

GULF OF MEXICO FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
MACKEREL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Omni Houston Houston, Texas

June 26, 2024

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 11 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 12 Susan Boggs.....Alabama
- 13 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 14 Dale Diaz.....Mississippi
- 15 Tom Frazer.....Florida
- 16 Bob Gill.....Florida
- 17 Michael McDermott.....Mississippi
- 18 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- 19 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- 20 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- 21 Ed Walker.....Florida

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- 24 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 25 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 26 Jonathan Dugas.....Louisiana
- 27 Lt. Carl Fuhs.....USCG
- 28 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 29 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 30 Troy Williamson.....Texas

STAFF

- 33 Max Birdsong.....Social Scientist
- 34 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 35 Matt Freeman.....Economist
- 36 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 37 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
- 38 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 39 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 40 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 41 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- 42 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 43 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
- 44 Camilla Shireman.....Administrative & Communications Assistant
- 45 Verena Wang.....Fishery Biologist

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

- 48 Tim Griner.....SAFMC
- 49 Frank Helies.....NOAA

1 Anna Kersting.....NOAA
2 Dominique Lazarre.....NOAA
3 John Walter.....SEFSC
4
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1 The Mackerel Management Committee of the Gulf of Mexico Fishery
2 Management Council convened at The Omni Houston in Houston,
3 Texas on Wednesday morning, June 26, 2024, and was called to
4 order by Chairman Dakus Geeslin.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
7 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN DAKUS GEESLIN:** I would like to call the Mackerel
11 Management Committee to order. The members include myself,
12 Captain Walker, Dr. Banks, Ms. Boggs, Mr. Broussard, Mr. Diaz,
13 Dr. Frazer, Mr. Gill, Dr. Sweetman, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Schieble,
14 and Mr. Strelcheck.

15
16 The first item on the agenda is the Adoption of the Agenda. Any
17 changes, or additions, to the Other Business section within the
18 agenda? Can I get a motion for approval? I've got Tom and Dr.
19 Banks. Any opposition to approval of the agenda? Seeing none,
20 the motion passes.

21
22 Next is the Approval of the April 2024 Minutes. Can I get a
23 motion to approve? Any changes to the minutes? Not seeing any,
24 there's a motion from Mr. McDermott, and a second by Dr. Banks.
25 Any opposition to accepting the minutes as-is? No opposition,
26 and the motion passes. Next, we will have Dr. Max Birdsong
27 going through the Action Guide and Next Steps.

28
29 **DRAFT FRAMEWORK AMENDMENT 14: MODIFICATIONS TO GULF MIGRATORY**
30 **GROUP SPANISH MACKEREL CATCH LIMITS AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES**
31

32 **DR. MAX BIRDSONG:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Council staff will
33 review Draft Framework Amendment 14, Modifications to Gulf
34 Migratory Group Spanish Mackerel Catch Limits and Accountability
35 Measures. This is based on the recent SEDAR 81 stock assessment
36 and the council's Scientific and Statistical Committee's
37 recommendations. SEDAR 81 transitioned the recreational catch
38 and effort data to the Marine Recreational Information Program's
39 Fishing Effort Survey and determined the stock was not
40 overfished or undergoing overfishing.

41
42 This version of the document includes an additional action to
43 consider reducing the bag limit for Gulf Spanish mackerel. The
44 committee should consider the new action and select a preferred
45 alternative, as appropriate. Staff will develop a final draft
46 for the August 2024 meeting.

47
48 Just a brief overview of the Gulf Spanish mackerel fishery. The

1 fishing year runs from April 1 to March 31, and there is no
2 sector allocation. The minimum size limit is twelve inches fork
3 length. There is a recreational bag limit of fifteen per person
4 per day, and there is an in-season accountability measure, where
5 there is a closure if the stock ACL is reached, or is projected
6 to be reached.

7
8 The purpose is to modify Gulf Spanish mackerel catch limits and
9 management measures, based on the results of the SEDAR 81 stock
10 assessment, and the need is to update existing Gulf Spanish
11 mackerel catch limits and management measures consistent with
12 the best scientific information available for managing Gulf
13 Spanish mackerel and to achieve the optimum yield, in accordance
14 with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management
15 Act.

16
17 At the April council meeting, the committee selected a preferred
18 alternative for Action 1, which modifies Gulf Spanish mackerel
19 OFL, ABC, and ACL. The Preferred Alternative 2 was the more
20 modest of the proposed reductions.

21
22 Also, at the April council meeting, the committee selected a
23 preferred alternative for Action 2, which looks to modify Gulf
24 Spanish mackerel AMs. The preferred alternative would modify
25 the AM for Gulf Spanish mackerel to a post-season AM. If the
26 stock ACL is exceeded in a fishing year, then, in the following
27 fishing year, the Regional Administrator will close the fishing
28 season for Gulf Spanish mackerel for the commercial and
29 recreational sectors if the stock ACL is reached, or projected
30 to be reached, is how that should read.

31
32 At the April council meeting, there was a fair amount of public
33 comment concerning Spanish mackerel, and the committee also
34 recommended that we explore bag limits as a way to -- Reducing
35 bag limits, to keep the fishery open, and I will just read off
36 some of those comments now. A quote is "I would like to see us
37 reduce the bag limit to ten fish per person, and possibly even a
38 thirty-fish per-boat-per-trip limit," unquote.

39
40 Quote, "Spanish mackerel, I would be good going down to ten, or
41 maybe seven, and I feel like they may be declining a little bit,
42 but it's definitely nothing drastic, and I want to take
43 "drastic" out of your vocabulary", unquote.

44
45 Quote, "Spanish mackerel, very quickly, ten fish per person
46 would be fantastic, and I think that's enough fish. Thirty fish
47 per day, or per trip, on a boat, and that would be five fish on
48 a six-pack boat, and it would be less fish on a multi-passenger

1 boat, and that would kind of constrain the harvest a little bit,
2 and I think that's a fair and adequate bag limit", unquote.

3
4 Quote, "Moving to five mackerel per person, and one king
5 mackerel per person", unquote. Quote, "For Spanish mackerel, we
6 do agree that the bag limit needs to be reduced, but we would
7 like to see it between seven and ten fish. We believe that five
8 fish will drastically increase an already high discard
9 mortality", unquote.

10
11 We took this back to the IPT and came up with a range of bag
12 limit reductions. This ranges from no action, keeping the
13 current bag limit at fifteen fish per person per day, down to a
14 three-fish-per-person-per-day bag limit, and then we also have a
15 bag limit analysis that will explore the effects of these
16 different alternatives.

