished species, I don't know if that will  
20 necessarily be the case, because the whole point of a rebuilding  
21 plan is to get that overfished stock to a certain biomass level,  
22 and so, with increasing fishery-independent indices, that's what  
23 you would expect, if your management measures are working, and  
24 so you might not provide relief for a situation like red snapper  
25 right now, while it's overfished, but certainly, in the future,  
26 for stocks that are showing consistent rebuilding or increased  
27 abundance, this would allow for a little bit more access to that  
28 resource.

29  
30 Do we have any more questions or discussions? I am not seeing  
31 any hands. Again, thank you, and that was a fantastic  
32 presentation, and I really enjoyed it. It's 2:50, by my watch,  
33 and, technically, by the agenda, it's lunchtime, but we're well  
34 past that, but I'm going to suggest that we take a ten-minute  
35 biological break. Then, when we get back, we'll dive into a few  
36 presentations from Mr. Rindone on some management approaches,  
37 potential management approaches.

38  
39 **MR. RINDONE:** Steve, you still have a presentation by Carrie  
40 also about timing and use for management for the interim  
41 analyses.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** I apologize. We'll go to break after we hear  
44 from Carrie. My apologies.

45  
46 **MR. RINDONE:** Carrie can't believe that you forgot her. She's  
47 just beside herself right now.

1 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** I am truly, truly sorry.

2  
3 **INTERIM ANALYSES - DISCUSSION ON TIMING AND USE FOR MANAGEMENT**

4  
5 **DR. SIMMONS:** No problem, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much. I  
6 just wanted to acknowledge John Froeschke and Ryan Rindone for  
7 helping me put together this presentation, as well as Doctors  
8 John Walter and Dr. Clay Porch, who provided some insight and  
9 feedback on this presentation, which was originally slated for  
10 our Gulf Council meeting in August, and so this will be the  
11 first time I've given it to everyone else, but we were supposed  
12 to talk about this in August.

13  
14 This discussion, and Skyler's presentation teed this up great,  
15 and we tried to think about, with this presentation, that the  
16 Science Center has given us this great tool, and how can we now  
17 take this, when the council wants to make changes in management  
18 and catch levels, and think about timing and use of those, and  
19 what stocks might we want to have on an annual basis for these  
20 standing requests.

21  
22 I will provide a quick overview of what an ABC analysis is, some  
23 candidate species in the Gulf, timing of those requests, a  
24 little bit more about that example in the Gulf for red grouper,  
25 and I apologize that I don't have any specific examples for the  
26 South Atlantic Council, but hopefully you can take a look at  
27 this and think about how you might apply it in the South  
28 Atlantic.

29  
30 We'll talk a little bit about what we can do on the management  
31 side, perhaps, and these are in their infancy, as far as  
32 improving timing or automate the process, our current requests  
33 we have in the Gulf for interim analyses, and some future  
34 considerations.

35  
36 We recently learned that the interim ABC analysis, the  
37 acceptable biological catch analysis, that the Science Center is  
38 producing is also capable of producing an OFL, the change in the  
39 OFL as well, and I guess there's a couple of different ways that  
40 can be completed, and we're going to talk about, I guess, that  
41 some more, in more detail, during the SSC meeting next week for  
42 gray triggerfish, but that is possible, and that was kind of  
43 news to us, and good news to hear.

44  
45 If there is an increase in the ABC, and it would be higher than  
46 the current OFL, then that's a possibility that they can produce  
47 both, and, if the councils choose to take action on those, they  
48 can make that change for both, potentially.

1  
2 This is a quantitative method of adjusting catch advice, and it  
3 occurs between the SEDAR stock assessments, which is good news,  
4 increasing throughput, as we talked about, and it doesn't take  
5 up a slot, necessarily, on that schedule, but there is a  
6 limitation regarding resources and how many of those we can ask  
7 for and how many of those -- If the council makes changes to  
8 catch limits, how quickly we can accommodate those changes.

9  
10 It requires an accepted stock assessment, and, typically, or,  
11 to-date in the Gulf, it uses a defensible fishery-independent  
12 index. Highly Migratory Species has been able to complete  
13 these, I believe, using a catch per unit fishery-dependent  
14 index, and we haven't seen that yet in the Gulf, as far as I  
15 know to-date, and we haven't seen the triggerfish one yet.

16  
17 This is a slide that I took from Dr. Porch's presentation to the  
18 Gulf Council in October, and it just shows what species might be  
19 good candidates for these and what index might be useful for  
20 those, and you can see the species on the left and the index on  
21 the right.

22  
23 Skyler talked about this a little bit, the management strategy  
24 evaluations, and they are useful for refining this interim  
25 analysis procedure. Some things that might trigger this is if  
26 there's a long time period between stock assessments and how big  
27 of a buffer there is for uncertainty. For example, if there is  
28 multiple indices that need to be combined, there might be more  
29 uncertainty, and so you might -- This might trigger the need for  
30 this.

31  
32 You may need to complete this because it may require stakeholder  
33 workshops or input, due to competing objectives, and, big  
34 picture, these evaluations can be revisited periodically, to  
35 address specific questions, but you might not need them every  
36 time.

37  
38 Skyler walked us through a really nice example of what she did,  
39 and this is focusing on the first time the council asked for an  
40 interim analysis for red grouper, and this was before we had the  
41 stock assessment, and we were getting a lot of concerns from  
42 stakeholders at the council meetings and at public comment  
43 sessions and in written comments that red grouper was in  
44 trouble.

45  
46 In May, during the Steering Committee meeting, the Gulf Council  
47 requested the Science Center conduct an interim analysis, when  
48 we learned that this was possible. In August, the Science



1 Center laid out, for the SSC, in 2018, what this might look  
2 like, and then they completed the analysis in October of 2018,  
3 and that analysis actually -- The SSC recommended changes to the  
4 catch levels, the annual catch levels, instead of to the ABC,  
5 and so it allowed the council to have the flexibility to decide,  
6 because it was a large reduction, if they wanted to act on this  
7 in management.

8  
9 At that time, the council did act on it, and they requested an  
10 emergency rule, and also a framework action, and we started  
11 working on those, and the Regional Office staff started working  
12 on those, and, because of that request in October, an emergency  
13 rule was published to withhold the red grouper IFQ allocation  
14 for the commercial fishery in December.

15  
16 Then, in March and May, the proposed and final rule published.  
17 In May, the emergency rule, the final rule, published and was  
18 implemented. All the while, we were working on the framework  
19 action, at the same time, and so the council took final action  
20 on that framework action in April of 2019, and then that became  
21 effective and made that ACL change permanent in October of 2019,  
22 until the council makes another change again here in another  
23 amendment that we're working on.

24  
25 In this particular example, it took approximately two years, and  
26 it wasn't a real fast process, and so, if we're thinking about  
27 getting these requests and the council wants to make changes  
28 every other year, we would just have implemented a change, and  
29 so, even if the council is able to ask, and it meets the  
30 requirements of an emergency rule, it's still taking  
31 approximately seven months to implement that change.

32  
33 Due to that emergency rule request, NMFS was able to withhold  
34 the IFQ allocation before that January of 2019, when it would  
35 have been released, but sometimes we may not meet all of those  
36 requirements of an emergency rule.

37  
38 In trying to think about how, on the management side of things,  
39 could we improve timing or automate this process and really put  
40 this tool to the best use, and so one of the things we were  
41 thinking about, and I think you brought this up, Mr. Poland, is  
42 modifying the framework procedure and trying to set something  
43 up, and I think this would have to be in each FMP, like a closed  
44 framework, where we can automate this process, and it would  
45 allow changes in catch levels based on recommendations from the  
46 SSC to the ABC after you get this information, and then it goes  
47 to the council and they concur. What I'm not sure about is if  
48 that can be automated for the OFL, and so we would need to look

1 into that in more detail.

2  
3 Another thing that's being considered, and this is in the New  
4 England Council, what they're exploring, and I think this could  
5 be not just regarding the ABC Control Rule, or the ACL/ACT  
6 Control Rule, but this could be applied across multiple  
7 amendments or documents the council may have recently analyzed,  
8 which would reduce the amount of NEPA requirement for something  
9 that was completed and those range of alternatives were already  
10 analyzed.

11  
12 We can maybe automate this process, to where it goes quicker,  
13 and you only have something like a supplemental report and a  
14 Regulatory Flexibility Act analysis under NEPA that would be  
15 required, and so, on the backend, you may not need as much  
16 analysis, if that range of alternatives were already analyzed,  
17 and so that's something else we can look more into, or we can  
18 continue to move forward with this framework action approach and  
19 try to streamline that, where possible, and perhaps we could  
20 work with the Science Center and start putting something  
21 together well in advance of it going to the SSC, in anticipation  
22 of knowing which direction there may be a change in the ABC.

