

GULF COUNCIL

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Hilton Palacio Riverwalk

San Antonio, Texas

August 26, 2025

VOTING MEMBERS

- 10 J.D. Dugas.....Louisiana
- 11 Michael Allen.....Florida
- 12 Kevin Anson (designee for Scott Bannon).....Alabama
- 13 Brenda Ballard.....Texas
- 14 Kesley Banks.....Texas
- 15 Billy Broussard.....Louisiana
- 16 Troy Frady.....Alabama
- 17 Dakus Geeslin (designee for Robin Riechers).....Texas
- 18 Johnny Marquez.....Mississippi
- 19 Anthony Overton.....Alabama
- 20 John Sanchez.....Florida
- 21 Chris Schieble (designee for Ryan Montegut).....Louisiana
- 22 Joe Spraggins.....Mississippi
- 23 Andy Strelcheck.....NMFS
- 24 C.J. Sweetman (designee for Jessica McCawley).....Florida
- 25 Ed Walker.....Florida

NON-VOTING MEMBERS

- 28 Dave Donaldson.....GSMFC
- 29 Lt. Jason Morton.....USCG

STAFF

- 32 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 33 Matt Freeman.....Economist
- 34 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 35 Sarah Gardiner.....
- 36 Beth Hager.....Administrative Officer
- 37 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 38 Mara Levy.....NOAA General Counsel
- 39 Jessica Matos.....
- 40 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 41 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist/SEDAR Liaison
- 42 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 43 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

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- 47 Frank Helies.....NOAA
- 48 James Hull.....SAFMC

1 Jessica Stephen.....NOAA
2 John Walter.....SEFSC
3
4 - - -

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3 [PAGE 9](#): Motion to recommend to approve the Abbreviated Framework
4 Action: Modifications to the Federal For-Hire Red Snapper Fishing
5 Season and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for
6 review and implementation and deem the codified text as necessary
7 and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the
8 necessary changes to the document. The Council Chair is given the
9 authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary
10 and appropriate. [The motion carried on page 10.](#)

11
12 [PAGE 46](#): Motion in Action 7 to make Alternative 2 the preferred
13 alternative. [The motion carried on page 47.](#)

14
15 [PAGE 50](#): Motion in Action 4 to modify Alternative 3 as follows:
16 Alternative 3: A post-season recreational AM would be implemented
17 for the black grouper complex if the recreational ACL and the black
18 grouper complex ACL are exceeded. In the year following an
19 overage, NMFS would close the recreational black grouper complex
20 to harvest when the recreational ACL is met or is projected to be
21 met, unless NMFS determines based upon the best scientific
22 information available (BSIA) that closure of the recreational
23 fishing season is unnecessary. [The motion carried on page 52.](#)

24
25 [PAGE 52](#): Motion in Action 8.2 to modify Alternative 2 as follows:
26 Alternative 2: If recreational scamp complex landings exceed the
27 complex recreational ACL in a fishing year and the stock complex
28 is overfished, NMFS would reduce the recreational ACL and ACT for
29 the following fishing year by the amount of the ACL overage in the
30 prior fishing year, unless the best scientific information
31 available determines that a greater, lesser, or no overage
32 adjustment is necessary. [The motion carried on page 53.](#)

33
34 [PAGE 61](#): Motion in Action 1 to modify Alternative 3 as follows:
35 Alternative 3: Revise the MSY proxy and catch limits for red
36 grouper based on the results of SEDAR 88 and recommendations of
37 the Gulf Council's SSC using a three-year constant-catch scenario.
38 The OFL and ABC for red grouper would be set based on an MSY proxy
39 of the yield when fishing at F 40 percent SPR, and the yield when
40 fishing at 75 percent of the FMSY proxy, respectively. The OFL
41 and ABC are derived, in part, using SRFS data for private
42 recreational vessels. The total ACL is set at 80 percent of the
43 ABC in 2026, 90 percent of the ABC in 2027, and 100 percent of the
44 ABC in 2028 and subsequent years. The OFL, ABC, and total ACL in
45 million pounds gutted weight are as follows: (table updated) [The](#)
46 [motion carried on page 62.](#)

47
48 [PAGE 63](#): Motion in Action 1 to add an Alternative 4 where the

1 total ACL is set at 90 percent of the ABC. [The motion carried on](#)
2 [page 64.](#)
3
4 [PAGE 71:](#) Motion in Action 3 to make Alternative 2 the preferred.
5 [The motion carried on page 71.](#)
6
7 [PAGE 104:](#) Motion to direct staff to draft an abbreviated framework
8 action to continue the measures in the DESCEND Act in the Gulf,
9 with the goal of taking final action in November 2025. [The motion](#)
10 [carried on page 109.](#)
11
12 - - -
13

1 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf Council convened at
2 the Hilton Palacio Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas on Tuesday
3 morning, August 26, 2025, and was called to order by Vice Chairman
4 Chris Schieble.

5
6 **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**
7 **APPROVAL OF JUNE 2025 MINUTES**
8 **ACTION GUIDE AND NEXT STEPS**
9

10 **CHAIRMAN CHRIS SCHIEBLE:** At this time, I would like to call the
11 Reef Fish Management Committee to order. It's members of the
12 whole. The first item is Adoption of the Agenda, Tab B, Number 1.
13 Do we have any additions or changes to the agenda? C.J.

14
15 **DR. C.J. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to add a
16 couple things to the agenda. Can we first have a discussion about
17 greater amberjack, and then, second, on the DESCEND Act, please?

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** We'll add those two under Other Business. Mr.
20 Sanchez.

21
22 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** Thank you. After we get through, I guess, if
23 we do, final on 58B, I would like to bring up some items. I would
24 like a document to get started on, which would be to phase in the
25 reductions in 58B, deepwater, and have some discussion on that and
26 see what would be the correct path forward, and, also, I would
27 like to -- You know what? I forgot. I'll come back to you in a
28 minute.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I can come back to you, and so we'll discuss
31 the phase-in options during the 58B discussion, and not Other
32 Business, correct? Do we have any other Other Business to add?
33 Mr. Chairman.

34
35 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. I would like to add a
36 discussion, or update, of the FES pilot study.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Any other business to add? Seeing
39 none, we'll adopt the agenda, as modified, to include those three
40 Other Business items. Can I get a motion to adopt the agenda with
41 those additions? Dr. Banks. A second? General Spraggins.

42
43 All right. Moving on, Adoption of the Minutes from the June 2025
44 Council Meeting, and do we have any edits or changes or additions
45 to the minutes from that meeting? I reviewed them also, and I did
46 not have any changes, and so, seeing none, can I get a motion to
47 adopt the June meeting? C.J., and second by Billy Broussard.

1 All right. Moving on, the next in the order of business is the
2 Action Guide and Next Steps. Mr. Rindone, can you lead us through
3 the first part of the action guide, please?
4

5 **FINAL ACTION: DRAFT ABBREVIATED FRAMEWORK ACTION: MODIFICATIONS**
6 **TO THE FEDERAL FOR-HIRE RED SNAPPER FISHING SEASON**
7

8 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** I can, and so we're going to lead off with Final
9 Action on the Draft Abbreviated Framework Action for Modifying the
10 Federal For-Hire Red Snapper Fishing Season. We started working
11 on this in April of 2024, and we were looking at both the buffer
12 for the for-hire component for red snapper and the for-hire fishing
13 season. Then, in August of last year, you guys decided to drop
14 consideration of the buffer to Considered but Rejected and to only
15 proceed with looking at the for-hire fishing season.
16

17 We're going to review public comments received, and then we'll
18 review your preferred alternative in the draft abbreviated
19 framework action, which includes a season duration analysis, and
20 then SERO staff, probably Frank, I guess, is going to briefly talk
21 about the codified text with you guys, and, if you guys think
22 everything looks appropriate, then you can recommend that the
23 council take final action, and so you'll lead off with Emily for
24 talking about public comment.
25

26 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Right, and so, Ms. Muehlstein, are you ready
27 to go, please?
28

29 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** I'm ready. Okay, and so, for this issue,
30 since it was a framework, we did not host any traditional in-
31 person or virtual public hearings. Instead, we published a public
32 hearing video, which we advertised both on social media, on our
33 website, and we also did a push through the Fish Rules and
34 Fishbrain apps, and so, just quickly, some analytics there.
35

36 That Fish Rules push got us 1,457 views of the materials, which is
37 really pretty good, and we had 176 views of the public hearing
38 video itself. From that, we received twenty comments, and I'll
39 just go ahead and give you a brief overview of what we heard.
40

41 We did hear support for Alternative 1, no action. The rationale
42 provided was that we should wait until the federal for-hire
43 reporting program is in place before we increase uncertainty by
44 changing season dates. We also heard support for no action,
45 because for-hire operators should not be allowed to pre-season
46 fish ahead of private anglers.
47

48 We also heard support for Alternative 2, which would open the

1 federal for-hire red snapper season the Friday before Memorial
2 Day. The rationale provided was that August fishing is less
3 desirable, and so opening earlier is better for business. We also
4 heard that it would be great to fish a big holiday weekend.