17
18 This is the bag limit analysis provided by SERO staff, and what
19 you see here is a simple histogram of Spanish mackerel harvest
20 per person on trips, and so that's on the X-axis, and then, on
21 the Y-axis, we have the percentage of trips, and what this shows
22 is that the majority of trips that harvest Spanish mackerel are
23 -- The vast majority are harvesting less than five fish per
24 trip, and this is data from 2021 to 2023.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Walker.

27
28 **MR. ED WALKER:** Looking at this analysis, it kind of looks like
29 no one ever catches ten mackerel, and is that -- Am I reading
30 this wrong?

31
32 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** If you look at the fifteen-plus, I mean,
33 there's a small proportion, if you look at that, that do, but,
34 in the grand scheme of the data that we have, it's rare.

35
36 **MR. WALKER:** It's looking like, at best, five or less is the
37 vast majority of trips. Thank you.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Birdsong, before you go, this is 2021 and
40 2022 and 2023, and so more reflective of those current catches.

41
42 **DR. BIRDSONG:** That is correct, yes. The bag limit analysis
43 used the method of looking at trips that exceeded the proposed
44 daily bag limits, and it reduced those down to the considered
45 limit, to look at the estimated effect on landings, and so, for
46 example, considering a five-fish-per-person-per-day limit, if
47 you look at all the trips that went over that limit, and reduced
48 them down to five, you can estimate the decrease in landings,

1 and these are -- This table presents the results of that
2 analysis, and so, in the first column, you can see the proposed
3 bag limit, and, in the second column, you can see the estimated
4 percent decrease in landings.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Captain Walker.

7
8 **MR. WALKER:** To Mr. Geeslin's comment, this also was -- This
9 doesn't have the years that it was, and was this off of those
10 same last three or four years, when things were in decline, or
11 is this over a longer time series?

12
13 **DR. BIRDSONG:** I believe it's also based on 2021 through 2023
14 data.

15
16 **MR. WALKER:** So it would have likely been different ten years
17 ago, when the Gulf was frothing with mackerel. Thank you.

18
19 **DR. BIRDSONG:** That's the information that I have for you today,
20 and now I would like to turn it over to you guys for discussion.
21 We're looking for a preferred alternative for Action 3, or some
22 future direction for Action 3, and we plan to go final at the
23 next meeting.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** I've got Dr. Sweetman and Mr. Gill.

26
27 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thank you for the presentation. You just
28 said it right there, and so we're going final? That's the
29 gameplan, is to try to do that? Okay. So let me state some
30 thoughts here.

31
32 So this was one of those species, Spanish in particular, that we
33 labeled as a Tier 3 species in the MRIP-FES -- Right? So I do
34 have some concerns there, considering that study is halfway
35 done, and we should learn more, a little bit more, in the future
36 here, but, even looking at some of the actions that we have in
37 here, we're not meeting those catch limits, or even close to it,
38 and so I'm not sure what benefit that would have there.

39
40 Quite frankly, it's just we have these CMP virtual workshops
41 that we're planning to conduct there, and I feel like this might
42 be getting out a little in front of that process, before we
43 could try and finalize some of this stuff, and part of me is
44 just I'm not sure why the urgent need to act upon this, at the
45 very moment right now, considering some of these issues here,
46 and so I just kind of wanted to put that out there for the
47 committee.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Gill.

2
3 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to point out the
4 obvious, that there is no need to change bag limits, from a
5 biological point of view, and, in the last twenty years, if you
6 look at Table 1.1.1, the FES-equivalent landings has only
7 exceeded the current ACL three times in over twenty years, and
8 so it's more a question of whether there is a desire to change
9 bag limits for other reasons, be they philosophical, or
10 constrain them for some other reason, but we don't need to do
11 that, and so, if the council wants to do that, that's a
12 different issue, but we're not there because we have to.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Captain Walker.

15
16 **MR. WALKER:** I agree with Mr. Gill. There is no need to do
17 this. It's not going to make a big difference, and I don't
18 think we should be changing just because, well, it might be a
19 good idea, especially in the current environment of having to
20 close a lot of things on people, with, you know, a legitimate
21 reason, but I will tell you this.

22
23 I've spent the last sixty days fishing along the beach in
24 southwest Florida, and I saw, in my little corner there, I saw
25 an uptick in the Spanish mackerel, and the king mackerel, from
26 what I've seen the last three years, and I'm not saying it's
27 back where it was, but what I saw was improved over the last
28 three years, and so I am kind of in favor of let's assume this
29 was a cycle in the fisheries, and give that a chance to fix
30 itself, before we go making cuts to people.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Ms. Boggs.

33
34 **MS. SUSAN BOGGS:** I concur with what Mr. Gill said. I mean,
35 we're really not even 50 percent of what we could catch, and I
36 don't disagree that fifteen is a lot of fish, but I don't know
37 what we accomplish going down this road to change the bag limit.
38 The Spanish mackerel fishing this year, off of Alabama, was
39 good, and I'm going to be not so nice, but until the netters
40 showed up, and then the Spanish disappeared, but we did have a
41 fairly good spring, for those few boats that did fish. They
42 were catching their limit, but some boats were telling them the
43 limit was ten, so they didn't have to bring home fifteen, and so
44 they kind of self-moderated.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Banks.

47
48 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** I agree with the other side of the room

1 there, and so, to maybe move this along, I will throw a motion
2 out there, if I may, Mr. Chair. **I will throw a motion out to**
3 **make Alternative 1, no action, retain the current bag limit of**
4 **fifteen fish per person for the recreational sector.**

5
6 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Is that a second, Ms. Boggs? We've got a
7 second by Captain Walker. Ms. Boggs.

8
9 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I guess either -- I guess I can make a
10 substitute motion, just to say that Action 3 has been moved to
11 Considered but Rejected, and just get rid of the entire action.

12
13 **DR. BANKS:** **I can withdraw my motion, and we can go with that**
14 **one.**

15
16 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** So is there a second to Ms. Boggs' substitute
17 motion? We've got Mr. Gill seconding Ms. Boggs' motion. Any
18 discussion on this motion? **Any opposition to this motion? The**
19 **motion passes.** Dr. Sweetman.

20
21 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, relative to the
22 rest of the framework that we've got going on here, the plan is
23 still to move forward with that, unless perhaps I put a motion
24 out here to put a pause on this until maybe after the workshops
25 that we have, or the FES study be completed, and I'm looking for
26 staff, basically, or if that's the desire of the committee.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Simmons.

29
30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
31 I guess just a couple of thoughts. I'm looking over to Emily,
32 and I think our virtual engagements -- We're looking at like
33 September, and we also were thinking about this, and remind me
34 of the months again, and you laid them out, and I can't
35 remember.