23  
24 In the Gulf, we have some current outstanding requests. Next  
25 week, we're going to get the gray triggerfish interim analysis,  
26 and that's going to go to the SSC, and we requested, for red  
27 snapper, an interim analysis, and we're anticipating that would  
28 be available in the spring of 2021, and, as Dr. Sagarese  
29 mentioned, we have a standing request for red grouper. I guess  
30 it's every other year now, but a request for this interim  
31 analysis, to get a health check for red grouper.

32  
33 Here's the other example, using gray triggerfish, and so we  
34 found out, in early 2020, that we weren't able to complete an  
35 operational assessment for gray triggerfish, and so, at that  
36 time, I think Dr. Porch suggested that they could do an interim  
37 analysis, and the council concurred. We went forward with the  
38 request, and we asked that it be given to the SSC in September,  
39 and so September of 2020, and there we are. We're anticipating  
40 that will go to the council in October of 2020, and then they  
41 would direct staff to make changes to those catch levels.

42  
43 Perhaps we could back to the council in January of 2021 with a  
44 final action document, and then that rule may become effective  
45 in June of 2021, and so, if there's an increase in catches, that  
46 would be good, because that's the end of the closed season, and  
47 so the commercial and recreational sector may have a fall  
48 season, perhaps, if there was an increase in the quota.

1  
2 If there was a decrease, and that quota had already been caught  
3 for the previous year, or it needed to be lowered, then you  
4 would apply that to the following year.

5  
6 In thinking about when the best time to request these might be,  
7 for most of the species that we're looking at managing, if this  
8 can be accommodated with the Science Center, is we would request  
9 an interim analysis in January. If it could be completed and go  
10 to the SSC by March of that year, the council decides if they  
11 want to take action in April, and, if we continue with the  
12 framework action idea, have a final action document in June, and  
13 the final rule becomes effective in December, so that you can  
14 realize that fishery in the following year, in January.

15  
16 Some considerations is this is a really great tool, and it has  
17 the potential to provide managers with flexibility to respond to  
18 recent trends that probably were not considered in the last  
19 stock assessment, depending on the age of that assessment, such  
20 as red tide for red grouper, or there could be other  
21 anthropogenic impacts that you may need to assess the stock for,  
22 to get an idea of where you are.

23  
24 Really, we're trying to think about the ideal time to request  
25 these analyses for most species, and it seems to be January, and  
26 then review by the SSC in March, and this is just our  
27 brainstorming, and it certainly can be modified, but just  
28 thinking about this right now, but then you have these other  
29 species, like greater amberjack and king mackerel, that you  
30 probably need to consider different timing for, because they're  
31 on a fishing year instead of a calendar year. I will stop  
32 there. Thank you.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you, Carrie. Again, my apologies for  
35 trying to run past you. Do we have any comments from anyone on  
36 the workgroup? I guess my comments, as far as considerations  
37 from the management side, were a little premature, but, again, I  
38 see a lot of applicability to this, and I see this as something  
39 that the Gulf Council is already starting to use this procedure,  
40 and it's certainly something that I feel like the South Atlantic  
41 Council could quickly get in the hopper. Mel, I see you have  
42 your hand up. Go ahead.

43  
44 **MR. BELL:** I was just going to thank Carrie for bringing that  
45 up, because that is the complete picture now. It's like Katie  
46 said, and you could have a problem where you have too much  
47 advice, too much coming at you, or I guess there is worse  
48 problems to have, but what Carrie just described is the complete

1 picture of how we actually turn that into the real world of  
2 making decisions and making things happen, and so that was  
3 great. Those two together is the full, complete picture.  
4 Thanks.

5  
6 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Any more comments or questions  
7 from the workgroup? Ryan, go ahead.

8  
9 **MR. RINDONE:** Just thinking about the conversation that we had  
10 at lunch, it might be better for the next thing that we talk  
11 about to be the carryover and phase-in, instead of zone  
12 management, just because I think it's a good follow-on for this  
13 interim analysis discussion, after we take our biological break.

14  
15 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thanks for that, Ryan. Yes, I agree that  
16 that's probably a really sensible modification, and so we'll go  
17 ahead and break for ten minutes, and, when we come back, Ryan  
18 will give us a presentation on carryover and phase-in  
19 strategies. We'll see everybody back at 3:15.

20  
21 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)  
22

#### 23 **REVIEW OF CARRYOVER AND PHASE-IN STRATEGIES**

24  
25 **MR. RINDONE:** Carryover and phase-in strategies, we had a  
26 National Standard 1 workgroup, and it was a subgroup that was  
27 comprised of NOAA Office of Science and Technology, the Science  
28 Center, council staff, the Southeast Regional Office, and  
29 Atlantic HMS folks. We all worked together to develop this  
30 technical memo to help guide the councils on carryover and  
31 phase-in, and this memo was officially published this past July.

32  
33 What is carryover? Simply, it's just moving some percentage of  
34 foregone yield from the past fishing year to the next, and it  
35 results in a one-year increase to the ABC, which in turn would  
36 affect the ACL and the other catch limits. The next year's OFL  
37 would be unchanged, and it cannot be exceeded, and that's a big  
38 caveat of it, and it can be limited by various factors that are  
39 -- Some are self-imposed, and some are kind of necessary, like  
40 buffers and species exclusions, like if something is in a  
41 rebuilding plan, and environmental considerations. Ultimately,  
42 it must continue to prevent overfishing.

43  
44 What is phase-in? Phase-in allows incremental changes in catch  
45 limits over time, and phase-in periods should not exceed three  
46 years, and they reduce the socioeconomic effects on large  
47 changes to catch limits, and, again, they must still prevent  
48 overfishing, and this little chart here shows the application of

1 phase-in for a quota decrease, with the dashed line representing  
2 phase-in of that decrease over time, to kind of soften the blow  
3 on the stakeholders.

4  
5 They are great tools when they're properly applied, and they can  
6 be carried out without causing any biological harm to the stock,  
7 and they can also be used to increase opportunity or to soften  
8 negative effects. An important point though is that, if  
9 carryover is the yin, they payback provisions are the yang, and  
10 so you can't continue to allow carryover but not address quota  
11 overages. Those overages have to be paid back, or the stock  
12 will deplete faster than forecasted.

13  
14 If you think about it in terms of finance and interest accrual,  
15 versus overdrawing your account and then eating away at your  
16 principal, and so the key here though is to prevent overfishing  
17 in the long run, and so, for some situations, payback provisions  
18 might not be that palatable.

19  
20 Phase-in can be applied to soften the effects of a quota  
21 reduction, but that softening needs to be done within three  
22 years, and that reduction was likely needed for a reason. Maybe  
23 overfishing was occurring, or there was some episodic event,  
24 like red tide with red grouper, and taking too long to phase in  
25 that reduction can create a negative effect that's not being  
26 forecasted by the model, which will mean that your projections  
27 are now inaccurate, and so you save a little now, but you have  
28 to pay it back later.

29  
30 The council explored carryover as part of this generic  
31 amendment, and things that had to be considered, when we were  
32 thinking about how we might apply it, were avoiding compounding  
33 quotas. You know, if you weren't catching the ACL, there really  
34 wasn't -- You know, year after year, there wasn't a need to just  
35 keep rolling over that extra quota every year, if the effort  
36 wasn't there to catch it.

37  
38 We wanted to avoid overfished species, and they are being  
39 rebuilt for a reason, and carryover could be carried out without  
40 harming the stock and used the increase that opportunity, but it  
41 needed to be applied to the smallest divisible unit of effort  
42 possible, and so, for something like vermilion snapper, in the  
43 Gulf, we don't have sector allocations for it, and it's just a  
44 stock ACL, but, for species like red snapper, the smallest  
45 divisible unit might be the state ACL for the State of Florida  
46 for the private recreational angler.

47  
48 Before we get into the questions, I wanted to move this one up

1 right following the interim analysis because the interim  
2 analysis allows you guys to take another glimpse at the stock  
3 condition, with a lot greater frequency than requesting a full-  
4 blown stock assessment every year, and so, whereas the carryover  
5 provision is something that can be set up through framework  
6 procedures and be somewhat automated, or at least that would be  
7 the goal, it's still relying on projections that were made  
8 following a stock assessment, and those projections aren't  
9 usually updated until we do another one.

10  
11 If we are doing interim analyses, and, if we can get to a point  
12 where we are doing those annually for some species, then we're  
13 going to greatly increase the resolution of management advice  
14 coming in for that stock, or stocks, if there is multiples that  
15 are being looked at, and so that would be something for you guys  
16 to think about, especially if perhaps there was appetite for a  
17 way to use the interim analysis process to automate updating  
18 catch advice in response to recommendations coming from the  
19 councils' SSCs, as an idea, and I'm not saying you should do  
20 that or shouldn't, but I'm just throwing it at the wall. Any  
21 questions?