5
6 Finally, we also heard support for Alternative 3, which would open
7 the federal for-hire season on May 15, and the rationale given for
8 that was because it allows for more fishing early in the year,
9 which is desirable. We heard that higher discard mortality
10 associated with fishing later in the year, when it's hot, and so
11 an early start would actually benefit the stock, and then we heard
12 that Alternative 2, the idea of opening before Memorial Day, won't
13 always provide many more days, because the date of Memorial Day is
14 inconsistent.

15
16 We were also told that we should use caution in changing the
17 season, because it might cause a quota overage, and that the
18 charter and commercial season dates should mirror the private
19 recreational season, and that concludes my report.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Muehlstein. Any
22 questions regarding the public comments we received on this?
23 Seeing none, okay. Moving on, I guess we could pull up the document
24 and look at the preferred alternative in the first action.

25
26 **MR. RINDONE:** In the spirit, I guess, of going final action,
27 Bernie, let's start with the purpose and need, and then we'll go
28 to the preferred alternative, and so 1.2 to start with.

29
30 The purpose is to modify the fishing season for the federal for-
31 hire component for red snapper to allow greater recreational access
32 while continuing to constrain landings to the component ACL, as
33 well as the total recreational ACL, and the need is to allow the
34 federal for-hire component more opportunity to harvest red snapper
35 at a level consistent with achieving optimum yield for the rec
36 sector in the long-term, while preventing overfishing on an annual
37 basis, and while rebuilding the red snapper stock.

38
39 From there, we can go to the preferred alternative, which is in
40 1.4 on page 6, and so the current preferred alternative is to
41 modify the federal for-hire component fishing season for red
42 snapper to open on the Friday before the Memorial Day federal
43 holiday and close when the for-hire component ACT is projected to
44 be met, or on December 31, whichever occurs first, and so, Mr.
45 Chair, any comment on that?

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Ryan. Appreciate it, and so,
48 council members, we have a Preferred Alternative 2. We've received

1 our public comments on the draft, on the public hearing draft
2 version of this, and is there any discussion of the preferred
3 alternative, or any of the other alternatives in the action? All
4 right. I guess we can move forward, and so seeing --

5
6 **MR. RINDONE:** We'll go to Frank next for the codified text.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and we can go to the codified text, or
9 Mara.

10
11 **MR. FRANK HELIES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The codified text is
12 pretty straightforward. I want to make a note that the Gulf of
13 America name change has been made in the CFR, and so that will
14 apply from here on out. In 622.34, the recreational start date is
15 actually considered a seasonal closure, and so we're going to
16 change the closure from January 1 through the Thursday immediately
17 preceding the Memorial Day holiday. Another note is we're not
18 adjusting the federal private angling component season at all.
19 Any questions on that?

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Helies. Appreciate that. We
22 have the codified text up on the screen. Any questions from anyone
23 on the committee? Seeing no questions, we could entertain a motion
24 for the council to take final action on this document, with
25 Preferred Alternative 2 as the final action, and so Bernie may
26 have some language to help us with that that she could pull up,
27 and if someone would be willing to make the motion. Dr. Banks,
28 and General Spraggins seconds that. We'll get the language up
29 here in a second. Is that your motion, Dr. Banks?

30
31 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** Yes, and would you like me to read it into the
32 record?

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, please.

35
36 **DR. BANKS:** I make a motion to recommend the council approve Draft
37 **Abbreviated Framework Action: Modifications to the Federal For-**
38 **Hire Red Snapper Fishing Season and that it be forwarded to the**
39 **Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation and deem the**
40 **codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial**
41 **license to make the necessary changes in the document. The council**
42 **chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified**
43 **text as necessary and appropriate.**

44
45 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right, and we have a second by General
46 Sprague on this motion. Ms. Levy, you had your hand up.

47
48 **MS. MARA LEVY:** Yes, and just to note, looking at the document, I

1 mean, I just want to note that I think we're going to have to
2 restructure a little bit. Nothing substantive, but, the way that
3 it's structured, it went from a framework to an abbreviated
4 framework, and it went from a possible environmental assessment to
5 the agency doing a CE, and so it's a little bit awkwardly
6 structured to meet that new abbreviated framework and CE, and so
7 we just might restructure the way it looks a little bit, and some
8 of the terminology used, in terms of how we describe alternatives,
9 but the substance will remain the same, and so I just wanted to
10 let you know that it might look a little different when it gets
11 submitted, but, substantively, it'll be the same. The preferred
12 alternative will be the same, and the codified text will be the
13 same.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Levy, for the heads up
16 on that. Any discussion regarding that? Seeing none, I guess
17 we'll do a roll call vote, correct, on this motion, Madam Chair?

18
19 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIE SIMMONS:** A Full Council. Full Council
20 will do the roll call vote.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and we'll just leave it as-is for now?

23
24 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Just take a vote during committee.
25 We'll do it at Full Council, a roll call.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So no vote now at all?

28
29 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** No, and we need to vote.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right, and so this will be anyone opposed
32 to this motion on the board, raise your hand. You're opposed?

33
34 **UNIDENTIFIED:** Yes.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so we have one opposed. **The motion**
37 **passes with one opposed.** All right, moving on, can you take us
38 through the next item in the action guide, please?

39
40 **FINAL ACTION: DRAFT REEF FISH AMENDMENT 58B: MODIFICATIONS TO**
41 **DEEPWATER GROUPER MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

42
43 **MR. RINDONE:** All right, and so I'm going to present, or Emily is
44 going to present, public comments received on Reef Fish Amendment
45 58B that proposes modifications to the deepwater grouper complex,
46 in light of recent stock assessment advice for yellowedge grouper.
47
48 Management alternatives for deepwater grouper include things like

1 specifying status of termination criteria, catch limit sector
2 allocations, and recreational accountability measures. I'll
3 review the current preferred alternatives that you guys have, and
4 the purpose and need, and SERO staff will review the draft codified
5 text, which is based on your current preferred alternatives. You
6 guys should review the information presented, and, if you think
7 things look necessary and appropriate, recommend that the council
8 take final action, and so we'll lead off, again, with Emily.

9
10 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you, and so, for this document, we did go
11 out to three in-person hearings, and we hosted one virtual hearing,
12 and then we also did our standard video, and collected online
13 comments, and so I will sort of go through what we heard throughout
14 all of those different things.

15
16 We started public hearings in Madeira Beach, Florida. Three
17 members of the public attended, or four members of the public
18 attended, and three of them spoke. At that public hearing, we
19 heard support for Action 2, Alternative 4, which would give both
20 sectors an even haircut. The rationale provided was that the
21 commercial sector has been constrained to its portion of the
22 landings, because of management under the IFQ program, as well as
23 the 1,000 hook limit on longline vessels.

24
25 We also heard support for Action 3. We heard that, basically,
26 it's difficult to wait the three years to constrain overages in
27 the recreational sector. However, if the council isn't going to
28 initiate a recreational data collection system, then it's better
29 to keep that sector out of the payback cycle.

30
31 We also heard, during that meeting, a little bit about the dynamics
32 of how share costs will change as the deepwater grouper allocation
33 goes down and red grouper goes up. There was some talk of
34 essentially shareholders leveraging the price of deepwater grouper
35 and red grouper among themselves.

36
37 In other words, if you're going to buy deepwater grouper, you also
38 have to then buy some amount of red grouper so that you can get it
39 from me. They were a little bit worried about how this document,
40 because it's such a severe cut, coupled with the red grouper
41 increase, is going to change the dynamics and purchasing power,
42 essentially, of folks. We also heard that recreational harvest
43 estimates for deepwater grouper are low, and there's been a large
44 increase in charters that target deepwater species.

45
46 Next, we hosted a meeting in Panama City, Florida, where we had
47 three members of the public attend, and two provide comment. We
48 did hear that accountability is needed for recreational fisheries.

1 We also heard that recreational fishing has negatively affected
2 dayboat commercial fishing, especially for red snapper, and he's
3 seeing that start for the deepwater grouper deep-drop fishery.
4 There was, again, support here for a recreational reporting program
5 to be implemented in the deepwater grouper complex.
6

7 We also heard support for Alternative 2 for both Actions 1 and 2.
8 We heard that final action should be delayed until more information
9 can be collected and analyzed on what the economic effects would
10 be to the commercial sector of this document. We also heard that
11 there should be smaller increments considered for the MSY proxy
12 values in this document, because we wanted to make sure, you know,
13 since that value can be the difference between the stock being
14 overfished, or undergoing overfishing, smaller increments should
15 be considered. We also heard that there should be a special permit
16 for recreational fishing for deepwater grouper species that is
17 tied to mandatory reporting.
18

19 Finally, we moved to Fort Myers, Florida. We had three members of
20 the public attend, and all three spoke. At that meeting, we heard
21 that the charter for-hire catch of deepwater grouper species is
22 significant, and that it has been increasing. We also heard a lot
23 at this meeting about some of the issues with the IFQ program. We
24 heard that in Madeira Beach as well, and so that's a theme that
25 you'll read. Since it's not germane to this, I would direct you
26 guys to reading the actual summaries of these meetings.
27

28 We also heard, at this meeting, that depredation is a worsening
29 issue and should be addressed. We heard that our management,
30 especially on deepwater grouper species, is based on bad science,
31 because there's no real recreational data collection, and that
32 private anglers are harvesting tons of deepwater grouper, and they
33 don't land them at the boat ramps, and so they're not being caught
34 by those intercept surveys.
35

36 We also heard that discards in the recreational sector need to be
37 accounted for, and that deepwater species don't survive catch and
38 release events. Then we heard that there was, you know, sort some
39 consensus that folks could live with any of the alternatives that
40 establish a recreational allocation, but doing that is pretty moot
41 until the data collected is accurate from the recreational sector.
42

43 Then we hosted a virtual public hearing. We had five members of
44 the public attend that, and one spoke. From that, we heard support
45 for changing the council's current preferred alternative in Action
46 2 to Alternative 2, because it would reduce discards and promote
47 fairness and equity, and this is based also on the fact that there
48 is extreme management uncertainty in the recreational sector.