36
37 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** We -- As you might remember, we did have
38 a couple of things that we planned on doing. The first is to
39 host three different virtual engagement sessions, and also to
40 open an online tool that is sort of reminiscent of our Fishermen
41 Feedback tool, but is broader to all CMP species, and then we
42 also were looking to possibly engage some of the APs that we
43 have not yet engaged.

44
45 Those virtual sessions should be held -- I have a document put
46 together, but I don't have it pulled up, and they will be held
47 sort of in the fall, trying to sort of not coincide with some of
48 the different more important commercial and recreational season

1 openings and closures, because we want to make sure that people
2 are available.

3
4 That engagement tool can be opened for any amount of time that
5 we desire, but we should have results of this effort back -- I
6 mean, we could probably push it to the November meeting, if we
7 needed to get it done by then, but certainly, if not, then we'll
8 have everything done by January.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Simmons.

11
12 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so just a
13 follow-up. Then, I guess, if you were to wait on that, that
14 wouldn't be as long, but then, if you waited until the pilot was
15 completed -- I believe that's going to be several years, before
16 that's accomplished.

17
18 A side note is I think that the Science Center is working on
19 desk management strategy evaluations, and they presented to the
20 SSC, I think, a cod example, and so I think, when we had some
21 internal meetings with them, we suggested using perhaps a less-
22 complex Gulf stock, and that could be Spanish mackerel, in our
23 minds, and so, if there's some specific things you would want
24 them to look at, like, you know, the data in the eastern Gulf
25 that is calibrated to MRIP-FES, and try to ask some questions
26 about the uncertainties of that, to try to get at some
27 management concerns, that might be something that could be
28 really applicable to that work that the Science Center is doing,
29 and so I would suggest that that's maybe another thing that we
30 could consider as well.

31
32 I don't know how that's going to line up with taking final
33 action, and I think that could take some time, into next year,
34 but I don't really know, and we would have to ask Dr. Walter
35 that.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Thank you for that information and insight,
38 Dr. Simmons. Mr. Gill, you had a hand up?

39
40 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't want to preempt Dr.
41 Sweetman, and are you planning to make a motion relative to that
42 topic, or no? I've got a separate subject that I would like to
43 bring up, before we leave Spanish mackerel.

44
45 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Go ahead, Bob.

46
47 **MR. GILL:** So I would like to bring up an old subject, and
48 address a question to the agency, and that is the use of the

1 terminology "landed weight". You may recall that we had this
2 discussion, I don't remember, a couple of meetings ago, and my
3 take-away, from that discussion, was the agency said no problem,
4 and we could change it. However, it's still there, and so my
5 question is whether the council -- In order to change it, does
6 that require a council action, or will the agency be changing it
7 on its own?

8
9 My argument is that Spanish is the only place, that I know of,
10 that landed weight is used, and it's got to be a confusing
11 terminology for stakeholders, and it's probably an archaic thing
12 from many years ago, but why we're straying from the whole
13 weight and gutted weight terminology, that we use on everything
14 else, aside from the fact that Spanish have essentially no guts,
15 and it makes no sense to me. It's a confusing condition, that
16 we ought to rectify, and so my question, Andy, is whether or not
17 we need to take action to try and do so, if we're so inclined.

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

20
21 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** I apologize that I don't remember all the
22 details of the conversation, and so what we do know is the SSC
23 did recommend the OFL and ABC in whole weight, and we're saying
24 landed weight is essentially used, and considered synonymously,
25 as whole weight, right?

26
27 I would say, if the council was explicit, in terms of how we're
28 going to manage this, right, then that would be taken into
29 consideration as we review the rule, and, obviously, the record,
30 for this decision. We wouldn't necessarily blanketly change
31 that, and, if there was questions about that, we would
32 potentially have to come back to the council for clarification,
33 if necessary, right, and so, the more explicit you can make it
34 in the amendment, the more we'll review it based in that light
35 for consideration and rulemaking.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Gill.

38
39 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To that point, and maybe I
40 don't understand, but I'm looking to eliminated the terminology
41 "landed" from use relative to Spanish, going down the road, and
42 not necessarily this document, but getting rid of it as a
43 terminology, so that we minimize that confusion for
44 stakeholders, because I don't know if most stakeholders
45 understand that distinction.

46
47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I will look to Mara. I mean, I'm not seeing an
48 issue with eliminating it, but I am maybe a little confused

1 here, in terms of the details, in terms of why we initially
2 established it. Mara, do you have anything?

3
4 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Well, I guess I have a question. Is the problem
5 landed weight, or is it that we track things in both round and
6 eviscerated weight, meaning is the use of the term "landed" the
7 problem, and, if we're more specific that it means both, that's
8 okay, or you just want to have only one or the other?

9
10 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Gill.

11
12 **MR. GILL:** The problem, as I see it, is that landed weight is
13 not used in any other species, and we ought to be consistent, in
14 terms of whole weight and gutted weight terminology, and there
15 is no advantage to keeping this unique terminology for this
16 species, and so my argument is we need to get back to whole
17 weight and gutted weight for Spanish, and they would be whole
18 weight, and I understand that, and I understand they're
19 equivocal, but the terminology is different, for no reason.

20
21 **MS. LEVY:** Well, I will just note that, in the regulations, at
22 least in the catch limit and catch target regulations, which is
23 all of CMP, at the very top, it says all weights are in rounded
24 and eviscerated weight combined, unless specified otherwise, and
25 so, I mean, I guess you could specify it otherwise, and I don't
26 know if the other CMP species are measured the same way or not.
27 I don't know how much confusion there will be if we're different
28 for king, Spanish, cobia.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Froeschke, do you care to shed some light
31 on this?

32
33 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I will try. We did have -- Following that
34 recommendation and council discussion, at the IPT level, we had
35 a lot of conversation about this. Some of the rationale for why
36 it's in landed weight was that the recreational -- Some Spanish
37 mackerel are landed whole, and some are landed gutted, and it's
38 just -- But there's no conversion, and so, in the strict sense,
39 whole weight and landed weight are equivalent.

40
41 However, when we tried to make that change, and we talked to the
42 Regional Office staff, and they didn't want to do it, and they
43 noted that the regulatory language is in landed weight, and they
44 wouldn't support that change. There was some discussion about
45 the consistency with the South Atlantic Council, and so that was
46 where the pushback, I guess, came from, but that's what I know.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Frazer.

1
2 **DR. TOM FRAZER:** I guess, along those lines, and I didn't see it
3 in the South Atlantic liaison report, but I didn't know where
4 the South Atlantic Council sits on the Spanish mackerel
5 management. I don't know, Tim.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Griner.