22  
23 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thanks, Ryan. I really appreciate that, and  
24 especially the commentary there at the end, comparing it to the  
25 interim analysis. Do we have any questions from the workgroup  
26 for Ryan on carryovers and phase-in? Spud, go ahead.

27  
28 **MR. WOODWARD:** Thank you, Steve, and thank you, Ryan. Just to  
29 make sure I'm clear, if you had a stock that was overfished, but  
30 you basically underharvested your ACL, and let's just say by 50  
31 percent, you could not carry over into the next year, because  
32 then it's overfishing? Is that correct?

33  
34 **MR. RINDONE:** That was a consideration that the Gulf Council had  
35 put forward, because, if these species are in rebuilding plans,  
36 the thinking was that, especially if they're overfished, like  
37 they're actively overfished, then the goal, first and foremost,  
38 should be to try to get them out of that overfished condition,  
39 and so an example for the Gulf would be greater amberjack, which  
40 our last assessment had said that it was overfished and that  
41 overfishing was occurring.

42  
43 Based on our status determination criteria, it's still  
44 overfished, but we have a stock assessment underway right now,  
45 and so we'll see what that churns out here in a few months, but,  
46 if a stock is in a rebuilding plan, but is no longer overfished  
47 or undergoing overfishing, like red snapper, per last year, then  
48 perhaps there might be some room still for carryover, in that

1 circumstance, without jeopardizing the success of the rebuilding  
2 plan, but, again, when you're looking at carryover, if you're  
3 willing to carry over from one year to the following year, you  
4 also need to be considerate of what happens if you overharvest  
5 and need to pay that back.

6  
7 Like I said, it's kind of a yin and a yang. If you're going to  
8 do one, you have to be prepared to do the other, to make sure  
9 that you don't cause any undue biological harm to the stock, and  
10 so, in that respect, that's where the interim analysis kind of  
11 plays a similar, but different, role, because it allows you to  
12 kind of do a checkup on that stock every time you conduct that  
13 interim analysis, and so you know has any undue harm come to the  
14 stock as a result of what's been done in the recent past or not.

15  
16 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Do you have a follow-up, Spud?

17  
18 **MR. WOODWARD:** Yes. Thank you, Ryan. So, if you've got a plan  
19 where your stock is overfished, so you would be prohibited from  
20 carrying over to increase the ACL, and you may or may not be  
21 required to repay the overage, I guess depending on the plan,  
22 and so, sort of to link this back up to interim analysis, if  
23 you've got a stock, and I will just use South Atlantic red  
24 snapper for an example, that's deemed to be overfished, but yet  
25 you've got an independent index which has an almost vertical  
26 trajectory, it seems like, in terms of abundance, and you're  
27 definitely harvesting everything you can get, and maybe a little  
28 more, if you have an interim analysis that says we can double  
29 the ACL, and it's overfished, then would the council be able to  
30 increase the ACL?

31  
32 **MR. RINDONE:** If the council's SSC reviewed that information and  
33 recommended as such, there would be certainly more support for  
34 doing that. What we're trying to work towards is the ability to  
35 modify catch limits, like the OFL and the ABC, as a result of  
36 advice received from the interim analyses, and I will stop there  
37 and let the Science Center speak more to how they would foresee  
38 that actually happening.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Is there anyone from the Science Center that  
41 would like to address that now?

42  
43 **DR. SIEGFRIED:** My audio cut in and out during the last  
44 question, and would you mind -- Maybe Ryan could summarize it  
45 for me? I apologize, but we have a lot of people online at my  
46 house.

47  
48 **MR. RINDONE:** Sure, Katie. Spud was asking, if for like

1 Atlantic red snapper, if an interim analysis is done, and it  
2 says that South Atlantic red snapper, which is overfished, that  
3 the ACL could potentially be doubled from what it was, and is  
4 that something that the council could move forward with, and I  
5 had said that the SSC could certainly consider that interim  
6 analysis, and they could advise the council on the best course  
7 of action moving forward, but that one of the goals of the  
8 interim analyses was to also be able to inform OFL and ABC, but  
9 that I would let you guys speak to that directly.

10  
11 **DR. SIEGFRIED:** Thanks. It is meant to update ABC, and we can  
12 update OFL from it, and we don't actually use the status during  
13 the interim assessment, or interim analysis, and so there's  
14 nothing different we do there.

15  
16 If the South Atlantic red snapper was to undergo an interim  
17 assessment, I assume we would do the MSE to determine the best  
18 index, because, to my memory, there wasn't an evaluation of  
19 which index was best yet, and so that would be more what we  
20 would consider, rather than just the status, and, if the MSE was  
21 conducted, we might also look into a little bit more about how  
22 accurately the catch can be monitored. I know that the mini-  
23 seasons are monitored very closely in the South Atlantic, and so  
24 that's something that could be included in that MSE. Let me  
25 know if that didn't answer your question.

26  
27 **MR. RINDONE:** Spud?

28  
29 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Follow-up, Spud?

30  
31 **MR. WOODWARD:** We're getting there, and I guess maybe I'm just  
32 being a little obtuse in my question. I guess what I'm really  
33 trying to figure out is, if you have a stock that's considered  
34 to be severely overfished, but yet you have an interim analysis  
35 that shows an increasing trend in an acceptable fisheries-  
36 independent indices, is, because it's overfished, it's  
37 disqualified from having any sort of increase in the ABC, based  
38 on the interim analysis, and, if so, it's that categorically the  
39 case, then I understand it, but, if it's not, then is it the  
40 SSC's responsibility to take the interim analysis and the  
41 recommendations thereof and then look at all the other relevant  
42 factors and then make a recommendation back to the council as to  
43 whether they approve increasing the ABC or disprove? I'm just  
44 trying to figure out the steps in the process here to get to a  
45 council-level decision.

46  
47 **MR. RINDONE:** Spud, I'm wondering if we're inadvertently  
48 combining carryover and the interim analysis process, which are



1 really two separate things. Carryover is something that would  
2 be applied based on the landings in the past and the projections  
3 for the following year, whereas the interim analysis is  
4 something that could be done annually, or biannually or what  
5 have you, to reexamine the condition of the stock against --  
6 Like basically the performance of the landings against that  
7 representative index of abundance.

8  
9 In your scenario with South Atlantic red snapper, what would be  
10 measured is the ABC for South Atlantic red snapper against  
11 whatever that fishery-independent index of abundance is saying  
12 is happening with the stock, in terms of relative abundance  
13 there, and so, if the index is trending up, saying that stock  
14 biomass is increasing, and it's saying that that's happening at  
15 a rate that is greater than the change in the ABC, and the SSC  
16 has more confidence in the performance of that representative  
17 index of abundance than they do in the projections from the last  
18 stock assessment, which are what generate the ABC, then they can  
19 set that scalar that Dr. Sagarese talked about to more closely -  
20 - To have the advice that comes from the interim analysis more  
21 closely track the index.

22  
23 What that may tell the SSC, and what it could tell the council,  
24 is that it's time to have another operational assessment of the  
25 species and consider all the different components and figure  
26 out, all right, where exactly is the stock.

27  
28 If we're having this increase in relative abundance from this  
29 one index, maybe we'll have it in more than just this index, and  
30 maybe we'll have it across the board, and it's definitely time  
31 to pop the hood and see what's going on again, but, in the  
32 interim, the catch advice could be modified to more closely  
33 track what that representative index is saying is going on with  
34 the stock.

35  
36 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Ryan. Spud, to your  
37 question, I think I understand what you're saying, and it's  
38 basically, for a stock like red snapper, that is overfished,  
39 with an interim analysis, and the fact that abundance indices  
40 show an increasing trend, would we be able to get more fish to  
41 catch, and I kind of feel like that probably ventures into the  
42 management world as well, as far as are we meeting those  
43 rebuilding requirements and that kind of stuff, and I see Roy  
44 has his hand up, and I expect that he will speak to that. Roy,  
45 go ahead.

46  
47 **DR. CRABTREE:** There is nothing inherent in the fact that a  
48 stock is overfished that would keep you from doing an interim

1 analysis and getting a higher ABC, and so that could be done.  
2 Red snapper in the South Atlantic is more complicated, because  
3 the current ACL and catch levels are not based on the last  
4 assessment. They were set independent of that.

5  
6 The South Atlantic is more complicated than that though, because  
7 that's not what the current ACL is based on, but the assessment  
8 that they're working on in Beaufort is not an interim  
9 assessment, and it's more of an update assessment, because you  
10 remember there was a whole lot of selectivity and new  
11 information and things to be incorporated.