1
2 We heard that, in Action 3, the council should modify alternatives
3 to allow National Marine Service to set the length of the
4 recreational season based on the best available science. We also
5 heard that the council should consider creating a buffer in the
6 recreational sector to account for management uncertainty, and
7 that, finally, the council should add a payback provision to the
8 recreational sector. We also heard that the council should
9 initiate work on a document that explores a recreational deepwater
10 grouper permit with a mandatory reporting requirement to address
11 the uncertainty.

12
13 Finally, I'll move on to summarizing our written public comment.
14 We received sixteen comments. For this, we did create another
15 public hearing video and do a push across Fish Rules and Fishbrain.
16 We got 137 views of the public hearing video, and then that Fish
17 Rules push did result in the same 1,500, essentially, folks
18 visiting our materials for this document.

19
20 From that comment, we heard that the data currency for the new
21 quotas should be clarified, and that annual catch limits for the
22 recreational sector should not be additive, since they're
23 calculated with different currency. We heard that reallocation
24 alternatives, and that would be in Action 2, Alternatives 2 through
25 4, should be put on hold until the MRIP-FES pilot study is
26 complete.

27
28 We heard that a larger annual catch limit for the recreational
29 sector will not necessarily reduce the likelihood of an ACL
30 overage. We heard that better analysis of how actions will affect
31 discards should be included in the document. We heard support for
32 creating separate allocations for the sectors.

33
34 We heard that the recreational sector with no accountability should
35 not be given a greater portion of the allowable harvest. We heard
36 that for-hire charter vessels need better accountability
37 immediately, especially since they harvest so many deepwater
38 groupers.

39
40 We heard that cutting the deepwater grouper quota is going to drive
41 up the price of allocation and increase the cost of red grouper.
42 We heard cutting the quota will force longliners to fish closer to
43 shore using bandit gear. We heard that electric reels in deepwater
44 fishing should be eliminated, or limited, so that vessels with
45 electric reels onboard may only keep one person's bag limit.

46
47 We heard the 4 percent commercial buffer should be eliminated,
48 because the sector is highly accountable. We heard that electric

1 monitoring from commercial vessels should be considered, because
2 primarily it shows less dead discards in the commercial fishery
3 than assumed.

4
5 We heard that we should incorporate broader economic data from the
6 IFQ programs into the economic analysis and provide a comprehensive
7 understanding of the impact of allocations. We heard that interim
8 assessments on yellowedge grouper should be added to the SEDAR
9 schedule.

10
11 We heard that stakeholder feedback from a yellowedge grouper
12 fishery ecosystem issue should be collected and reviewed, and this
13 could be used to evaluate ecosystem-wide factors that are
14 influencing poor recruitment. We were asked to consider using
15 multiyear annual catch limits to address the high errors in the
16 recreational data, to address allocations in a separate amendment,
17 and we were asked, or told, that new deepwater grouper regulations
18 should not unfairly burden the recreational sector.

19
20 We heard that effort in the commercial sector is not increasing,
21 while the number and quality of recreational boats grows. We also
22 heard recreational data collection efforts need to be improved.

23
24 We heard support for Action 2, Alternative 4, which is the best
25 way to reduce recreational overages. We heard that Action 3,
26 Alternative 4 fails to constrain recreational catch. We also heard
27 that a year-round recreational season is not justified with catch
28 reductions, and that headboats should not be part of the
29 recreational quota, and that concludes my report.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Ms. Muehlstein. We have one
32 question, or comment, from Mr. Sanchez.

33
34 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I just want to commend Matt and Emily for doing a
35 great job in Fort Myers, where I attended. There were -- We went
36 ahead and did a, you know, typical professional presentation of
37 the document, but quickly sized up the small group, three people
38 and a dog, and we had -- We went to a more informal format, which
39 I think is great for public participation, in terms of we had an
40 exchange, and it wasn't like us presenting things, you know,
41 against the public. It was a very productive exchange, and so I
42 think -- I want to commend them for doing a good job of sizing up
43 the opportunity.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez, and so it was more of
46 a question-and-answer discussion. That's good. I like that. Any
47 other comments, or questions, regarding the public comments we
48 received? None? All right. Well, moving forward, can we go to

1 Tab B, 5(b) which is the document, and Ryan can lead us into that.

2
3 **MR. RINDONE:** We'll start off with the purpose of need again, and
4 so the purpose of this amendment is to modify the status
5 determination criteria, sector allocations, catch limits, and
6 accountability measures of the deepwater grouper complex, in
7 response to recent stock assessment results, and the need for these
8 actions is to use the best scientific information available, based
9 on the recent stock assessment, to implement measures to end
10 current and prevent future overfishing of yellowedge grouper,
11 which is a species in the deepwater grouper complex, and to achieve
12 optimum yield for the species considered herein, consistent with
13 Magnuson.

14
15 We'll go to Action 1, Bernie, please, and so Action 1 is looking
16 at modification of the deepwater grouper maximum sustainable yield
17 proxy, overfishing limit, acceptable biological catch, and complex
18 annual catch limit.

19
20 The current preferred alternative is to revise the MSY proxy and
21 catch limits for the deepwater grouper complex based on the
22 council's SSC's recommendations. The OFL and ABC for yellowedge
23 grouper will be set based on an MSY proxy of the yield when fishing
24 at a 40 percent spawning -- Fishing mortality at a 40 percent
25 spawning potential ratio and the yield when fishing at 75 percent
26 of that MSY proxy, respectively.

27
28 The OFL and the ABC for the three remaining species, which is
29 warsaw grouper, snowy grouper, and speckled hind, will be set based
30 on Tier 3b of the council's ABC control rule. The deepwater
31 grouper complex MSY proxy would then be the yield when fishing at
32 40 percent SPR.

33
34 The OFL and ABC for yellowedge grouper and the three remaining
35 species would be combined, and all four species would be managed
36 as a single complex, you know, just like they are now, with a
37 complex overfishing limit of 731,035 pounds and an acceptable
38 biological catch of 555,026 pounds gutted weight. The complex ACL
39 would be set equal to the ABC. Mr. Chair.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Rindone, and so we
42 have Action 1 on the board here. Alternative 1 is not a viable
43 option, and so we have Preferred Alternative 2. Do we have any
44 discussion, or comments, or questions regarding Preferred
45 Alternative 2? C.J.

46
47 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just a comment. I realize that, you know, we got
48 some public comment to delay some action here, but, obviously,

1 we've got an overfishing designation, and so we can't really delay
2 on this, and so I just kind of wanted to note that.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Understood. Any other comments? Mr. Sanchez.

5
6 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Following-up on what C.J. mentioned, you know, we do
7 have to go to final action. There is -- This has been deemed
8 overfishing is occurring, but I would like to follow-up promptly
9 with -- I don't mean like in council and NMFS fashion, you know,
10 which is slow, but with a follow-up document to address the couple
11 things I had tried to get in there during Other Business, which
12 would be, we heard public comment that we need to have some
13 meaningful recreational reporting for this fishery.

14
15 The reason why we're overfished is -- You know, we appropriately
16 put them at 40 percent, because of their life history and how slow
17 they are to recover to pressure, and it makes no sense to me to
18 reduce a quota by upwards of 50 percent and then not know when an
19 entire sector, that's going to be given an allocation, is really
20 catching, and, MRIP-FES, it's not -- It's just not set up to catch,
21 intercept, these private, you know, dock departures, and this and
22 that, and it probably will never be able to be tweaked to do so,
23 and so I think this screams for some kind of a mandatory reporting
24 system.

25
26 I had some thoughts that I would like to throw out there, like
27 maybe something along HMS or something, where, you know, we create
28 a deepwater grouper permit in the Gulf, and we require the same
29 type of reporting methodology and requirements, and then let's try
30 to conserve these fish, because, the beating that they're taking,
31 I don't know that they can withstand it.

32
33 We need to quantify it, and see if what we're doing here, with a
34 50 percent reduction, is actually going to address overfishing,
35 and so I would like to have some discussion. I don't want to slow
36 this document down, and so something separate, but it makes no
37 sense to do one without the other, is what I'm suggesting, and
38 maybe we look at, for stability, given the dramatic reduction,
39 like we're going to do in red grouper, maybe phase-in some of the
40 reduction over time in a doable way. Thank you.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Sanchez, and your
43 comments are a good segue, because I was going to bring this up
44 after we get back from the lunch break, because I wasn't sure where
45 we were in the schedule as far as the whole Reef Fish Committee,
46 but, at the end of Reef Fish Committee today, we're going to be
47 receiving a presentation from an outside vendor on a mandatory
48 reporting app that can be used for deepwater grouper, and so it

1 may be a good time for specific questions regarding what you just
2 illustrated there, and I understand that.