8
9 **MR. TIM GRINER:** Well, that's an interesting discussion, and we
10 really haven't spoken much to whether there's a distinction
11 between landed weight, whole weight, and gutted weight. The
12 discussion actually just hasn't come up, but I do think that
13 either one -- Either way, the Spanish mackerel is going to be
14 the same, whether it's gutted or whole weight, and it's going to
15 be the exact same, and so that premise I do agree with, but
16 getting into the semantics of coming up with a new term called
17 landed weight, to include both of those, you know, I really
18 haven't thought that much about it, but I can see the confusion,
19 but the reality is they're all the same. You know, when we're
20 talking about an action that would reduce bag limits, or
21 something that would affect your ACL, it's not going to really
22 matter, because the weights are all the same.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Froeschke.

25
26 **DR. FROESCHKE:** One thing that we did talk about, at the IPT,
27 is, given that the -- I wouldn't say it's a conversion, and
28 they're just treated as the same, but, I mean, for the purposes
29 of writing the document, the numbers could be reflected in whole
30 weight, to be consistent with the scientific advice from the SSC
31 that was in whole weight, and I guess I don't see why the
32 codified language couldn't still be reflected in landed weight,
33 and, I mean, they're the same.

34
35 We do that. I mean, all our documents are in whole weight, and,
36 in the codified text, it's round weight, and so I don't see the
37 modification there as being problematic, but that's just my
38 opinion and some of the discussion we had at the IPT.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mara.

41
42 **MS. LEVY:** Well, just a question then, and so I'm just looking
43 at the king mackerel document that you're going to look at next,
44 and there's a sentence in there that says the king mackerel
45 total ACL is monitored in pounds of landed weight, and that is
46 combined whole and gutted weight, and so king mackerel too, and
47 does that matter?

1 I mean, I get what you're saying, but it's not just Spanish
2 mackerel, and so, for Spanish mackerel, there might be no
3 difference. I don't know if there's a difference for king
4 mackerel, and so I guess I would just caution about just doing
5 this for Spanish mackerel without thinking about the
6 implications for either king mackerel or cobia, if it applies
7 there as well.

8

9 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Froeschke.

10

11 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, I guess the discussion we had is there are
12 no implications. We don't convert, and, I mean, that's just the
13 way the fishery is prosecuted, both now and in the foreseeable
14 future, and we don't have an active way to account for the
15 slight reduction in weight, based on gutting or anything like
16 that, and it just is how it is, based on how the fishery is
17 prosecuted, and the scientific advice in the stock assessment is
18 provided in whole weight, and we just pass it through.

19

20 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Agreed, and, folks, I'm going to try to land
21 this plane. We're getting caught up in some semantics, and I
22 can certainly understand the inconsistency here, but, if our
23 landings are currently in whole weight, and if you want to call
24 it landed weight, and maybe that's the path forward, that we
25 keep it there. I understand Mr. Gill's concerns, but this is
26 kind of outside of what we're discussing right now, in terms of
27 these management actions. Mr. Strelcheck.

28

29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I agree with Dakus, and, you know,
30 maybe this is an opportunity, with the virtual meetings coming
31 up, to also think about how to tee-up a conversation about this,
32 if there is confusion by anglers with regard to how the fish are
33 landed and reported.

34

35 What I did want to say is I wanted to go back to C.J.
36 suggestion. My recommendation is the council take final action
37 on this, move this action forward, and the main, you know,
38 reason is you have, obviously, under the Magnuson Act,
39 requirements to specify annual catch limits at levels that do
40 not exceed the recommendations of your Scientific and
41 Statistical Committee.

42

43 Right now, we have an overfishing limit that is specified, and
44 our current catch levels are kind of in excess of that, and we
45 need to lower them down to below that overfishing limit. This
46 amendment would do that, and, obviously, I recognize that the
47 MRIP pilot study may produce different results, but we are
48 waiting on that, and that's going to take some time, and so this

1 is the scientific information that we have available to us, but,
2 when that information becomes available, we can make course
3 corrections, and adjustments, at that point to the catch levels
4 going forward.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** I appreciate that, Mr. Strelcheck. Dr.
7 Sweetman.

8
9 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I don't disagree with
10 what you're saying there, Andy. I mean, I think maybe waiting
11 for the MRIP-FES is probably a little too much there, and I'm
12 not saying that we wouldn't act upon the SSC recommendations for
13 the catch limits here, but I'm just saying that my thought
14 process here is let's just wait until the stakeholder engagement
15 things are done, and that's only just going to be a few extra
16 months, basically, on top of this, and so that's really all I
17 was getting at there.

18
19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I guess then my question would be what are we
20 hoping to get from the stakeholder engagement sessions, because,
21 to me, that would potentially be new actions, or alternatives,
22 that could be added to this, and I'm not sure they really would
23 have a lot to offer with weighing in on the catch limits, or the
24 accountability measures, at this point, because those are the
25 only two remaining actions in this amendment.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Sweetman.

28
29 **DR. SWEETMAN:** To that point, I mean, I guess the reason why I'm
30 kind of getting at this here, and I understand what you're
31 saying there, but the perspective on the fishery, even just --
32 We heard about this with kings, and we're hearing about it with
33 Spanish too, and it's just a little bit different now than what
34 we've heard for the past three years there, and I understand
35 what you're saying.

36
37 I mean, I also recall the sensitivity run that Dr. Barbieri
38 presented the Gulf Council and urged caution in moving forward
39 with changing the catch limits, because of the FES issues, and
40 so I'm not trying to weave that into this process here, but I'm
41 just simply saying that we would have a better idea of what the
42 fishery actually looks like there, and it is at the request of -
43 - The council could request to have the SSC reconsider those, in
44 light of some of what we're hearing about the fishery, if the
45 condition has changed from the last three years and what we've
46 been hearing to the current situation, and that's all I'm kind
47 of saying there.

48

1 I understand that they don't have necessarily the wherewithal or
2 -- That's not the right word. They don't necessarily have the
3 insight, as it relates to the changes in the catch limit, and
4 what the council would do there, but the perspective on how the
5 fishery, the health of it, relative to what the public is saying
6 there, I do think is kind of an important nuance here for the
7 council to consider, relative to the catch limits.

8

9 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Simmons.

10

11 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so just a
12 thought. If we're going to wait until we have the stakeholder
13 engagement sessions, would it be worthwhile to leave the bag
14 limit action in there, so that folks can comment on that,
15 because I think you did have some public comment, in April, that
16 said they would like you to consider lowering the bag limit.
17 Just a thought.