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Roy. Spud, does that  
14 cover it? Do you have any follow-up?

15  
16 **MR. WOODWARD:** No, and Roy answered my question. Basically,  
17 there is nothing inherently prohibitive, and it really all comes  
18 down to the particulars of that stock and the management of the  
19 stock, and so I appreciate everybody's forbearance.

20  
21 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, everybody. Any more  
22 questions for Ryan on carryovers and phase-in? Seeing none,  
23 we've got two more presentations from Ryan. The first is the  
24 evaluation of zone management.

#### 25 26 **EVALUATION OF ZONE MANAGEMENT**

27  
28 **MR. RINDONE:** All right. What is zone and area management?  
29 Simply, it's just using spatial boundaries to apply fine, or  
30 finer, scale management measures for a species or species  
31 groups, and it can be used for resident or migratory species, as  
32 we've certainly demonstrated in both regions.

33  
34 The largest limiting factor is usually the data, because they  
35 may not exist to help us manage that species or species group to  
36 the desired scale. Also, the survey, or surveys, that are used  
37 to try to check on the relative abundance of those species may  
38 not collect the data at the desired scale that we're trying to  
39 manage that species at, and so, if we can't tell what's  
40 happening as a result of management action, we can't do much.

41  
42 Pros to zone management are that it adds flexibility to tailor  
43 management to specific populations, both marine and human, and  
44 so, even if a species is ubiquitous throughout the region, the  
45 way the people chase after that species might be different  
46 depending on the season, market variation, et cetera, and so  
47 customizing regulations to best suit an affected environment  
48 certainly has appeal.

1  
2 We can also generate an improved understanding of the affected  
3 populations, and it allows us to improve our responsiveness to  
4 changes in population dynamics. Changing management in one area  
5 might be possible without negatively affecting what happens in  
6 another area, depending on the biology of the species.

7  
8 Some of the drawbacks are, first and foremost, definitely the  
9 data burden, and so how we collect the data and what it takes to  
10 synthesize those data is going to increase with each layer of  
11 stratification, and so, if you go, in the Gulf, from just Gulf-  
12 wide to eastern and western Gulf, you have now doubled it. If  
13 you divide it up between five states, you have quintupled it,  
14 and, if you divide it further still, you guys get the idea, and  
15 so it's just more and more is involved, and Mel would probably  
16 want to know what the cost was.

17  
18 The modeling burden would be the next thing -- I am just picking  
19 at you, Mel. The modeling burden would be the next thing, and  
20 having the additional spatial stratification can be difficult to  
21 model, and it would certainly add uncertainty, and so some of  
22 our -- Well, a lot of our models are done on basically single-  
23 area models, and so creating models that are considerate of  
24 further spatial stratification is basically building a whole new  
25 modeling environment, and it's definitely a lift for our  
26 analytical bodies.

27  
28 A more complex regulatory environment can also confound the  
29 data, which we know all too well for greater amberjack, as an  
30 example, and we've changed the regulations on greater amberjack  
31 more so recently than most species. Poor reef donkeys.

32  
33 The last thing would be stakeholder burden, and so stakeholders  
34 fishing in multiple areas would need to know multiple sets of  
35 regulations, especially up in the northern Gulf, where we have  
36 fishermen in the Panhandle and in Alabama that fish on both  
37 sides of that state line, and they will need to know exactly  
38 what they are and are not allowed to do in each area, and so,  
39 the more lines you draw on the map, as far as what can go on  
40 where, the more that the stakeholder is going to have to be  
41 cognizant of when they're out there chasing the resource.

42  
43 An example of zone and area management that we use between our  
44 councils is for commercial king mackerel, and so we have the  
45 Gulf and Atlantic groups with a mixing zone south of U.S. 1 in  
46 Monroe County, and you guys can see how everything is broken  
47 down here on the map, and this is from Amendment 26, and this  
48 was actually a cool follow-on from the king mackerel assessment,

1 because it resulted in a pretty significant reduction in what we  
2 thought the mixing zone was for kingfish, and it changed how we  
3 ended up managing this stock in both of our areas.

4  
5 The way that it's set up is to cater to what's actually going on  
6 in each of these regions from a commercial perspective, and also  
7 when the fish are going to be in those areas, and I will speak  
8 more about the Gulf, since I'm more intimately familiar with  
9 that one, but the fish migration for kingfish starts in the  
10 western Gulf in June, and the season in the Western Zone opens  
11 up on July 1, and so there is a mix of traveling fishermen from  
12 the east coast of Florida and elsewhere, and resident fishermen  
13 in the Gulf, that fish that Western Zone stock until usually  
14 sometime between September, mid-September, and early November,  
15 and then October 1 is when the Northern Zone opens up.

16  
17 The Northern Zone opens up a little bit later, so that the  
18 dually-permitted vessels, the vessels that are both commercial  
19 and charter/for-hire, can switch over from running charters in  
20 the summer and early fall to some more commercial-intensive  
21 operations in the wintertime, including chasing after those  
22 kingfish.

23  
24 The Southern Zone also opens up July 1, but their harvest can be  
25 intermittent, but it really picks up in the later months, in the  
26 winter, and, once the kingfish start to turn back in the spring,  
27 the Northern Zone can get another crack at them, and so the way  
28 that this is set up, specifically for the Gulf anyway, it  
29 definitely caters to what the fishermen want to try to do and  
30 where the fish are at the time, and the Atlantic is set up in a  
31 similar way.

32  
33 An example on the recreational side is private recreational red  
34 snapper in the Gulf, and you can see the lines here dividing up  
35 the state-water jurisdictions for managing private vessels and  
36 state guideboats for red snapper, and the -- Don't worry so much  
37 about the fact that Texas waters are shaded blue. This is just  
38 what I pulled out of one of the amendments, but you can see how  
39 the lines are set up on the map and the way that everything is  
40 divided.

41  
42 We were talking about what would be going on between say the  
43 Alabama and Florida Panhandle anglers, and so those anglers  
44 would certainly have to be aware of where they were and what  
45 they were doing, to make sure that they were in compliance with  
46 the regulations at the time. Any questions?

47  
48 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks for that presentation,

1 Ryan. Do we have any questions from the workgroup? I am not  
2 seeing any. This issue of dealing with zone management, it  
3 seems to crop up quite a bit, in a bunch of different management  
4 discussions, just because our regions are so broad, and there is  
5 differences in fish availability and seasonal availability and  
6 spatial availability across our management zones.

7  
8 **MR. RINDONE:** Mr. Chair, if I can just jump in, to kind of poke  
9 the bear a little bit.

10  
11 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Go ahead.

12  
13 **MR. RINDONE:** In thinking about this, and thinking about other  
14 species that occur in each council's jurisdiction, you guys  
15 might try to think which species are fished differently in  
16 different areas, and, of those species, which of them might be  
17 candidates for an application of zone management, and, if one of  
18 them might be, what sorts of differences would there be between  
19 zones if you were to establish zone management for that species.

20  
21 I will pick on one that would be -- Like what we were talking  
22 about before for the difference between doing something like  
23 Atlantic red snapper or Gulf vermilion, and I will pick on Gulf  
24 greater amberjack. We have gone back and forth in the Gulf with  
25 what to do with the seasons for greater amberjack, because, in  
26 different areas of the Gulf, different fishermen want to fish  
27 the fish at different times.

28  
29 Off of Louisiana, the commercial fishermen like to get into them  
30 in the wintertime. Off the east coast of Florida, the  
31 recreational fishermen like going after them in the early spring  
32 and in May, to make sure there's something out there to catch,  
33 and that's a little bit different from what the folks in Texas  
34 want. They like getting after them in August and September,  
35 before it's time to go chase Bambi.

36  
37 Every region is going to have a little bit different desire, and  
38 so the same fish that occurs within all of these different  
39 regions, and that isn't migrating enormous distances between  
40 them, is being used in a little bit different way at a little  
41 bit different time, and so that's just one example of  
42 consideration of how different areas want to use the same thing  
43 in a different way.

44  
45 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thanks for that, Ryan. Martha, go ahead.

46  
47 **MS. GUYAS:** Thanks, Steve. Thanks, Ryan. One of the, I guess,  
48 challenges that I see with doing zone management right now, at

1 least for a lot of recreational fisheries, and I think we talked  
2 about this a little bit with amberjack, is that I think, at this  
3 point, our regions are limited by MRIP regions, right, because  
4 we would need to be able to track what's happening in the  
5 region, catch-wise, I think.

6  
7 In Florida, with the State Reef Fish Survey, we have different  
8 strata, and so that may be something that we could -- Let me  
9 also say that, with greater amberjack, using that example,  
10 different areas of Florida's Gulf coast wanted very different  
11 seasons and different things.