3
4 Then maybe, at Full Council, consideration of a motion to have
5 something added to the action guide in particular to that, if you
6 so choose. All right. Any other questions regarding this first
7 action, the Preferred Alternative 2? If not, we can move to the
8 second of the three actions in the document, Mr. Rindone.

9
10 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, sir, and so Action 2 looks at modification
11 of deepwater grouper sector annual catch limits and sector
12 allocations and assumes that Alternative 2 in Action 1 will remain
13 the -- Will remain the preferred alternative, and so we work from
14 there, and so go on down, please, to I think it's Preferred
15 Alternative 3.

16
17 Preferred Alternative 3 states that the deepwater grouper complex
18 ACL will be set equal to the complex ABC and establish a
19 recreational ACL and sector allocations based on the average
20 recreational landings from the most recent five years, or 2019
21 through 2023, which results in a recreational ACL of 56,668 pounds
22 gutted weight, or approximately 10.21 percent of the complex ACL.

23
24 The commercial sector is then allocated the balance, which is
25 approximately 89.79 percent of the complex ACL, or 498,358 pounds
26 gutted weight. Their commercial quota is reduced from the
27 commercial ACL by 4 percent, and it's set at 478,424 pounds gutted
28 weight, and so it's the commercial quota that the IFQ program
29 manages to.

30
31 The recreational and commercial ACLs sum to equal the deepwater
32 grouper complex ACL, and so you guys can see that table there, and
33 of note here is the 4 percent reduction is in place from the
34 Generic ACL/AM Amendment, and it was put in place for two reasons.

35
36 One was to try to account for uncertainty surrounding discards at
37 the implementation of the IFQ program and also to allow for the
38 flexibility measures that exist between the current deepwater
39 grouper and other shallow-water grouper complex, and, in the event
40 that those flexibility measures are not maintained in Amendment
41 58A, which will be discussed later today, it states, in this
42 document, in the discussion, that the commercial quota will then
43 be set equal to the commercial ACL, because the necessity for that
44 buffer won't exist anymore. Mr. Chair.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Rindone, and so
47 we've got Action 2, and we have a Preferred Alternative 3, which
48 sets 89.79 percent of the ACL to the commercial sector and 10.21

1 percent of the complex ACL to the recreational sector, and with
2 the 4 percent buffer being removed. Do we have any comments? Mr.
3 Sweetman.

4
5 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, and this one is tough. I
6 mean, we've got no real great options, from my perspective, on the
7 table that are reflective of basically what the fishery is doing,
8 and so, in the last fifteen years, the PSEs for the recreational
9 sector, in twelve of those fifteen years, exceed 50 percent.

10
11 Their own recommendation from NOAA is not to use that data, but it
12 is what we have that's available, and, therefore, we're having to
13 structure and change an entire fishery based on bad data, quite
14 frankly, that has really high error rates, and so, I mean, I get
15 where we're at here, that, you know, because of the overfishing
16 designation, we do have to specify catch limits and allocations
17 here, but I'm just going to also kind of echo what Mr. Sanchez was
18 saying.

19
20 I mean, there has to be something better than what we currently
21 have, because managing this fishery towards MRIP-FES is just --
22 It's not palatable. I mean, I get where we're at. It is what it
23 is. We do have to make this call here within this amendment,
24 because of that overfishing designation, but something needs to
25 improve here for us to get a hold of this one.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Good comments, Dr. Sweetman. Mr.
28 Strelcheck.

29
30 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** I just wanted to maybe get a little bit more
31 on the record with regard to the allocation decision, and so, in
32 reading the amendment, you know, the basis for this allocation is
33 essentially from an equitable reduction over the most recent five-
34 year time series for both the commercial and recreational sector.

35
36 There's some discussion, obviously, about this would reduce the
37 amount of overages for the recreational sector, which I don't view
38 as strong justification for shifting allocation more toward the
39 recreational sector, but there's also acknowledgement that this is
40 a growing segment of, you know, harvest that would justify,
41 obviously, that increase in allocation, but do the council members
42 have other, you know, rationale, or information, we can include
43 into this amendment with the basis for, obviously, this allocation
44 decision?

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Any further
47 comments regarding Action 2 in this document? Ms. Levy.

1 **MS. LEVY:** I was hoping that that would prompt some more discussion
2 of the rationale for Preferred Alternative 3, and so, from looking
3 at the minutes from the last meeting, the rationale we have right
4 now is it seems to be, to me, 10 percent is not that much for the
5 recreational sector, and so that's what they should get.

6
7 That, to me, is not really a good justification, and so we should
8 be looking at how we're calculating, and not the end result, and
9 the other justification seemed to be that, if we get rid of the 4
10 percent and the flexibility measure, then the commercial gets 4
11 percent more, but that's based on a decision that hasn't been made
12 yet, and so, again, not that strong of a rationale, in my
13 perspective.

14
15 What I feel like is really needed is some discussion about why not
16 Alternative 4, which is actually doing an equal reduction to both
17 sectors, given the reduction required for the total catch limit,
18 and I would really encourage you to state, with more details, why
19 that is not preferred over Alternative 3, which shifts more to the
20 recreational sector, and therefore doesn't do that equal
21 reduction, and so explaining how that's fair and equitable, and
22 explaining how that promotes conservation, is really needed from
23 the council. Thank you.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Levy. Do we have any
26 other further comments, or questions, in the action or with regards
27 to -- Mr. Sanchez.

28
29 **MR. SANCHEZ:** At the last meeting, I tried to make Alternative 4
30 the preferred, and it was substituted, and it overwhelmingly turned
31 into Alternative 3, and so I don't want to rehash and refight that,
32 but I did feel, originally, that what could be a fair and equal
33 haircut for everybody, but here we are, and then, you know, after
34 giving it some thought from that meeting to this one, there is an
35 increasing interest in prosecuting this fishery from the
36 recreational side, and so I chose, you know what, pick your
37 battles, and 10 percent seemed to be what people were echoing would
38 be fair, and so I'm not overly happy, but I'm going to let sleeping
39 dogs lie and go with Preferred Alternative 3.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. Dr. Sweetman.

42
43 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I just want to echo what Mr. Sanchez was saying
44 there. I was on John's side there relative to where we're going
45 with that, and I just thought an equal reduction was more fair and
46 palatable across the board, but, like John said, that's not the
47 way it goes, and I'm also not going to stand in the of this. I
48 recognize that the council would prefer that Alternative 3

1 overwhelmingly, based on that vote last time, but, yes,, and I
2 just wanted to put that in the record.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you. Captain Walker.

5
6 **MR. ED WALKER:** I'll just point out, in the alternative, that it
7 says this sector allocation was based on the average recreational
8 landings from the most recent five years, which would include more
9 recreational deepwater fishing, as it's become more popular, and
10 that's in the alternative, and I would -- If you're looking for
11 some justification for why that alternative was picked, I would
12 just highlight that.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Captain Walker. I think, you know,
15 we're in a difficult situation here, right, and we're trying to
16 take action on an overfishing situation, and we're also trying to
17 establish a catch limit for a fishery that previously doesn't have
18 one, and so I understand that maybe, you know, this is the
19 preferred alternative, but, going forward, we can look and evaluate
20 it. If that's not appropriate, going down the road, then we have
21 to come back and re-evaluate. That's typically how things are
22 done around here with other fisheries as well, and so any other
23 comments regarding Action 2 in this document? Mr. Strelcheck.

24
25 **MR. STRELCHECK:** The reason we're asking, obviously, is we have to
26 review and approve, obviously, anything the council submits to us,
27 and so I feel like this conversation has actually muddied the
28 water, and not helped it, because you had several members say,
29 well, we view Alternative 4 as more fair and equitable, right, and
30 so I think Mara is exactly right.

31
32 Alternative 3 and 4, I think there's probably still needed some
33 discussion here, just to ensure we've locked down the council's
34 rationale for choosing Alternative 3, because both of them use
35 that five-year time series that Ed indicated, right, and one is
36 essentially using it to set the allocation, and then determine the
37 commercial based on what's remaining, whereas the other is taking
38 that proportional reduction.

39
40 I think the main emphasis, at least in what I'm hearing in the
41 difference between Alternative 3 and 4, is using that more recent
42 snapshot of landings data to represent kind of a growth in the
43 recreational sector over time as a reason to allocate more to the
44 recreational sector than under Alternative 4, but I'm happy for
45 others to, obviously, add rationale or reason.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Any other
48 comments regarding that, or anything else in this action? All

1 right. Seeing none, Mr. Rindone, can you lead us into the third
2 action in the document, please, when you're finished taking notes?