18

19 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** That's a good point, Carrie. We did hear
20 that. At that point, I don't think we had this bag limit
21 analysis either, and so that's another -- We just voted to
22 remove and do away with that, and we saw, pretty clearly, that
23 most of those catches are below the five-fish bag. Ms. Boggs.

24

25 **MS. BOGGS:** Never mind.

26

27 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I mean, you could think about it,
28 and maybe get some public comment on it, and then decide at Full
29 Council, and you can just vote it down at Full Council, if you
30 wanted to keep it in for the stakeholder engagement sessions. I
31 think Emily has also a list of questions as well, and then we
32 could try to weave this in there, and so we don't want to take
33 too much time, and so thinking about how to handle that with the
34 engagements a little bit more creatively, probably.

35

36 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** I think that is an excellent suggestion, Dr.
37 Simmons. Dr. Sweetman.

38

39 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I guess, to that point there, I agree, and just
40 consider all options on the table there, relative to the
41 stakeholder engagement, and so maybe now is not the appropriate
42 time for me to make -- In light of that, considering we're going
43 to discuss this in Full Council later on, and so -- But I'm just
44 throwing out there that my intent ultimately would be to include
45 this for consideration amongst the stakeholder engagement
46 efforts, but ultimately delay action until that occurs, and then
47 the council could reconsider it, in light of that new
48 information.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Okay. Hearing that, I don't believe we need
3 a motion to move this into Full Council. Okay. With that, Dr.
4 Birdsong, it looks like you will be handing it over to Dr.
5 Hollensead to move on into king mackerel.

6
7 **DR. BIRDSONG:** That I will do. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Thank you.

10
11 **GULF MIGRATORY GROUP KING MACKEREL MANAGEMENT DRAFT OPTIONS**

12
13 **DR. LISA HOLLENSHAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have a
14 presentation for this, and so we'll be going through the
15 document, and Bernie will be flying through the document, and so
16 take your Dramamine now, if you need it, because, once we're in
17 the document, it won't do you any good.

18
19 Just looking at the action guide, and to provide a little bit of
20 background, under Framework 11, the catch limits for Gulf king
21 mackerel were updated based on the results from the SEDAR 38
22 update, which incorporated MRIP-FES in that assessment. Those
23 catch levels were implemented in January of last year.

24
25 Since then, stakeholders, including members of the CMP AP, have
26 expressed concern about the health of the stock, referring
27 specifically to the decline in abundance, and recent landings
28 data suggests that that may likely be the case. In response,
29 the Southeast Fisheries Science Center provided results of an IA
30 analysis to the SSC in July of 2023. Those IA results were
31 difficult to interpret, due to the lack of data and some years
32 of missing data with the fishery-independent survey, and, as a
33 result, the SSC did not recommend updated catch advice to the
34 council at that time.

35
36 It is the prerogative of the council to modify catch limits to
37 account for management uncertainty. In the case of the action
38 that we're going to talk about today, this is only going to look
39 at reducing the current stock ACL and the subsequent sector-
40 specific ACLs. This document does not consider any changes to
41 that sector allocation of any kind, and there is also an action
42 to consider reducing the recreational bag limit, and so that's
43 what this action will do and also not do.

44
45 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind pulling up the document for me.
46 Thank you, and if you will go to Table 1.1.3. This is
47 recreational landings going back to the fishing year 2001-2002
48 to about as recent as we can get, and, of course, there's the

1 little pickup and change in recreational data currency from CHTS
2 to FES there in that table.

3
4 For the purpose of this, just focus on that first column and
5 that last column, because it gives you an idea of what the
6 fishing year is, and then the percent of ACL that was landed for
7 the recreational, and you see, you know, they have remained well
8 below their ACL, through a significant portion of time, and so
9 that's just what I wanted to highlight first, as initial
10 background.

11
12 Bernie, will you please go to Table 1.1.4? This is showing an
13 analogous table, but for the commercial sector, looking at the
14 various zones for the commercial, and, as you will see again,
15 and go ahead and just focus on the first column and last column,
16 just for now, and so this is just sort of a broad overview.

17
18 You will see that the commercial sector, by and large, does land
19 its ACL, and has for some time, although, if you will focus on
20 those last two rows there in the bottom column, you will see
21 that there has been a marked decrease in landings in those
22 recent years for that ACL, and so I will get into the zone-
23 specific at the next action, but I just wanted to give you all a
24 broad overview of sort of what's happening, telling this tale of
25 the recreational seems well below their ACL, where the
26 commercial seems about at that, up until very recently.

27
28 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going to Action 1, and so Action 1
29 is going to consider modifying the total ACL, and then keeping
30 the sector allocation of 68 percent recreational and 32
31 commercial for those sectors, and so that would remain the same.

32
33 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind scrolling down to just highlight
34 Alternative 2 for me, please. Thank you, and so, you know, we
35 didn't get any sort of explicit advice from the SSC, and so
36 council staff, together with SERO staff, decided to sort of tee
37 this up, and what could we possibly do, and we decided to look
38 at setting the total ACLs based on a three-year average or a
39 five-year average, but with an additional 20 percent reduction,
40 and so Option 2a shows what the catch levels would be with just
41 the three-year average.

42
43 Option 2b is, again, the three-year average, with an additional
44 20 percent reduction, and Option 2c is that five-year average,
45 and then Option 2d is a five-year average, with an additional 20
46 percent reduction, and these are sort of things that we sort of
47 kicked off, and that's certainly just looking at the most recent
48 averages, as a place to start with this.

1
2 What does this actually mean, and what does this actually do?
3 For now, I'm going to focus on the commercial, looking at
4 commercial for this, and then, when we go into the recreational
5 bag limit action, I will also speak to the recreational sector.

6
7 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going to Table 2.1.1. Based on
8 what is in the Action 1 alternatives, this is what your quotas
9 would look like for those commercial zones, and you can just
10 take that in for each alternative, the no action alternative,
11 and then Alternative 2 with the various options, looking at the
12 three-year average, the three-year average with the 20 percent
13 reduction, a five-year average, and then a five-year average
14 with an additional 20 percent reduction.

15
16 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going to Table 2.1.2. Okay, and so
17 here we start breaking out some commercial, recent commercial,
18 landings, by zone, and then looking at what those recent
19 landings are relative to their quotas, and so, if we just --
20 We've got year in the first column, and let's start with the
21 west zone, and so, if you look at that percent WZ quota column,
22 you'll see, in past years, they had been achieving their quota,
23 but, again, these last two years, we see a marked decline in
24 landings in that western zone. This is all for the hook-and-
25 line handline zones.