12  
13 We could use, potentially, the different areas that we use for  
14 data collection for the State Reef Fish Survey, if we went down  
15 that road, but I felt like that was a hurdle that we identified  
16 when we talked about this at the Gulf Council with amberjack,  
17 and that was one of them, but, anyway, I'm just kind of putting  
18 that out there, but I think it is a tool that we should not  
19 dismiss, for sure, and so I don't mean to poo-poo it, but that,  
20 I guess, limitation, to me, can be a significant one, depending  
21 on what fishery you're talking about and what the region should  
22 be.

23  
24 **MR. RINDONE:** I think that's a great point.

25  
26 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Yes, I agree. That's a fantastic point, and,  
27 I mean, the South Atlantic Council certainly had to deal with  
28 that, and I think Atlantic migratory group cobia is a prime  
29 example, where that boundary line was put where it was, just to  
30 accommodate that, among many other reasons, and, especially up  
31 in here in North Carolina, Cape Hatteras is that biogeophysical  
32 boundary for a lot of different stocks.

33  
34 MRIP, just because of the way our coast is oriented and where  
35 our inlets are, it doesn't do a really good job of  
36 differentiating trips north and south of that Cape, and, when  
37 we've looked at drawing management lines, especially for state  
38 species, that becomes a problem. I mean, it's not an  
39 insurmountable problem, but it's certainly a consideration, and  
40 so I appreciate that. All right.

41  
42 Any more discussion for zone management? I think Ryan made a  
43 good suggestion of -- We certainly don't have to do it right  
44 now, but think about some potential candidate species where zone  
45 management might be appropriate. All right. Seeing none, we  
46 will move on to your last presentation, Ryan, on conditional  
47 accountability measures.

## CONDITIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

**MR. RINDONE:** All right. What are accountability measures? They are usually triggered as a result of another event, and they're designed to counteract that triggering event, and they maintain responsibility to manage a stock sustainably, and so some examples of that might be trip limit adjustments, once a certain amount of the catch limit has been reached, bag limit adjustments, payback provisions, in-season closures, and post-season effort adjustments.

Examples from the South Atlantic include in-season closures for many species and payback provisions that are usually tied to stock status or whether or not something is overfished or undergoing overfishing. Also, trip limit step-downs, based on some percentage of the ACL being landed, are used, mostly in the commercial, and we also use these in the Gulf in a couple of circumstances, like with greater amberjack.

In the Gulf, like I just mentioned, we have the commercial trip limit reduction for greater amberjack, which drops it down to 250 pounds once 75 percent of the ACL is met, and another example for the recreational sector is the payback provision for the state-specific ACLs, and so, if a state-specific ACL is exceeded in a year, then the following year's ACL is reduced by that overage, pound for pound.

We often think of accountability measures as a way to address a negative outcome, but there's no reason they can't be used to increase opportunities also, and we're trying to ultimately manage to OY, or optimum yield, sustainably, and so that means that, if we're leaving a lot of fish in the water, and we just haven't -- Maybe we just haven't figured out the way to allow the stakeholders to access those fish, and it's not that they don't want them, but it's that the construct is keeping them from it.

Triggers can be anything the councils want them to be, and underharvest could be a trigger to increase season length or increase a bag or trip limit or some sort of temporary allocation shift from one sector to another, under certain conditions.

We explored this a little bit Gulf king mackerel, in CMP Amendment 29, which the Gulf has since tabled, but it kind of illustrates the being able to move quota back and forth, depending on what the landings have been in the previous years. In this particular amendment, the first priority of the Gulf

1 Council was to maintain the year-round recreational access to  
2 king mackerel, and the second was to increase overall harvest,  
3 to try to achieve OY.

4  
5 Gulf king mackerel management in the Gulf, as in the South  
6 Atlantic, is quite complex, and, in the Gulf, it's influenced by  
7 a forty-year-old allocation, and there is currently no IFQ  
8 program in place for Gulf kingfish.

9  
10 Some other possibilities that I think, at least through some  
11 commenting, the South Atlantic had heard about this idea for  
12 yellowtail snapper, which has had historical recreational  
13 underharvest, I think over the last fifteen years or so, just  
14 meaning that the recreational ACL hasn't been caught, and  
15 popular species -- Yellowtail is, obviously, a very popular  
16 species with private and for-hire vessels, and especially in the  
17 Keys.

18  
19 I grew up going down to the Keys, and there were times, on for-  
20 hire vessels, when yellowtail would make the trip, and so, if  
21 nothing else was biting, you could always catch a bucketful of  
22 yellowtail.

23  
24 SEDAR 64, which has recently been completed, but we're still  
25 waiting on the SSCs to make decisions about the catch limits,  
26 and I think that will happen on September 30, used new MRIP-FES  
27 and a spawning stock biomass adjustment for yellowtail snapper,  
28 and so a possibility might exist there to explore something like  
29 this if the recreational quota continues to not be met, and  
30 maybe the bag limit could be increased, or maybe measures to  
31 increase catch could be rescinded if some percentage of the  
32 stock ACL is met, and then brought back later, and so there are  
33 a bunch of different ways that this could be looked at.

34  
35 Again, it doesn't have to be that accountability measures always  
36 take away. We could use conditions to make it such that things  
37 are given back, as long as other conditions are met.

38  
39 Another example is Gulf Spanish mackerel. Historic stock  
40 underharvest has been the story here, and I think the ACL is  
41 something like eleven million pounds, and I think the Gulf  
42 typically lands somewhere in the neighborhood of three or four,  
43 and it's a ubiquitous species, near and offshore in the Gulf,  
44 and SEDAR 28 dramatically increased the OFL and the ABC for the  
45 stock.

46  
47 If the stock quota continues to not be met, and, again, in the  
48 Gulf, Spanish is managed as a stock ACL, and there's no sector



1 allocations, but, if the quota continues to not be met, and the  
2 fishermen think that it would be helpful for them, and, again,  
3 this is recreational and commercial in this particular example,  
4 then perhaps something like removing the size limit or  
5 increasing the bag limit could be explored, if that's something  
6 that they wanted.

7  
8 Measures to increase catch could be rescinded, again, if some  
9 percentage of the stock ACL is met. Right now, we're around say  
10 35 percent or so, and let's say that it got up to 85 percent.  
11 Then, the following year, maybe the bag limit goes back down to  
12 what it was, or maybe the size limit of twelve inches fork  
13 length gets put back in place, just to make sure that we don't  
14 cause any undue biological harm. Where applicable, we could  
15 always try to use interim analyses to monitor what's going on  
16 with the stock, using that representative index of abundance.

17  
18 What would be next? What other species might benefit from novel  
19 approaches to AMs, and you guys should think about what other  
20 potential triggers can you think of that you might want to apply  
21 for certain species, and what do you want the outcome to be?  
22 Like what is the ultimate need for that particular species for  
23 the stakeholders? Are there questions?

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thanks, Ryan. Any questions for Ryan on  
26 accountability measures? One thing, Ryan, that just pops into  
27 my head, just because we've been dealing with it at the South  
28 Atlantic Council for the last couple of fishing seasons for  
29 Spanish mackerel, is you mentioned the possibility of, if  
30 there's chronic underharvest, relaxing regulations, but what  
31 we've heard from a lot of our recreational stakeholders for  
32 Spanish mackerel is it's chronically underharvested.

33  
34 I mean, most years, it's less than 50 percent of the ACL is  
35 landed, and what we're hearing is that's fine, because some of  
36 the vocal recreational stakeholders have expressed a desire to  
37 maintain a certain level of abundance to increase their  
38 interaction rate with the species, and so we've had some kind of  
39 online and offline discussions at council meetings, as far as  
40 potentially redefining what OFL is for the different sectors.

41  
42 Really, for the recreational sector, for a lot of our species,  
43 it's more about having interactions and having that abundance  
44 out there and not necessarily maximizing that harvest, and so,  
45 from a trigger perspective, it certainly is convenient to put  
46 something in place, as far as something to the effect of, if the  
47 ACL is chronically underharvested for three fishing years or  
48 something, then it automatically triggers an increase in the bag

1 limit, or something to that effect, but, just from our -- At  
2 least my experience with Spanish mackerel, that doesn't seem  
3 like something that's necessarily desirable to the recreational  
4 fishermen.

5  
6 That's not saying that there aren't other fisheries where that  
7 might be desirable, but a lot of other fisheries it tends to be  
8 the opposite, where a lot of the concern and consternation,  
9 especially from the recreational sector, is there's not enough  
10 fish and we need more fish and we need higher abundance, so we  
11 can have these interactions. I am just putting that out there  
12 as an observation. Go ahead, Ryan.