3
4 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, sir. So Action 3 is Modification of Deepwater
5 Grouper Recreational Accountability Measures. Scroll on down to
6 the current preferred alternative, which is Alternative 4, which
7 states that, for the recreational sector, if the average
8 recreational deepwater grouper landings exceed the average
9 recreational ACL, and the average deepwater grouper complex
10 landings exceed the average deepwater grouper complex ACL over a
11 three-year moving period, then Mr. Strelcheck would reduce the
12 duration of the recreational fishing season by the amount
13 projected, such that the recreational ACL is not exceeded during
14 the following fishing year, unless NMFS determines, based on the
15 best scientific information available, that no adjustment to the
16 recreational fishing season is necessary. Sir.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Rindone, and so,
19 for the third action in the document, we have Preferred Alternative
20 4. Do we have any discussion regarding that preferred alternative,
21 based on public comments received? Dr. Sweetman.

22
23 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, just some rationale
24 here, and so, obviously, the couple options in Alternative 3 -- I
25 just find it incredibly challenging, from a one-year perspective,
26 to be able to project and attribute some landings, based on just
27 a lot of uncertainty with the data, and so Alternative 4, which
28 was something I think we put forward to try and mitigate some of
29 that uncertainty with the data, and I think that's an appropriate
30 way to go for this type of fishery.

31
32 We've previously received presentations from the Science Center
33 about rare-event species, and how you can deal with some of those
34 uncertainty with the landings, and so that's why I think the
35 council tried to move forward and selected this as the preferred
36 alternative.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Understood. Thank you for those comments,
39 and, you know, I believe we heard, during the recreational
40 initiative, that one of the items, or initiatives, in there was to
41 look at, you know, averaging ACLs over multi-years, in order to
42 reduce error, and get to a better average, and so, you know, it
43 seems like implementation of something that was suggested by the
44 public for us to try to initiate, and so it makes sense. Any
45 further comments? Dr. Allen.

46
47 **DR. MICHAEL ALLEN:** I just wanted to speak in favor of this
48 approach. I think, given the very high uncertainty that we're

1 going to be dealing with, with the current system of monitoring
2 the recreational landings, it means that -- That uncertainty means
3 that, in some years, we're going to get estimates that are not
4 close to what the landings probably are.

5
6 They could be either higher or lower, and this concept of using a
7 three-year moving average is, I think, a really good approach,
8 because the hope there is that that average response over three
9 years is going to be much more robust, and closer to the true
10 landings, and that -- I just feel like this is a really good
11 approach, and so thank you.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right, Dr. Allen. Thank you. Mr. Rindone.

14
15 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, sir, and just a comment on this. You
16 guys see, you know, we're using the average landings, based on the
17 average ACL, and the average complex landings, based on the average
18 complex ACL, and, while we have a constant catch scenario for this
19 complex proposed in Action 2, if, at some point, those catch limits
20 were to change, then, by using the average, we account for any
21 increase or decrease in the complex ACL in the future, also, and
22 so it helps smooth things out across the board over time.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and that's a good point to bring up.
25 Dr. Froeschke.

26
27 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** So, just for my own enlightenment here, just
28 to clarify, in that section, the second line, first sentence, it
29 says where deepwater grouper landings exceed the average
30 recreational ACL. In practice, we're going to specify an ACL, and
31 that would just be the ACL to which it's evaluated against, and is
32 that right?

33
34 **MR. RINDONE:** We'll be specifying an ACL in Action 2.

35
36 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Right, and whatever that single number is would be
37 considered the average recreational ACL. I'm not sure what
38 averages contribute to that.

39
40 **MR. RINDONE:** Well, it's averaged for every year, and so, if it's
41 100,000 pounds this year, and 100,000 pounds next year, and let's
42 say there's a catch limit change in three years, and it's 120,000
43 pounds then, and then it would be 320,000 pounds divided by three,
44 and that would be the average that it would be measured against,
45 and so the total landings in that period -- Mara is shaking her
46 head at me, but --

47
48 **DR. FROESCHKE:** No, and that doesn't seem right.

1
2 **MS. LEVY:** We should have removed the word "average" before the
3 ACLs. There's one ACL. You compare the average landings to that
4 ACL, where, if we change the ACL, we don't start averaging it in
5 there again.

6
7 **MR. RINDONE:** The last time we talked about it at the IPT, it was
8 agreed that we should put it in there, and so this is probably the
9 third time that it's been taken out, or put back in, or taken out,
10 and so, whatever it's going to be fine, but --

11
12 **MS. LEVY:** Well, we don't have a changing ACL, and so, if there's
13 one ACL in place, and we're going to do the average landings
14 compared to that ACL.

15
16 **MR. RINDONE:** But if the ACL is -- If we have a catch limit change
17 in the future, then you're going to need this in there, written
18 the way that it is. The catch limit right now is set under constant
19 catch, but we don't change the accountability measures every time
20 we change the catch limit.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Froeschke.

23
24 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I guess, in my mind, the way that -- If you change
25 the catch limits, you would restart at zero year-one, and then you
26 would have a one-year average after year-one, a two-year average
27 after year-two, and a three-year average after year-three. If you
28 were to have -- To go from a very large one to a very small one,
29 or vice versa, that would seem very difficult to understand.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Does the average start over when a catch limit
32 changes?

33
34 **MR. RINDONE:** It does not, not the way that it's currently written.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Simmons, you had your hand up?

37
38 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Yes, and, the way I was reading it,
39 it was a little confusing to me to have "average" in there right
40 now, because it's just that constant catch recreational ACL, but
41 I understand, in the future, when we get new science, the reason
42 we had written it this way is, if there's an increasing or
43 decreasing recreational ACL, we would take that average and compare
44 it to the average landings, and that was my understanding of why
45 it was written that way.

46
47 **MR. RINDONE:** If there's a catch limit change, then that's going
48 to change the degree to which NMFS is projecting the recreational

1 season, you know, will be open, and so their season duration
2 analysis will pivot based on that, and so, if it goes up, then
3 presumably the recreational season will get longer. Obviously,
4 the opposite would also be true. Whatever the catch limit changes
5 to for a given year, the season duration analysis, that's done at
6 the beginning to project how long the recreational season will be,
7 will pivot based on that.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Froeschke.

10
11 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, just to follow-up though, say the average -
12 - Say our ACL is 100,000 pounds now, and, in two years, either by
13 way of reallocation, or we get better news on the science, and say
14 now the recreational ACL is 300,000 pounds. Well, if you took the
15 average recreational ACL, you would still be 133,000 pounds, and,
16 to my mind, that's what you would be evaluated against, which that
17 would be inappropriate, because you've now set the ACL at 300,000.

18
19 **MR. RINDONE:** It's the three-year average landings against the
20 three-year average ACL. It's not a single year's landings against
21 a three-year average ACL.

22
23 **MS. LEVY:** I think we need to talk about this and come back at
24 Full Council.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I agree. It seems like we're stuck
27 in a stalemate here figuring this out, but I think we keep it as-
28 is, and move on, and then we can vote on the document as a whole
29 coming up here, and then I agree we could discuss this before Full
30 Council on Thursday. Frank, did you have your hand up? All right,
31 and so we're at the end. No further discussion on this Action 3,
32 and we'll move to codified text. We got an email with updated
33 codified text just a minute ago, I believe. Mr. Helies, can you
34 run us through that?

35
36 **MR. HELIES:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, and the updated codified
37 text includes the updated commercial quota in 622.39. We,
38 obviously, just had a lengthy discussion about the recreational
39 AM, and so we'll come back to that. The current codified does not
40 say "average" though, and so we'll have to discuss that and make
41 adjustments, if necessary. The other portion here is we're setting
42 a recreational sector ACL for the first time, and so that will be
43 outlined as well. Thanks.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Roger that. I appreciate it. Any
46 discussion or questions about codified text here? Moving forward,
47 we will vote on the document then, and so anyone opposed to the
48 preferred alternatives that are in the document? Seeing no

1 opposition, we will get a motion, Bernie, and can someone make a
2 motion? Dr. Simmons.

3
4 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, do you just want to wait until
5 Full Council, so we can make sure we're completely clear on the
6 accountability measures alternative, because we don't want to have
7 to get ourselves in a bind with Roberts Rules by moving forward to
8 take final action, and then have to undo all that, and so maybe
9 just waiting, so we make sure that we have our ducks in a row on
10 that, and then make a motion and do a roll call at Full Council,
11 please.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Roger that. Dr. Sweetman.

14
15 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thanks. A little sidebar, and I just want to --
16 Whoever put this document together, I actually do appreciate the
17 way that the kind of economic chapter was put in there. There's
18 actually more information, I think, than I'm typically used to
19 seeing, and that was useful, from my perspective, and so kudos to
20 whoever did that.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Well then, we'll move on to --
23 We're supposed to be scheduled for a break, I believe, Mr. Chair,
24 at this time, but we could move on to 58A, if you so choose, since
25 it's 9:30, correct, and 10:15 is supposed to be our break. Do you
26 want to keep -- Do you want to keep moving? All right, and so,
27 Mr. Rindone, can you lead us through the next item in the action
28 guide for 58A?

29
30 **DRAFT DOCUMENT: REEF FISH AMENDMENT 58A: SHALLOW-WATER GROUPER**
31 **COMPLEX MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

32
33 **MR. RINDONE:** It is, and I'll read the action guide when Matt comes
34 on, or Lisa comes up here, excuse me, and so Lisa is going to
35 present updated actions and alternatives for Reef Fish Amendment
36 58A, which proposes dissolving the current other shallow-water
37 grouper complex structure into two new management categories, the
38 scamp complex, which will include scamp and yellowmouth grouper,
39 and the black grouper complex, which will include black grouper
40 and yellowfin grouper, or firebacks.