26
27 The north zone, if we look at that column there, the percent NZ
28 quota, you will see a similar story to what we saw in the
29 western zone, with decrease down to 60.5, and then 76.5, for the
30 last two years, for landing that quota, and then, for the
31 southern zone handline, again, it's a similar story for that.
32 If you look at that last column, the percent SZ quota, again,
33 you will see that there's been, really -- Actually they had
34 exceeded their quota in the past few years, but, the past three
35 years, they have not realized their catch levels. Bernie, if
36 you wouldn't mind going down to Table 2.1.3.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Hollensead, hold on just a second. It
39 looks like we've got a question from Ms. Boggs.

40
41 **MS. BOGGS:** So I just want to make sure that I understand. We're
42 looking at our options in FES, correct? Okay, and these are all
43 converted to -- I just wanted to make sure that I'm looking at
44 apples-to-apples.

45
46 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, ma'am. Table 2.1.3 focuses on the south
47 zone gillnet, and, based on this landing information, if you
48 look at the percent of their quota landed, you know, they're a

1 little closer to their catch limits, relative to the other
2 commercial zones, and so, Bernie, let's go to Action 2. Is
3 there any questions about Action 1, before I move to Action 2?
4

5 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Ms. Boggs.
6

7 **MS. BOGGS:** Well, I would just like to comment that it appears,
8 and that's why I was asking my previous question, is it appears,
9 to me, that, if we take action with any of these alternatives,
10 then it looks like the commercial sector is going to be really
11 close, and bumping up to that number, and so are we doing a
12 disservice to the commercial sector? I just wanted to point
13 that out, unless I'm looking at it wrong.
14

15 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** I see that you're looking at that exactly
16 right. They're the only sector that has really come even near
17 their catch limits.
18

19 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, ma'am. Thanks for bringing that up. That
20 was the point I was wanting to get to, but I was going to go
21 through Action 2. I appreciate you doing it, so I don't have
22 to.
23

24 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Strelcheck.
25

26 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I agree, obviously, with what Susan
27 just said. The other piece of this though is we've seen the
28 commercial sector taking longer and longer to actually harvest
29 those catch limits in recent years.
30

31 I think the comment that I would make, with Action 1, is I was
32 hopeful that we could make this a little more dynamic, right,
33 and so, if we're going to look at reducing the catch limits,
34 right, that then sets a cap, but we have room between the cap
35 and where the SSC advice is right now, and, if we start seeing a
36 rebound of the stock, I would like to see it be able to be moved
37 up, back to that level that's been set by the SSC, rather than
38 just capping it and then, all of a sudden, we run into a real
39 problem, if, all of a sudden, we get a resurgence of recruitment
40 back into the fishery.
41

42 To me, we should be thinking about this more from the standpoint
43 of this is a conservative approach, given the current state of
44 mackerel, but, if we're successful in seeing a rebound, that
45 we're able to then give back and allow for the more fish to be
46 caught, as those mackerel numbers come back up.
47

48 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Frazer.

1
2 **DR. FRAZER:** I guess, to that point, Andy, do we really need to
3 even lower the ACL? Can we use an ACT, in this particular case,
4 that is based on the catch history, and, that way, we have a lot
5 of flexibility just to remove the ACT?
6

7 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Strelcheck.
8

9 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, but I think it has the same function,
10 unless you make it to where it could be changed from one year to
11 the next, right, and so, by setting the ACT at some percentage
12 lower than the ACL, right, then we're managing to the ACT. If
13 there's no room to then move that ACT up, and reduce the buffer,
14 then we're going to continue to close the fishery based on when
15 we estimate the ACT to be met.
16

17 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Gill and then Dr. Froeschke.
18

19 **MR. GILL:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and that gets to the point
20 that I wanted to make, is there is no scientific basis to take
21 this action at all, at this stage of the game, and so we're
22 doing it to be proactive, as you've mentioned, Andy, but, in
23 reality, if we're not catching anywhere near these limits, then
24 it's already happening, and setting limits artificially caps, as
25 you pointed out, and so I would question the need to even do any
26 of this, that we're not really accomplishing anything, because
27 the current state of the fishery is doing it by itself.
28

29 What the cause of the problem is, don't know, and I would argue
30 that the purpose and need don't adequately reflect this, and I
31 think we probably ought to talk about that, if we continue
32 considering this amendment, but, from where I sit, we're doing
33 it because the fishery seems to be in trouble, but, in fact,
34 changing bag limits, et cetera, isn't going to accomplish
35 anything. If we're not catching them, we're not catching them,
36 and so I question the need for the entire amendment. If we keep
37 the amendment, I would suggest that we revisit the purpose and
38 need, as to why we're really doing this. Thank you.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** I've got Dr. Froeschke, and then we'll go
41 online to Mr. Diaz.
42

43 **DR. FROESCHKE:** My question is just a follow-up to what Mr.
44 Strelcheck discussed about the dynamic nature of the catch
45 levels, and what we tried to do is we did not include the OFL
46 and ABC in this, such that, if they did go up, that we wouldn't
47 be subject to overfishing. I guess I am curious though if there
48 are additional ways that we think that we could do this, either

1 for here or in other documents, that we haven't discussed, or
2 considered, and that would be great. You know, we would like to
3 hear that.

4
5 I mean, the other discussion, just while I'm talking, is, I
6 mean, we did discuss, at the IPT level and things, and, you
7 know, what you all would be considering is that, at least in my
8 view, if you don't reduce the catch levels, such that you are
9 triggering closures, you're not changing the behavior of the
10 fishing, and so there is no change, and so, if there really is a
11 biological problem, you probably do need to ratchet it down,
12 such that you are capping the fishing mortality. If not, then
13 there may not be much gain in reducing it a modest amount, but
14 not so much that you actually change anything about how the
15 fishery is prosecuted.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Good morning, Dale. We're going to you.

18
19 **MR. DALE DIAZ:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This question is for
20 Dr. Hollensead, and I probably should know this, but how did we
21 come about with the 20 percent options? Why did we pick that
22 option, instead of some other percentage?

23
24 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you for the question. That was sort of a
25 starting point that staff had come up with, and it's certainly
26 something that the committee could consider providing
27 recommendations on, and we could come back with those numbers.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Walter.

30
31 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** I guess I wish I could say that science has
32 the answer here, and I think that it doesn't right now, and
33 that's the interim didn't give clear advice, but I think that
34 what the options here are responding to are a lot of the public
35 comments saying that there's a problem with the stock.

36
37 When you're not catching the catch limits, and not even coming
38 close, then that also is an indicator that there may be a
39 problem with the stock, and I think that there's one particular
40 issue that this stock has a problem with, and that is the
41 potential for hyperstability, and what that means is that it
42 contracts to a particular core area, which is where that winter
43 gillnet fishery is, and that gillnet fishery is the only one
44 that's really catching, or getting close to, or potentially
45 exceeding, its limit.