13  
14 **MR. RINDONE:** Thanks, and we've heard that, too. We heard that  
15 specifically about king mackerel from the recreational sector,  
16 about having appreciation for the probability of interaction  
17 with the species, and also the ability to interact with larger  
18 individuals of the species, trying to get after more of the big  
19 smoker kings rather than the little snakes, and so that would be  
20 something that the councils should consider when they're trying  
21 to determine what do they think OY actually is, because that is  
22 something that is not just considerate of the biological side of  
23 things, but also the social and the economic factors.

24  
25 If a fish has more value to the stakeholders as being in the  
26 water, as opposed to being harvested, then that's something that  
27 the councils should consider, and so those are definitely great  
28 points, and these would all be things that I would presume would  
29 come out through council discussions on the topic.

30  
31 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Yes, absolutely, and it certainly doesn't  
32 detract from the fact that this is another management tool that  
33 we have in our toolbox that we could utilize, if it's  
34 appropriate, in that fishery. All right. Any more questions  
35 for Ryan on the accountability measures? All right.

36  
37 Seeing none, I would like to have a brief discussion, before the  
38 meeting concludes, about our workgroup charge, but, before we do  
39 that, I think it would probably be beneficial to go ahead and  
40 get public comment before we have that discussion, and so, first  
41 off, are there any public on the line who would like to give  
42 public comment? If so, raise your hand. We have a gentleman,  
43 Mr. Gary Jarvis. Go ahead, sir, whenever you're ready.

44  
45 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

46  
47 **MR. GARY JARVIS:** This is Captain Gary Jarvis, the Executive  
48 Director of the Charter Fishermen's Association here in the Gulf

1 of Mexico. I have listened, and I missed one hour earlier, and  
2 I had to give a speech on the heritage of the Destin fishing  
3 fleet there at 9:00 to 10:00, but the only comments I wanted to  
4 make, and it kind of pertains to your efforts to establish a  
5 charge and a scope of work, is, for us, accountability,  
6 especially in rebuilding fisheries, we have proven, through  
7 various management efforts here in the Gulf, leads to more  
8 access to the fishery.

9  
10 That's -- The underlying discussion here is all about access,  
11 and the states have been, and are, working to those ends, to get  
12 a higher level of accountability for the private recreational  
13 anglers. All of them though, after watching those  
14 presentations, are grave, grave improvements over what they had  
15 five years ago, but they also have room for plenty of  
16 improvement.

17  
18 Some of their issues are technology, and some of them might be a  
19 little bit systematic, and some is budgeting, and it seems like  
20 everybody wanted to know what each one of those projects costs,  
21 and, as usual, in fisheries management, some of it is political,  
22 but, in multiuse fisheries, the better data you get, by a higher  
23 level of accountability, it should be the goal of this  
24 committee, and, fortunately, in the Gulf of Mexico, with our  
25 council, and most of our state managers, that has been a  
26 priority.

27  
28 One of the things that I wanted to do was applaud the agency,  
29 the South Atlantic and Gulf Council and the SSC, for  
30 establishing a group like this and to establish a charge and a  
31 scope of work and a strategy, and I hope, as you guys continue  
32 this process, that you come up with some policies that's going  
33 to move us forward into higher levels of accountability.

34  
35 In multiuse fisheries, even though there may be battles,  
36 political battles, over allocation or who gets to catch what,  
37 long-term, in a thirty-thousand-foot view, better accountability  
38 by all the users is going to enhance the overall management of  
39 the fishery, and, like I said, if we're in the rebuilding  
40 process, and we've got a healthy fishery, then that's going to  
41 increase access for all the user groups, and so I just wanted to  
42 commend you guys for your efforts today, and I know it was a  
43 long time in front of the computer, but there was a lot of great  
44 information and great presentations, and I just wanted to thank  
45 all of you for that.

46  
47 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thank you, sir, and I appreciate those  
48 comments, especially on what our potential charge for the

1 workgroup should be. I appreciate that. Are there any other  
2 members of the public who wish to make comment? Seeing none,  
3 again, thank you for the comments.

4  
5 Now, as the workgroup, before we adjourn, I would like to open  
6 the floor up to the workgroup members to have a discussion on  
7 what our charge as the workgroup should be. We've had some  
8 comments, interspersed throughout the day, that have really  
9 touched on it, and we've heard better data, as a primary goal,  
10 or primary focus, and we certainly need to focus on providing  
11 usable and applicable recommendations to the Gulf and South  
12 Atlantic Council on how to incorporate or how to incorporate MFA  
13 requirements, mandates in Section 102, into management. Is  
14 there anybody that wants to take a stab at a draft statement?  
15 Have at it. Martha, go ahead.

16  
17 **OTHER BUSINESS**  
18 **DISCUSSION OF WORKGROUP CHARGE**  
19

20 **MS. GUYAS:** Thanks, Steve. I think Jessica had to get off the  
21 line, but we were kind of just kicking around just some draft  
22 language, just to get the group started, and so I can read that,  
23 if you would like. It's just two sentences.

24  
25 Our thought was how about explore alternative management  
26 approaches to suit regional/fishery needs, including data  
27 collection improvements to improve recreational fishing  
28 opportunities. I will --

29  
30 **MR. RINDONE:** Could you give us a little help here?

31  
32 **MS. GUYAS:** Hang on. I'm trying to toggle all my windows here.  
33 Let's see here. Explore alternative management approaches to  
34 suit regional/fishery needs, including data collection  
35 improvements, to improve recreational fishing opportunities.  
36 Then I guess the action for the committee would be to provide a  
37 report to councils with a prioritized list of alternative  
38 management approaches. This is pretty basic, and so suggestions  
39 are welcome, but I kind of figured it's better to start from  
40 something than nothing, and so I will just put that out there  
41 for consideration.

42  
43 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Martha. Yes, that  
44 certainly gets something on the board. I mean, in general, I  
45 feel like it captures what we were charged with from the  
46 discussions between our two councils at the CCC, and it captures  
47 the language, as far as alternative management approaches. We  
48 might could add in a reference to the Modernizing Fish Act, or

1 maybe pull some of that language out, just to reinforce that's  
2 kind of what the focus of this workgroup is, even though it is  
3 in our workgroup name, but at least codify that in our charge.

4  
5 You have hit on including -- Maybe investigating and including  
6 data collection improvements to improve recreational fishing  
7 opportunities, and so, I mean, I feel like the meat is there,  
8 and I don't feel like it leaves any nuanced perspective out or  
9 anything. Ryan, go ahead.

10  
11 **MR. RINDONE:** Thanks, and so you might put the bit about the MFA  
12 at the end of the action there, and so to provide a report to  
13 the councils with a prioritized list of alternative management  
14 approaches, as directed by the Modern Fish Act. I don't know  
15 that we need to put the whole long form of it in there, unless  
16 somebody feels otherwise, and I think it's kind of colloquially  
17 known what it is.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** I can't think of anything else that has that  
20 acronym, off the top of my head, and so I think that's fine. Do  
21 we have any more thoughts from workgroup members? Half of us  
22 are government employees, and so we have a certain word count  
23 that we need to reach. Are we happy with this, or do we need  
24 five pages? Mel Bell, go ahead.

25  
26 **MR. BELL:** I am not looking to add any more verbiage, but I went  
27 back and pulled up the Act, and I think what you've got so far  
28 fits within the verbiage provided in the Act, and so we're in  
29 the ballpark, and we're not wandering off into something that is  
30 not covered, and it's kind of broad, in terms of limited  
31 guidance there, but I think we're -- I wouldn't worry too much  
32 about the word count.

33  
34 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Also, to that, I mean, it's important to note  
35 too that this workgroup wasn't a mandated workgroup by the Act,  
36 and this was something that, through discussions at the CCC,  
37 that leadership of both councils felt like it would be  
38 advantageous to put a group together to kind of explore all the  
39 different options that there are with this Section 102 mandate,  
40 but we aren't specifically mandated to produce anything or meet  
41 a timeline or take specific considerations, and so, I mean, I  
42 think it's fine to leave our workgroup charge kind of broad, in  
43 the sense that it's hitting the main high notes from the Act,  
44 but we still have some opportunity there to kind of explore this  
45 issue kind of free form and as we see fit.

46  
47 **MR. BELL:** Yes, and I just mentioned that just because, putting  
48 my bureaucratic hat on, we fit within the Act, and, yes, you're

1 right that we're not listed in there as something that had to  
2 happen, but we're still fitting within the context of how this  
3 whole thing started through the Act, and so that's a good thing.

4  
5 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Kevin Anson, I see you have your hand up. Go  
6 ahead.

7  
8 **MR. ANSON:** So, just to wordsmith a little bit, since we aren't  
9 directed -- This particular workgroup is not directed within the  
10 MFA, but maybe change "directed" there, and that was offered by  
11 Ryan, to "described" or "outlined".

12  
13 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** I like "outlined".