41
42 With the creation of these two new complexes, management
43 considerations such as catch levels, status determination
44 criteria, sector allocations, and accountability measures, and
45 several other management issues will need to be addressed, and,
46 additionally, these updates will include new yield stream
47 projections for scamp and yellowmouth grouper that the SSC
48 recommended during its May 2025 meeting. You guys should review

1 the information presented, ask questions, and provide direction to
2 staff, as appropriate.

3
4 Right now, staff are planning to develop a public hearing draft of
5 the amendment for you guys to consider at the November 2025 council
6 meeting, and, in preparation for that, and in addition to the
7 virtual public hearing webinar, the committee should recommend any
8 public hearing locations, if desired, and just as a -- Like
9 thinking about like past public hearings that we've done, you know,
10 the end of the year tends to be hard to get good attendance on
11 that, with holiday travel and stuff like that, but, like I said,
12 we'll definitely still do a virtual public hearing. Consideration
13 of final action on this document is currently planned for January
14 2026.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you Mr. Rindone. While we
17 get this pulled up, the next is Tab B, Number 6, Bernie, to pull
18 up, while Dr. Hollensead gets settled here with her computer. We
19 will go through -- We have eight actions in the document, and
20 hopefully we'll be able to get through a few of them before the
21 break. Are you ready to go?

22
23 **DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, if
24 this document looks daunting, you're very astute. It's because it
25 is. One of the things that, conceptually, if you want to think
26 about this, you know, just in a way to kind of take it piecemeal,
27 Action 2, you're going to take the current structure, and you're
28 going to knock it down, okay, and so then, everything after Action
29 1, you're going to say we're going to create these new complexes,
30 and so that's why everything in the document says like to
31 establish, or create, because, after that, we're sort of a clean
32 slate. You can build it out however you would like.

33
34 Basically, you knock down this building, and you're going to build
35 two other ones, one for the black grouper complex and one for the
36 scamp complex that we're considering building out.

37
38 The black grouper, there's fewer pieces there, for example, and so
39 it might look very similar to what we've had in some of the Generic
40 ACL Amendment, that kind of thing. For scamp, you have some fancy
41 new pieces, based on SEDAR and some other new science, and so
42 that's why it's got a few more options to solve, and there's more
43 ways you can build it out.

44
45 What Ryan had reiterated is true. We're looking for a particular
46 timing, and so have a public hearing draft of this coming for the
47 next meeting in November, and so you do still have time to look at
48 this document, if there's things that you would like to add, if

1 there was things that you see, you know, discuss, decide to remove,
2 and all of that you can still do. We just ask that you put that
3 in a motion, so that staff has, you know, explicit direction on
4 what you would like to see going into that public hearing draft.

5
6 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going to Action 1, please. Okay, and
7 so we're going to knock down the tower here, and so, basically,
8 this action would say, okay, we're going to maintain that current
9 composition of the shallow-water grouper complex, which would
10 include scamp, yellowmouth grouper, black grouper, and yellowfin
11 grouper, and so this alternative is inconsistent with the best
12 scientific information available, and, therefore, it's not a
13 viable alternative, and so now we're looking at Alternative 2.

14
15 It would dissolve the existing other shallow-water grouper complex
16 and form two new ones. In that, you would have scamp and
17 yellowmouth grouper, from here on out known as the scamp complex,
18 and then you would have the black grouper and yellowfin grouper,
19 and that's your black grouper complex.

20
21 It would create two new IFQ share categories, one for the scamp
22 complex and one for the black grouper complex, and those shares
23 would be distributed such that the shareholders receive the same
24 percentage in each of the two new categories that they held upon
25 dissolution of the other shallow-water grouper complex, and so
26 that's decision point one, Mr. Chair, if there are any questions.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and looks like we have Captain Walker.

29
30 **MR. WALKER:** I'm having a little trouble wrapping my head around
31 the distribution of shares when we split it. Is it going to have
32 any relation to past landings, because some guys hold those, and
33 they don't catch any blacks, and they use it all for scamp, and
34 how is that going to shake out?

35
36 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** So, this time last year, you all had discussed
37 the suite of options to look at that, and ultimately had decided
38 to at least take that sort of suite and put it into Considered but
39 Rejected, but certainly, if there was something that you wanted to
40 revisit, and I know we have Regional Office staff that can answer
41 your questions as to how mechanistically that could occur.

42
43 **MR. WALKER:** No, and I'm not looking to revisit it, but just maybe
44 an explanation of where it is exactly we've landed with this one.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Froeschke.

47
48 **DR. FROESCHKE:** The way that we decided to do it is, essentially,

1 if you have whatever percentage of shallow-water grouper shares
2 you had, and so you had 1 percent, for easy math, you would be --
3 You're going to get 1 percent of the black grouper complex shares,
4 and you're going to get 1 percent of the scamp complex shares.

5
6 At that time, if -- They would own them. If they owned them
7 before, they're going to own them again, and so, if they don't
8 catch black grouper, they would be free to lease them, or sell
9 them, and vice versa, and they could buy, or whatever, and so --

10
11 **MR. WALKER:** Okay, and that makes sense, from a percent -- It was
12 harder to comprehend on a pound basis, but the percentage makes it
13 easier to understand. Thank you.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Sweetman.

16
17 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and this might be a stupid
18 question, but part of the impetus, I think, for why we were trying
19 to work on this was to not constrain black grouper, or whatever
20 subcomplex, to the issues that are associated with scamp, right,
21 and so -- Then I asked, at the last meeting, can we just not go
22 forward with that season for black grouper, or whatever, and I
23 think we were told that, no, we can't do that.

24
25 I guess my first question is I don't understand why we can't do
26 that, and then so you're saying -- Is Alternative 1 not viable
27 because they're in different units? Like why is Alternative 1 not
28 a viable option there, because I think -- Anyways, and, if we could
29 just set a season, that would solve everything.

30
31 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, if I -- Just regarding the black grouper
32 season first, in this document, there would no longer be a closed
33 season for the black grouper complex, and only for the scamp
34 complex, and I guess the first part of your question -- The reason
35 we didn't do that in the framework action is there was no way to
36 parse that out. All of the landings and everything are associated
37 -- The ACL, and the landings, all that is associated with a single
38 complex, and so we didn't manage scamp, per se, and so there wasn't
39 a way to close the recreational sector for scamp, and so that's
40 just the way that was set up. Hopefully, going forward, we'll
41 mitigate that.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Captain Walker.

44
45 **MR. WALKER:** So this would -- The equal on the commercial shares,
46 the equal distribution, the one-to-one, would subject the black
47 groupers to the reduction of scamp, correct?

48

1 **DR. FROESCHKE:** No, because the black grouper quota is being
2 addressed separately, and so, in the framework action, that's how
3 it was done, because we -- There was different currencies, and the
4 black grouper was a joint stock, and there was many factors that
5 did not allow us to just separate that out.

6
7 That's why we have split the complex, in this case, such that the
8 reductions that are necessary for scamp don't drag down black
9 grouper with it, which we don't have any science at this time to
10 suggest that that's necessary, and so the black grouper is
11 essentially unchanged. It's based on the old science, although,
12 you know, it's a jointly-managed stock, and there's a regional
13 apportionment between the two councils, and things like that, and
14 so, as best as we could, we did that, and, if we look at the ACL
15 for the black grouper complex relative to the recent landings,
16 that's far above those.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

19
20 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So I think the challenge here is we've punted
21 some of the decisions for redistribution to Amendments 59 and 60,
22 but those are lagging behind. The struggle I'm having with
23 Alternative 2, and this is where, you know, Ed or, you know, maybe
24 John could weigh-in, but, if you land primarily scamp right now
25 under other shallow-water grouper, when we distribute this, you're
26 going to get essentially black grouper and scamp, right, and you
27 may not be using your black grouper at all, right?

28
29 We're going to have some distributional effects, where people that
30 primarily own black grouper are going to get a lot of scamp, and
31 people that kind land a lot of scamp are going to get black grouper
32 quota, and then there has to be the movement, or mixing, of that
33 quota within the industry, in order to kind of redistribute it,
34 which can happen, right? The market can drive that.

35
36 The other option would be to add more alternatives to this document
37 that uses landings history, or some other data reporting from the
38 IFQ system, that tries to get those quota for shallow-water grouper
39 more aligned with the harvesting practices that are happening
40 today.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Andy. Any other
43 comments regarding this? Dr. Banks, and then Dr. Sweetman.

44
45 **DR. BANKS:** So, with that statement, Andy, I'm just struggling
46 with, since we don't currently have an active participation
47 requirement that -- Like Ed said, right now, you can be leasing
48 out those shares, and so I don't know that that's an accurate, at

1 this moment, reflection in that fishery, and so I think,
2 personally, at this moment, I'm leaning toward the one-to-one.