46
47 All the others are not getting it, but all the stock for the
48 South Atlantic and Gulf contracts to that area, because that's

1 where it's warm in the wintertime, and so the potential for the
2 catches to stay fine there, and seem like it's not a problem,
3 whereas the fishing mortality that is happening right there is
4 high, and that is, I think, one of the concerns from a science
5 standpoint, is many of the classic collapses of stocks have
6 happened because of hyperstability, where we failed to detect
7 that there is a problem, because at least one part of the
8 fishery is doing fine, whereas the fishery as a whole is
9 contracting to that core area. I think that is one of the
10 potential issues that we could be facing here. Thanks.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Just real quick, to that point, Dr. Walter,
13 and is it possible that what you're describing there is also an
14 artifact of the gillnets are incredibly efficient at catching
15 fish?

16
17 **DR. WALTER:** Yes, and, obviously, when you've got a gear that
18 can capture a large quantity of fish at one time, that adds to
19 that potential for that to be a high source of fishing
20 mortality.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** I had Captain Walker.

23
24 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, and I appreciate your comments, Dr.
25 Walter, and I think we've talked about that a little bit. I
26 would point out that, as Mr. Strelcheck said, the number of the
27 gillnet landings looks like it's strong, but it kind of belies
28 the fact that it took them three-times as long to catch those
29 fish as it typically does.

30
31 Those guys usually catch their quota in like two weeks, and it
32 took them -- They didn't even catch it this year. They came
33 close, and so they stopped fishing, but it got so late in the
34 season that they all went back to lobster fishing, and stuff
35 like that, and so they're not going out there and scooping it
36 up, like they used to either, is my point.

37
38 They're working harder, and longer, to catch the same amount.
39 Their gear is so efficient that they're getting it, out of less
40 fish, but I would just caution that don't look at their landings
41 and say, oh, they're catching them just like they used to,
42 because they're not.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Frazer and then Andy.

45
46 **DR. FRAZER:** I was just going to, you know, follow-up on Dr.
47 Walter's comments. I mean, we have a lot to learn about this
48 fishery, right, and so it's real tricky, moving forward, to try

1 to figure out whether this is truly kind of a fisheries problem,
2 you know, or whether it's an environmental problem, and so
3 that's all I have to say.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

6

7 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I just, I guess, wanted to go back, and the
8 reason we're talking about this action in the first place is
9 we've gotten three-plus years of public testimony expressing
10 concerns about the decline of king mackerel, right, and so
11 controls that we have to, obviously, regulate fishing mortality
12 are limited, as Mr. Gill is pointing out, and, at the end of the
13 day, right now, at least the options that are being considered,
14 probably don't achieve a whole lot, relative to status quo,
15 right, but I caution us from just sticking our heads in the sand
16 and saying we should do nothing, because we're, you know, not
17 going to influence changing the fishery, right, and so, you
18 know, if catch limit reductions, and bag limit changes, aren't
19 the right answer, then maybe we need to look at something else,
20 right?

21

22 What I will get back to, and this is where I think it's
23 important, right, is, yes, you know, the fisheries are taking
24 longer to harvest their quota, or maybe not harvesting it all,
25 and what I mentioned earlier, and what John was asking me about,
26 in terms of kind of the dynamic nature of, you know, increasing
27 the catch limits back up, you know, I don't have the answer.

28

29 Some of my thoughts are like, if we bump up against the quota at
30 kind of a certain date, or we're harvesting a certain percentage
31 of the quota by a certain time, right, that could trigger,
32 either within that year, or possibly the next fishing year, that
33 we allow the quota to dynamically move up, right, and you could
34 even do it the opposite way, right, if we're still seeing
35 falloff in king mackerel.

36

37 I don't have the answers today, but I think we could work up
38 some alternatives, and actions, that kind of look at that
39 dynamic nature and allows us to scale the fishery, based on the
40 environmental changes that we're seeing in abundance occurring
41 naturally in the environment.

42

43 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Thanks for that, Andy, and certainly we have
44 heard, over the years, from our anglers, and from the public,
45 that they're less and less kings out there. Dr. Frazer, it
46 looks like -- No? Okay. Ms. Boggs.

47

48 **MS. BOGGS:** I don't disagree with anything that's been said, and

1 I think I've seen two just barely legal kings come to the dock
2 this year, and normally you see one a trip, at least, and it's
3 not just our boat, and it's all the boats that are fishing, but
4 we did talk about something, and we don't get a lot of comment
5 in this respect, and it's one of the conversations was the
6 change in the mentality of the recreational fishermen that this
7 is not a species they target anymore.

8
9 I know the charter fleet tries to, because that's a nice fish to
10 catch, and people like to catch them, and so I say that, and, at
11 the same time, I know there's a lot of SKA tournaments that have
12 been canceled, because there's no king mackerel, and so
13 something is going on there.

14
15 I agree, and, you know, the next item is going to be a bag
16 limit, and I'm jumping ahead, but, kind of like with Spanish
17 mackerel, what are we accomplishing? If you're not catching
18 them, you're not catching them, and so, Andy, I would encourage
19 the agency to maybe come back with a creative idea, and John and
20 staff, to try to try figure out something to manage this,
21 because you don't want to create an issue, by changing your
22 catch levels, with the other sector, and so that's just my two-
23 cents.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Griner.

26
27 **MR. GRINER:** Thank you. I had a question for John. I was
28 curious if there's been any recent work done on the dynamics of
29 the mixing zone between the migratory groups.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Walter.

32
33 **DR. WALTER:** Well, I think it was SEDAR -- I don't know, and one
34 of the SEDARs a long time ago, that actually changed the mixing
35 zone from being rather complicated to being a much smaller
36 mixing zone, but, since then, not a lot of work, in terms of
37 documenting the mixing between the two stocks. We've done a
38 little bit of genetics work, but it hasn't been conclusive, in
39 terms of being able to be included into recent stock
40 assessments. Thanks.

41
42 **MR. GRINER:** Thank you.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Frazer.

45
46 **DR. FRAZER:** This is getting back to Andy's thoughts, and to
47 John's, about trying to be creative here, and so the concern
48 that I guess I have is that, if you radically reduce the ACL,

1 right, and you kind of attach the historical catch levels,
2 whether they're the last three years or the last five years, and
3 you exceed that ACL, or you're anticipating exceeding it, then
4 you're going to have to close the fishery, right, and so, I
5 mean, I'm just trying to figure a way not to have to do that,
6 because that may in fact reflect the fact the fishery is
7 rebounding in ways that weren't -- It wasn't affected
8 necessarily by the fishery itself, right, and it could be an
9 environmental thing.