14  
15 **MR. RINDONE:** Maybe "in keeping with".

16  
17 **MR. ANSON:** That would work too, yes.

18  
19 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Okay.

20  
21 **MR. RINDONE:** Or, if that's too colloquial, then "in  
22 consideration of". That might sound a little better, in  
23 consideration of the MFA.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Yes. All right. I feel like we're at a  
26 pretty good place. Any additional comments or suggestions? I  
27 am not hearing any, and so congratulations. We have completed a  
28 task. Good job, workgroup. All right. Unless there is any  
29 other business from any of the workgroup members, and please  
30 raise your hand. If not, I just want to thank everybody for  
31 sticking with us today, workgroup members and the invited  
32 presenters. All the presenters were fantastic. I see that  
33 Chester might have his hand raised.

34  
35 **MR. BREWER:** I did, but this so screwy, and I had it raised like  
36 ten minutes ago, and I don't think it registered, and so I think  
37 that this language that's here will work perfectly, quite  
38 frankly. Thank you.

39  
40 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Chester. All right.  
41 With that, again -- Go ahead.

42  
43 **MR. RINDONE:** Before we all bail, just something to think about  
44 is what the next step is. Now that we have our charge and the  
45 action that we're going to try to accomplish, and we've had  
46 these discussions, the next thing to do would be to try to  
47 satisfy pieces or all of this charge, and so a little bit of  
48 input from the workgroup about how they would like to approach

1 doing that would certainly help staff, so we know how to best  
2 provide for your needs.

3  
4 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Ryan. Absolutely. I view  
5 this meeting and the presentations as more of a kind of data  
6 collection and information overview session, and we certainly  
7 received a lot of information and a lot of good perspectives.  
8 There were certainly some things that we discussed today, like  
9 interim analyses and carryovers, that seemed to garner a lot of  
10 discussion and a lot of interest, and that's certainly something  
11 that we can focus on at the next meeting.

12  
13 As far as developing specific recommendations, that might take a  
14 little bit of work on our end offline, as far as structuring  
15 that discussion and figuring out exactly what recommendations,  
16 or potential recommendations, are achievable.

17  
18 We talked a lot about data collection, and it seems to be that  
19 there are numerous data collection programs throughout the two  
20 regions, and we didn't talk a whole lot about tags and catch  
21 cards, and so that's something that we could still investigate a  
22 little bit further. However, that's something that most of us  
23 are pretty familiar with, and, at least at the South Atlantic  
24 Council, we've already had some of those discussions.

25  
26 The South Atlantic Council is actually trying to schedule a  
27 recreational issues council meeting, probably sometime in  
28 November, to go over a couple of our recreationally-focused  
29 amendments that have been on the back-burner for a while, and  
30 one of those was recreational reporting and fish tags and that  
31 stuff, but that's certainly something that we can talk about at  
32 the next meeting, and we'll talk about it more from an  
33 application perspective, and so what type of recommendations and  
34 considerations for piloting a program like that, and what are  
35 some candidate species for that.

36  
37 You also mentioned, during your presentation on regional  
38 management, maybe identifying some species that might be  
39 candidates for consideration for regional management, and that's  
40 certainly something that we can look at as a workgroup, from  
41 both the South Atlantic perspective and the Gulf region  
42 perspective. I've got a few more, but I will go ahead and jump  
43 to Martha, since she has her hand up. Go ahead, Martha.

44  
45 **MS. GUYAS:** Thanks, Steve, and I think it would be good to hear  
46 about how that recreational meeting for the South Atlantic goes,  
47 because, at least to me, I think it would make sense for us to  
48 spend some time thinking about what are the problems and issues

1 in the recreational fisheries in our regions that need to be  
2 addressed, so that we can meet whatever the management goals are  
3 for those. What are those goals?

4  
5 I think this committee is going to have to think about -- It  
6 might be helpful to think about specific fisheries, and maybe we  
7 would want to make recommendations for specific fisheries, or  
8 maybe not. Maybe it's more for, okay, we have this problem with  
9 this group of fisheries, and here's some ideas for how that  
10 issue could be dealt with, and so like regional fisheries, like  
11 south Florida fisheries, maybe there is a suite of options that  
12 seem to make sense for those, versus some of the South Atlantic  
13 deepwater grouper species that are, quote unquote, rare-event  
14 species that have small quotas, versus, of course, red snapper.

15  
16 It might be good to kind of step back a little bit and think  
17 about that, rather than -- Now that we've looked at the tools,  
18 go back to thinking about, well, what are the problems, and  
19 maybe then come back to the tools and think about how we could  
20 apply those to solve the problems, and think about other tools  
21 as well, things that we haven't quite thought of yet, and so  
22 that's just kind of where I see things maybe heading when we  
23 meet next.

24  
25 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Yes, and that's a good suggestion, Martha, and  
26 I agree. It probably would be beneficial to go ahead and just  
27 come up with a list of the potential issues that we are trying  
28 to address, and one of those, I know that kind of cropped up a  
29 couple of times today, was the issue of discards, and I know the  
30 South Atlantic Council just took action last year, at the end of  
31 last year, to require descending devices and circle hooks,  
32 corrodible circle hooks, for most of the region.

33  
34 I know a lot of the public interest in that was to see increased  
35 survival from discards, with the hopes of, at some point,  
36 getting some type of benefit from that, some type of return on  
37 that, as far as more fish, either in the water, through  
38 increased abundance, or just more fish in the ACL, and so maybe  
39 consider that in conjunction with some of these reporting  
40 programs, and are there some alternative approaches there to  
41 bring that information in. Mel, I see you have your hand up.

42  
43 **MR. BELL:** Thanks. I think you and Martha have kind of hit one  
44 where I was going with this, but, as we look at making  
45 recommendations, we need to have a clear understanding of what  
46 the assumptions are related to the problems we're trying to  
47 correct and deal with and then sort of assumptions of the  
48 realities of the world.



1  
2 In other words, you don't -- The recommendations should be  
3 recommendations that have a reasonable chance of being followed-  
4 up on, and so just a clear understanding of where we are and  
5 what is going on and what the playing field looks like as we  
6 move to make specific recommendations, because we want to,  
7 perhaps, avoid stuff that's pie-in-the-sky kind of things, and,  
8 if they're just more grounded in the realities of where we are  
9 across the spectrum, from the Gulf to the South Atlantic, but  
10 that's what you all are kind of touching on, I think, a clear  
11 statement of what it is we're trying to fix and what the world  
12 looks like at the time we're making these recommendations.  
13

14 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** Thanks, Mel. Good point. Anything we put  
15 forward as recommendations need to be actionable and achievable  
16 and just not simply make more fish, but what are the specific  
17 things that we can implement to achieve whatever management goal  
18 or address whatever issue we can. Kevin Anson, I see your hand  
19 is up. Go ahead.  
20

21 **MR. ANSON:** I agree with, Steve, what you had said regarding  
22 kind of our next step, what Martha had said, and what Mel just  
23 said. I guess, in regard to what staff could provide to help us  
24 for our next meeting, as we look at kind of the lay of the land,  
25 is kind of assimilate the quotas for the Gulf and the South  
26 Atlantic, whether or not there is any sector distributions  
27 within those quotas, by species, and then maybe where the actual  
28 landings are relative to the quotas, whether or not they're  
29 being met or there is sort of significant underages, and that  
30 might be helpful as we look to identify regions and areas and  
31 species, and so I just offer that as a request for the next  
32 meeting.  
33

34 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks. That's a good  
35 recommendation, and I know the South Atlantic Council staff has  
36 already pulled a lot of that information together, when we were  
37 discussing potential emergency actions during the last meeting,  
38 and there was a lot of information pulled together looking at  
39 historic landings relative to ACLs and that kind of stuff, and  
40 so I know that information is there, and it certainly was useful  
41 in our deliberations over emergency actions and potentially kind  
42 of relaxing some regulatory measures, and so I certainly see  
43 utility in that. Do we have anything else from the workgroup?  
44 Mr. Troy Williamson, go ahead.  
45

46 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** When we started this meeting about eight hours  
47 ago, Chester posted a really important question, and, to  
48 paraphrase him, it was whether or not we were going to be

1 hamstrung by this concept of poundage and fish, and he supplied  
2 us with a definition of ACL, out of the Magnuson-Stevens Act,  
3 the reauthorized act, and I thought we were going to get some  
4 clarification in this meeting, but we haven't.

5  
6 It's my understanding, and I would like this to be possibly  
7 brought up at the next meeting, that the Magnuson-Stevens Act  
8 does not define the annual catch limit. The annual catch limit,  
9 to pounds and numbers of fish, was the result of the final rule  
10 of interpretation by NOAA in 2009, and one of the basic tenets  
11 of a law or statute is that, if it's ambiguous, or unclear, and  
12 it's submitted to a federal court, the federal court will defer  
13 to the agency charged with interpreting.