3
4 If you have 1 percent, as John said, of this existing shallow-
5 water grouper, you get one-and-one of the new complexes, and we
6 let the industry sort it out. If this were to go into effect after
7 active participation, and we had a dataset that showed who's truly
8 using them, then I would agree to that, but I would say, at this
9 point, I'm leaning more toward the industry having to shuffle their
10 shares around.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Sweetman.

13
14 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. So just bigger picture here
15 too, thinking about like timing of all this, right, and I kind of
16 think we're -- Even though there's not like -- We're not mandated
17 to act in a certain timeframe here, but, relative to the framework,
18 right, and so we are trying to move this forward as quickly as we
19 could, so we're not having a fishing season where black grouper
20 and whatnot is constrained to that season, and so I just want to
21 point that out.

22
23 I mean, I don't disagree with adding alternatives, if need be.
24 Obviously, this is the first time that we're seeing this document,
25 but that's, obviously, going to require analyses, and things along
26 those lines, that could further delay this, and then we would
27 ultimately have these impacts to -- Anyways, I just want to put
28 that out there.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Understood. Thank you for that comment. Any
31 other comments for the first action? Dr. Overton.

32
33 **DR. ANTHONY OVERTON:** Yes, and I'm in agreement of the even split,
34 because it may be that, after the split, one of these complexes
35 becomes more valuable than the other, and so, if you have equal
36 shares, you have a chance to make money, or reallocate, or sell
37 some of the shares, based on the value of the split, and so I think
38 we should let the industry continue to evaluate that, once that
39 split occurs.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Any comment? Ms. Levy.

42
43 **MS. LEVY:** Maybe I'm wrong, but I don't -- It doesn't say it's an
44 even split, right? It says you're going to distribute the shares
45 in the new share categories based on what the current holdings of
46 the shallow-water grouper shares are, right, and so you're not
47 distributing it equally. You're not splitting it equally, right?
48 You're just distributing it based on current shareholdings under

1 that alternative. You're not accounting for who is landing what,
2 essentially, right?

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and thank you, Ms. Levy. Yes, and it's
5 basically a distribution with equal percentages, currently, right?
6

7 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Equal to what you currently have.
8

9 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Right. Mr. Strelcheck.
10

11 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I have two thoughts. One, you know, with Kesley's
12 comment, I think, if that's the direction the council wants to go,
13 I think we should at least signal that in the amendment, that this
14 is something the council is interested in revisiting after the
15 distribution.
16

17 I think, because of the confusion I'm hearing around the table, it
18 may be worth coming back to this at Full Council and just showing
19 kind of an example of the distributional impacts here, because I
20 don't think it's fully understood the consequences of this, and
21 whether or not we should actually be including alternatives here
22 or not, right, and so I think we just want -- I would recommend
23 that, and Jessica Stephen is here, from my IFQ team, and so we
24 could work with her on maybe just a simple one or two-slide example
25 of this distributional changes that we're looking at here.
26

27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Good point, Andy. Thank you for that
28 comment. Dr. Simmons.
29

30 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. If you
31 have that information now, I think it would be appropriate for the
32 committee to look at it, instead of waiting to Full Council, unless
33 it's not prepared.
34

35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** No, and I don't have anything readily prepared.
36 I'm thinking of just some very basic examples of showing a set
37 percentage for shareholdings, and how that ultimately gets split
38 between scamp and black grouper. You know, we were prepared to
39 discuss potentially some other alternatives here, but I think it's
40 important, given the points around the table, that we have first
41 a consistent understanding of the issue, before we weigh-in on any
42 new alternatives.
43

44 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Simmons.
45

46 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Okay. Thank you. I think the other
47 big issue that we were battling, you know, for black grouper and
48 yellowfin, was just recreating these historical landings and what

1 happened when we apportioned this a long time ago between the
2 councils.

3
4 I think we struggled to do that, and I think there's still a lot
5 of question-marks with the data, which I think what we have here
6 we're comfortable with, but I think there's some indication,
7 perhaps, that some of the Monroe landings maybe were in the Gulf,
8 and so I think there's just a lot of question-marks, and taking
9 that, and then parsing out the recreational ACL, and then doing
10 redistribution, I think, on data that may not be up-to-date was
11 another concern, I think, that we talked about at the IPT level.

12
13 I don't know a way around that, until we get some better
14 information, with some type of stock assessment or index or this
15 MSE, but that was, I think, a large issue that we were struggling
16 with during development of this over the last, I don't know, five
17 years, I think.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Captain Walker, you
20 had your hand up?

21
22 **MR. WALKER:** I appreciate Mr. Strelcheck's suggestion that maybe
23 we just have a quick look at an example of this, because, if I can
24 use myself as an example, I have like 2,000 pounds of shallow-
25 water grouper shares that I, quote, unquote, own at the moment,
26 and I don't think I've ever caught a black grouper.

27
28 So, splitting that, but, now, people in south Florida might have
29 different -- They catch a lot of black grouper, and I don't, and
30 so maybe we can just see how that's going to shake out, and maybe
31 Dr. Stephen can put up a little example of what some of the
32 proposals would look like. That would be helpful to see.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Froeschke.

35
36 **DR. FROESCHKE:** We talked about this at the IPT, and one of the
37 example scenarios that we discussed, that I didn't understand the
38 implications, but, for example, if you leased -- If you bought
39 shares, and you leased them, which is permissible in the program,
40 and so you effectively never caught any fish -- If you based it on
41 the landings, then what would happen to your shares? You would
42 still be -- You could potentially still be on the hook for what
43 you paid for them, but you wouldn't have anything to show for it.
44 That's what we couldn't understand.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Well, I don't want to put Dr.
47 Stephen in a corner here, but maybe she could assemble something
48 for us before we get the Full Council, possibly, that we could put

1 up on the screen, a little flow chart or diagram or something like
2 that. Anyway, any other comments regarding the first action?
3 Seeing none, we'll move to Action 2, Dr. Hollensead.

4
5 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay, and thank you, and so Ryan alluded to this
6 a little bit when he was presenting 58B for the deepwater grouper,
7 and so, when he mentioned looking at this at 58A here, this is in
8 Action 2, and so this is considering IFQ flexibility measures.

9
10 Currently, it has two alternatives here, and so the no action would
11 be do not create flexibility measures for scamp, warsaw grouper,
12 or speckled hind, also known as kitty mitchell. These species
13 would not be landed under an alternative allocation category, and
14 the scamp complex quota would be equal to the complex ACL that
15 would be established in Action 6.

16
17 There's a second alternative to create a flexibility measure for
18 warsaw and speckled hind that accounts for the new shares, the
19 categories, from Alternative 2 in Action 1, and so this would
20 create a flexibility measure that will allow warsaw and speckled
21 hind, designated in the deepwater grouper category shares, to be
22 landed under the scamp allocation, once all of your deepwater
23 grouper allocation has been harvested, and so that's the only time
24 you can do that. You have to have no deepwater grouper left.

25
26 The scamp complex quota would then be 4 percent below the scamp
27 complex ACL established in Action 6, and so that's the one way of
28 going, is being able to land deepwater grouper under the scamp
29 complex.

30
31 You'll notice we don't have another alternative to go the other
32 way. If you'll recall, back last year, when we were deciding to
33 divide out this document into a deepwater component and a shallow-
34 water grouper component, there was direction to staff to not
35 include that possibility of a flexibility measure such that scamp
36 could be landed under deepwater grouper, and so that's why it's
37 not reflected here, but, you know, certainly this decision point
38 is still in this document, should the committee discuss how they
39 would like to handle this, and so, Mr. Chair, I'll pause there for
40 any questions.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Hollensead, and so,
43 in Action 2, we have a IFQ flexibility measure, with two
44 alternatives. Any discussion regarding Alternative 2? Captain
45 Walker.

46
47 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you Mr. Chair. I have had numerous commercial
48 operators contact me about this particular action, and they

1 definitely wanted to see speckled hind involved in some kind of a
2 flexibility measure, and it's a little tricky to -- They had all
3 suggestions across-the-board, to maybe include it in red grouper,
4 or, you know, a bunch of different options, that may or may not
5 make any sense.

6
7 I would love to hear anybody else's take on this. The one thing
8 I point out, on all these flexibility measures, is the hang-up I
9 have with them is it says allocation -- You can use it after all
10 allocation in an account has been harvested, and, thus far, in my
11 experience with these flexibility measures, that's not really what
12 is happening.

13
14 The allocation has often been shifted somewhere else, to create an
15 empty account, and then you can use the flexibility measures, and
16 it was -- It's been bounced around a little bit, and so I would be
17 interested to hear if anybody else had any input on whether we
18 should mess with this, for speckled hind in particular, because
19 I've been asked that, or not.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Sweetman.

22
23 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean from my perspective,
24 and when we've been working on this issue in the IFQ program, I
25 think we were leaning a little bit towards the direction of doing
26 away with those flex measures, and I would want to be consistent
27 here, along those lines, and we've got clearly some issues with
28 scamp, right? In the deepwater grouper complex, there's issues.
29 I don't like the back-and-forth there between that, and so, I mean,
30 I would be in favor of not creating -- No action for this one here.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Banks, I think you had your hand
33 up, right?

34
35 **DR. BANKS:** I can let John go first, if --

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Is that the point, Dr. Froeschke?