10
11 Can we word the accountability measures -- Can we get creative
12 there, I guess, and so that gives us a little more flexibility,
13 if, you know, we have a good year, for example?

14
15 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

16
17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, it's dangerous to think on the fly, but
18 I think there is potentially ways where you could do post-season
19 accountability measures that kind of address that dynamic
20 nature, and I think the question would be kind of how we handle
21 the in-season measures, right, and the recreational sector has
22 not closed historically, and the commercial sector has, for most
23 of the zones and areas, but, obviously, if the stock rebounds,
24 you could be artificially closing them early, because the fish
25 are present again, and they're able to catch the quota more
26 quickly, but there may be some ways from a post-season
27 accountability measure standpoint.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Captain Walker.

30
31 **MR. WALKER:** That discussion kind of piqued my interest. A
32 post-season accountability measure would be like a payback the
33 next year, or what kind of thoughts would you say on that?

34
35 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

36
37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So that is, obviously, one type of post-season
38 accountability measure, but, for example, the provisions that
39 we've had, in a lot of our accountability measures, is, if there
40 is an overage, unless the best scientific information available
41 indicates that a lesser, greater, or no reduction in harvest is
42 needed, right, and so there's essentially a provision in the
43 accountability measures that allows us to look at additional
44 science, and information, to see, well, what may have caused
45 that overage, and is there a reason to not apply a payback, or
46 an overage, or is there a reason to actually increase harvest,
47 and, you know, that's the dynamic parts that I'm trying to get
48 at here.

1
2 **MR. WALKER:** That sounds interesting to me, and that would give
3 you a little -- To me, it might give you a little safety valve,
4 if there was indeed a strong recovery, and it wouldn't tie you
5 to the change that we made at the bottom of the rebuilding say
6 of the stock. Interesting. Thank you.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Simmons.

9
10 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I
11 probably should know the answer to this, but I don't, and so I
12 will ask the staff, or maybe the Science Center, and do we --
13 How quickly can we generate the CPUE for these different years,
14 because I'm looking at the permitted vessels that have king
15 mackerel landings, and they have declined, and trips have
16 declined, and so it seems, to me, we should be looking at more
17 than just landings. We need to be looking at the days it's
18 taking them to harvest it, and get some kind of estimate of CPUE
19 for these gear types, if we can, and maybe we could use that as
20 a trigger, as well as the landings.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Walter.

23
24 **DR. WALTER:** So you're talking about using the fishery-dependent
25 CPUE, which we did consider for the interim assessment, but I
26 think it's a good point, and how quickly we can generate it is
27 quite quickly, because we get the logbook information, and most
28 of that probably comes from logbooks, and so probably within
29 like a one-year, you know, prior year, and we could certainly
30 get that.

31
32 I think, in previous years, we've had challenges using fishery-
33 dependent data for indices, because of a number of things about
34 how you actually quantify what is effort directed towards king
35 mackerel, but, from the standpoint of it's -- Certainly I think
36 you're probably correct in seeing that there's a decline in that
37 just simply nominal catch rates, and so there's probably
38 something to infer from that, and I think that's maybe a good
39 recommendation, to kind of take a closer look at what those are,
40 and to see if there's something there to be gleaned from it.
41 Thanks.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Frazer.

44
45 **DR. FRAZER:** To that point, I mean, there was some discussion in
46 the last meeting, and certainly a lot of discussion outside of
47 the meeting room, about kind of the social dynamic of the
48 mackerel fishery, and, because the numbers and catch rates have

1 been low, you've lost a large number of participants, and, as a
2 consequence, it's more difficult to locate some of those fish,
3 which could explain the lower CPUE, and so there's a lot packed
4 probably in there that we need to look at.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Captain Walker.

7
8 **MR. WALKER:** I would just throw in there that, if the for-hire
9 sector had a SEFHIER program up and running, you could probably
10 take a real easy look at that and see trends in king mackerel
11 landings.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Okay, and so what I see here is we've got
14 noted declines in catch rates over time with mackerel, and what
15 we have before us is more traditional fisheries management
16 techniques, that we don't really see would solve the problem,
17 and what I find encouraging today is we're looking at outside-
18 the-box kind of innovative strategies to address this issue.
19 I'm not sure where we want to go here today, but I think this
20 dialogue, and discussion, has been encouraging. Dr. Hollensead.

21
22 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Mr. Chair, just to make sure -- It sounds like
23 you would like this document to go back to staff and look at
24 some of the other options that we've spoken about today and
25 bring you back something for the next meeting.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** I think that's an accurate characterization
28 of what we heard today. If we could maybe ask that of staff,
29 that would be welcome.

30
31 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay, and so I have another question for you.
32 Would you like to wait until after the meetings that we're
33 having with the CMP, the engagement meetings?

34
35 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** I am seeing a yes, and that sounds
36 reasonable. Mr. Strelcheck's hand is up.

37
38 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, maybe one suggestion, if we wanted to at
39 least continue to explore this, is, rather than bring back a
40 document with actions and alternatives, just to bring back a
41 presentation with some of the ideas that we discussed, and see
42 if there's going to be the appetite to pursue that amendment
43 first, and I don't know if that has to wait for hearings or not.

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

46
47 **DR. FRAZER:** I agree with Mr. Strelcheck on that one. It would
48 be interesting to explore what the post-season accountability

1 measures might look like, and what the data underlying the CPUE
2 look like, and just explore it a little bit.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** That certainly sounds like a reasonable path
5 forward. Captain Walker, did you have your hand up?

6
7 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, sir. Thank you. Also, I think I would like
8 to hear public testimony today, to see if anybody else around
9 the Gulf is -- What trends they're seeing, and, you know, if I'm
10 optimistic, you know, maybe there's a common theme. You know,
11 the fish we saw are all really small, like unusual for what we
12 typically catch, and I've talked to David Krebs, who buys all
13 the kingfish, and he said his kings out of Key West this year
14 were very small as well, and so kind of an unusual maybe year
15 class, I suppose it probably is on those, and I'm not a
16 biologist, and I'm not sure exactly what that means, and maybe
17 that's a good sign, and it can't be a bad sign, I don't think,
18 and so I would just be curious to see what the fishermen of the
19 Gulf have to say, at public testimony, about what they're
20 seeing.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** Dr. Hollensead, have you heard what you need
23 to? You've got kind of quasi-direction?

24
25 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, sir. I think we're good.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN GEESLIN:** With that, if there's no other thoughts,
28 comments, or discussion, I will hand it back over to the
29 chairman.

30
31 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on June 26, 2024.)

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