14  
15 I would pose this proposition, that all of these alternative  
16 management issues, or procedures, that we've been talking about  
17 today, harvest rate, et cetera, were in effect at or before the  
18 time the Magnuson-Stevens Act was written, and so I think, from  
19 my perspective, that the Magnuson-Stevens Act contemplated  
20 alternative methods of coming up with the annual catch limit,  
21 and so I would like to know whether or not we're bound by these  
22 pounds and fish concept, when I don't believe that the Magnuson-  
23 Stevens Act is ambiguous and unclear in defining the annual  
24 catch limit, and so, with that, as everyone says, I will mute  
25 myself.

26  
27 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you for those comments, and  
28 thanks for reminding us of Chester's comments earlier.  
29 Certainly, we might -- I see Roy has his hand up, and I hope he  
30 can answer this question in the short-term, but it might  
31 potentially benefit the workgroup to maybe receive a  
32 presentation, or some information, from the agency on how that  
33 specific Magnuson language is interpreted and what are the  
34 guidelines, and maybe some commentary, to where the workgroup  
35 can have a discussion around this idea that ACLs are quantity-  
36 based, as far as being number or poundage of fish, and, with  
37 that, I will go to Roy. Go ahead, Roy.

38  
39 **DR. CRABTREE:** Well, it's addressed in the National Standard  
40 Guidelines. "Catch" is defined, and catch is the total quantity  
41 of fish, measured in weight or numbers of fish, taken in  
42 commercial, recreational, subsistence, tribal, or other  
43 fisheries. "Annual catch limit" is defined as annual catch  
44 limit is a limit on the total annual catch of a stock or stock  
45 complex.

46  
47 I mean, I've heard this extraction rate and that the annual  
48 catch limit can be something else. The problem with that is

1 it's a limit on the catch, and fishing mortality is not catch,  
2 and an extraction rate is not catch, and so, I mean, you guys  
3 can try to test the limits of this, I suppose, but I think that  
4 catch is catch, and it's not ever been clear to me how you can  
5 define it as something else, but it is addressed in the National  
6 Standard Guidelines, and so I would suggest that staff put the  
7 appropriate passages in there before you at your next meeting.

8  
9 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Roy. I know the NS 1  
10 Guidelines were provided, but, yes, maybe that's good direction,  
11 Ryan, and let's find those specific passages and maybe provide  
12 it as supplemental information, or maybe have a discussion,  
13 quick discussion, about it at the next meeting. Mr. Williamson,  
14 I see you have your hand back up. Go ahead.

15  
16 **MR. WILLIAMSON:** Roy is correct, and those definitions are out  
17 there, and they are part of that final rule that was implemented  
18 as an interpretation of National Standard 1. My point is that  
19 they are interpreting a statute, or a law, the Magnuson-Stevens  
20 Act, if you will, that is not ambiguous, and it's not unclear,  
21 that there are other methods of coming up with that annual catch  
22 limit.

23  
24 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Williamson. Maybe  
25 a good way forward on this is to have a discussion on this  
26 specific issue at the next workgroup meeting, and I don't know  
27 if it will be something that we'll get any resolution on, but,  
28 at least for everyone's edification, it might be good to see  
29 that information and have a little broader discussion on it.  
30 Chester.

31  
32 **MR. BREWER:** There were discussions, for years, as to whether  
33 the -- Under Magnuson itself, whether there was the flexibility  
34 that would allow for extraction rates, et cetera, these, quota,  
35 alternative methods of management.

36  
37 I always argued that there was that flexibility under MSA, but  
38 others, particularly NMFS, disagreed, and one of the main  
39 purposes of the Modernizing Fishing Act was to, again, state and  
40 restate essentially what Magnuson had said and that then the ACL  
41 -- The purpose of the ACL is to prevent overfishing. To set the  
42 ACL, you can use these alternative methods that we're talking  
43 about.

44  
45 Now, the Act went into effect in 2018, and the National  
46 Standards were, if I remember correctly, interpreting Magnuson  
47 back sometime before that, and so the argument can be made of,  
48 well, wait a minute, that interpretation is not of the

1 Modernizing Fishing Act, and it's an interpretation that was put  
2 in place by people who were trying to interpret, and I would say  
3 wrongly interpret, but that's just my opinion, but who were  
4 interpreting Magnuson.

5  
6 The reason that I raised the question this morning is, if in  
7 fact NMFS is going to say that we don't care what you do, and  
8 you have got to manage these fish by pounds or by number of  
9 fish, well then that portion of the Modern Fishing Act has no  
10 meaning, and I would argue that we do have, and have been  
11 certainly given, that flexibility, and that's what we're  
12 supposed to be exploring, and, with that, I will mute myself.

13  
14 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Chester. I guess the  
15 issue that you raise -- Is that really something that this  
16 workgroup can tackle, or is that something that needs to be  
17 addressed in another arena, and, if it is, then is it something  
18 that should preclude this workgroup, or do we continue under  
19 current guidance and let that discussion happen in another  
20 forum?

21  
22 Then, if there are changes to that interpretation of those  
23 guidelines, then we can incorporate that in, and that's not  
24 really something that this group is -- But, in those  
25 discussions, if we feel like it's something that we as a  
26 workgroup need to put forward as not necessarily a  
27 recommendation, but probably more of a consideration or  
28 something that we need a little further input on, or guidance  
29 on, I can certainly see that, but I don't think it should kind  
30 of stop us in our tracks either.

31  
32 Like I said, I'm really interested in really getting into those  
33 guidelines and kind of looking at the history of this and maybe  
34 having a discussion at the start of the next workgroup meeting  
35 on this.

36  
37 **MR. BREWER:** Well, if I might, Steve, I wasn't suggesting that  
38 we just stop work, if NMFS says, well, you've got to do it this  
39 way. I think that we need somebody that can give us a perhaps  
40 non-NMFS view of the two statutory schemes that we're talking  
41 about, and what I guess I have, in the back of my mind, is that  
42 we have been tasked with exploring alternative management, and  
43 that's what we should be doing, but I don't think that we need -  
44 - I don't want to see us constrained by saying, oh no, that will  
45 never be approved by NMFS.

46  
47 I want us to be, at times, perhaps outside of the box and  
48 suggest -- What we do here is not written in stone that it's

1 going to get passed. It has to go through the council process,  
2 and so I think that we should not be constrained by the -- Well,  
3 by interpretations of Magnuson by NMFS. I think we should go  
4 forward with what we think are the best suggestions for managing  
5 these recreational fisheries, and, with that, I will mute  
6 myself.

7  
8 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks for that, Chester. I see  
9 Mel has got his hand up, and then Roy. Go ahead, Mel.

10  
11 **MR. BELL:** Kind of back to what I was talking about earlier, and  
12 it all -- Where we go with recommendations is based on your  
13 assumptions of reality, and so Roy's explanation of what catch  
14 is and how that's interpreted, versus maybe what Chester is  
15 saying, and one is right, and the other is right, and they're  
16 both right, but, basically, we can move forward and consider a  
17 full spectrum of options right now, pending further guidance on  
18 this, but, whatever the recommendation is, it's based on the  
19 assumption that this is how we're interpreting --

20  
21 When we say an ACL or we say catch, this is -- Just make sure we  
22 understand, again, the realities of the world, but we can move  
23 forward along the lines of both areas, or the full spectrum, I  
24 guess, by just understanding the assumption under which that  
25 recommendation is being made, and I think that would allow us to  
26 explore a lot of things.

27  
28 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks for that, Mel. Roy, did  
29 you take your hand down?

30  
31 **DR. CRABTREE:** Well, I did, because I don't know that there is  
32 any point in this discussion any further, but, I mean, I'm not  
33 telling you what you can or can't do or what NMFS is going to  
34 do, but I just read you what's in the National Standard  
35 Guidelines, and some of this is commonsense. We know what catch  
36 is, but I'm sure we'll have more discussions of this to come.

37  
38 **CHAIRMAN POLAND:** All right. Thanks, Roy. Any further  
39 discussion on this issue or any more discussion on the potential  
40 items to discuss at the next meeting? I don't see any hands  
41 raised.

42  
43 Again, I want to thank everyone for sticking with us today.  
44 This was a hard slog, but we did receive a lot of information  
45 and had a lot of good discussion, and I appreciate it, and I  
46 just wanted to express my appreciation, on behalf of the  
47 workgroup, for all the invited presenters. Everyone did a  
48 fantastic job, and thank you for the work that each of you put

1 in. With that, unless there is any other business, I will call  
2 this meeting adjourned. Thank you.

3

4 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on September 10, 2020.)

5

6

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7