38
39 **DR. BANKS:** Okay. I don't -- I'm kind of with C.J. I'm not sure
40 I'm in favor of a flexibility measure, but I have a quick question
41 about that. This would still just be between deepwater grouper
42 and shallow-water both new complexes, or just scamp.

43
44 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just scamp.

45
46 **DR. BANKS:** But no flexibility between the two shallow-water
47 complexes?

48

1 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No.
2
3 **DR. BANKS:** Just scamp? Okay. Thank you.
4
5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Froeschke.
6
7 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Just a couple of points, and so, at the August
8 2024 -- I mean the reason why there's not the other way, for
9 example landing scamp under deepwater grouper, is because the
10 council gave us direction, at the August, not to do that. They
11 didn't specifically say to do this one. We sort of took some
12 flexibility there to provide this for your consideration.
13
14 I mean, some of the things that we talked about, at the IPT level,
15 was this potentially alleviating some dead discards for some
16 deepwater species. On the other hand, to accommodate this requires
17 reducing the scamp quota, which is very low already, by an
18 additional 4 percent, and so you may run out of fish, and generate
19 some discards there.
20
21 The discard conversation is always difficult, because, one, we
22 don't have very much data to actually inform this, and so it's
23 more of a hypothetical, but you get, you know, discards, instead
24 of catching it, because you don't have quota, but then there's
25 just such a low amount that then you end up with discards on the
26 other end, and so I'm not sure that there's any conclusive things
27 to be said about that, but, I mean, we certainly did talk about
28 this with that in mind.
29
30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Froeschke. Mr.
31 Strelcheck.
32
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** A lot of good points been raised, and so Ed made
34 a great point about how the system is working, versus maybe the
35 original intent, right, and that people move quota around to allow
36 for use of these flexibility measures. I think John has also
37 emphasized a couple of key points, that I wanted to reiterate, and
38 so, in reducing the catch limit by some percentage, right, we're
39 setting a quota below the catch limit to allow for that flexibility
40 to occur.
41
42 With cooccurring species then, if you're encountering them, you
43 have the flexibility to land those species, that maybe you
44 otherwise would have to discard, right, and so, even though it's
45 a small percentage, it does provide, to me, some greater
46 flexibility for on-the-water fishing operations, especially when
47 you're dealing with cooccurring species.
48

1 You know, removing the flexibility for going the other way with
2 scamp, you know, that does, obviously, potentially limit how much
3 scamp would be harvested, but keep in mind, when you're reducing
4 from the catch limit to a lower quota, we're assuring that the
5 catch limit for scamp is not going to be exceeded, right, and so
6 there's that buffer there, but I would encourage continued use of
7 flexibility measures, even though it's not necessarily a
8 substantial portion of the fishery.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Captain Walker.

11
12 **MR. WALKER:** I appreciate that. I think that's what I needed to
13 make up my mind. I'm very much on the fence with that too, and
14 then also with what John pointed out, that it's actually going to
15 cause a little bit of a reduction in the overall scamp, but I have
16 had a lot of guys really, really asking me, you know, if we could
17 do something to keep the speckled hind in the flexibility measure,
18 and so that's very helpful. Thank you.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Any further discussion on Action 2?
21 Seeing none, Dr. Hollensead, can you move us to Action 3 in the
22 document?

23
24 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, sir. Bernie, would you mind going to Action
25 3, please? So the next two actions are going to focus on the new
26 black grouper complex, and so we're going to have to establish
27 some biological reference points, status determination criteria,
28 the SDC, catch limits, and sector allocations for this complex.

29
30 Alternative 1 says don't do any of that, which is sort of
31 problematic, because, you know, that's a new catch limit, and so
32 it makes it impossible to manage. There's a scant amount of
33 information for black grouper and yellowfin grouper, but there is
34 some information that we have from Reef Fish Amendment 48 that
35 gives some of these criteria here that we can use, and so, Bernie,
36 if you wouldn't mind scrolling down, please.

37
38 These definitions that would be used for the black grouper complex
39 were generated through the Generic ACL Amendment, so that it is
40 supported through that effort. As I mentioned, there's not a lot
41 of information that we can use, but we do have some, and so that
42 would get through the SDC and your biological reference points.

43
44 In terms of the catch limits, we have that second table here below,
45 and so the OFL is going to be undefined, and so, for the whole
46 stock, and so, for black grouper, their core distribution sort of
47 straddles, there in the Keys, between the Gulf and the South
48 Atlantic, and so, while they sit there and thumb their noses at

1 our precious geopolitical boundaries, there's no way for us then
2 to have an OFL defined just for the Gulf, for that reason, and so
3 that's why that would remain undefined for the Gulf, but there is
4 an OFL for the entire stock.

5
6 The apportionment for the Gulf is that ABC that you see there, the
7 310,000 pounds, and that would also be set equal to the stock ACL.
8 The commercial and recreational apportionment for the ACL is going
9 to be informed by -- Set the allocation, and so it's sort of a
10 tabulation of the landings of black grouper and yellowfin grouper
11 landings that are for -- The landings history for both the black
12 grouper and the yellowfin grouper, and so that was generated from
13 that Generic ACL Amendment.

14
15 So, again, not a lot of information, but we do have that generic
16 amendment, which helps build out some of this, that would be needed
17 to create what we need to build our management foundation for the
18 black grouper complex.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. Dr.
21 Froeschke.

22
23 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Just for your edification, on Table 1.1.2, it
24 shows, among other things, the black grouper landings, and they're
25 way, way below what these numbers are, and so, speaking to C.J.'s
26 point about the seasons and things like that, and there's probably
27 a scientific need to re-evaluate the ACLs and all that for black
28 grouper in the future, and I think some of that is being done,
29 but, based on this now, we don't anticipate any seasonal closures
30 relating, and so you'll see, in more recent years, I mean, it's
31 gone way, way down, and so you're 30,000 pounds-ish.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Froeschke, for
34 pointing out the landings table. It's helpful, and so, in Action
35 3, we've got two alternatives. In Alternative 2, we've got an
36 SSC-recommended 30 percent SPR. Do we have any discussion
37 regarding Alternative 2? Dr. Allen.

38
39 **DR. ALLEN:** I'll just make a note that, based on the recent
40 discussions from the SSC, when I was there, that the -- For
41 hermaphroditic groupers, like black grouper, the trend has been to
42 go to a 40 percent SPR as a reference point, but, you know, the
43 SSC hasn't weighed-in on this lately, because we haven't had a
44 stock assessment, and I know there's some consideration of doing
45 a stock assessment in the future, and so we -- I think we can wait
46 on that, but I just wanted to make the point in the record that
47 the SSC is -- It would be consistent to make it 40 percent, and
48 we'll let them weigh-in on that.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Allen. Any other
3 comments for Action 3? Seeing none, Dr. Hollensead, I think we
4 can move to Action 4, and then we'll have a scheduled break, I
5 believe, at 10:15.

6
7 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Sure. With the completion of the review of Action
8 4, that would actually -- You know, we have discussed everything
9 that would be for the black grouper complex, and then we would
10 move into the scamp, and so that's a natural point there, and so,
11 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going to Action 4.

12
13 This would be considering some accountability measures for black
14 grouper. Alternative 1, the no action, would be to not establish
15 any recreational sector accountability measures. This is for the
16 recreational sector specifically.

17
18 Alternative 2, an in-season recreational fishing closure would be
19 implemented for the black grouper complex when NMFS projects the
20 recreational ACL, which would be established there in Action 3, is
21 met, and so that's an in-season accountability measure.

22
23 Alternative 3 would consider a post-season recreational
24 accountability measure that would be implemented for the black
25 grouper complex. In the year following an overage of the
26 recreational ACL, again established in Action 3, and so NMFS would
27 close the recreational black grouper complex to harvest when the
28 recreational ACL is met or projected to be met. Mr. Chair.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. We have a
31 question from Dr. Sweetman.

32
33 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No question, and I just -- From my perspective, I
34 mean, I don't -- We don't see any issues associated with this
35 fishery here, and so I don't think an accountability measure is
36 necessarily needed right now, until we get other information that
37 tells us otherwise, where we could also after the fact do something
38 later on down the road, if needed.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Froeschke.

41
42 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So, kind of on that vein, I don't know if we -- If
43 that's the consensus, if we need to retain the action, and I'm
44 assuming that we do, but, given the recent history of the council
45 of moving away from the in-season accountability measures, in
46 particular where the PSEs are very high, and I think they are for
47 black grouper, and I don't have it off the top my head, but I
48 wonder if there was any interest in removing Alternative 2, if the

1 committee doesn't think that's a reasonable alternative, given the
2 data and the ACLs.

3

4 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, Dr. Froeschke. Ms. Levy.

5

6 **MS. LEVY:** Well, you do need an accountability measure, because
7 you need -- Because you need accountability measures to ensure
8 that the ACL is not exceeded, and that's what the Magnuson Act
9 says. Whether it actually gets triggered, that's another question,
10 but you need some measure that makes you accountable to the annual
11 catch limit.

12

13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Mr. Strelcheck.

14

15 **MR. STRELCHECK:** In response to the suggestion about removing
16 Alternative 2, I think it's a reasonable alternative, and we don't
17 have to select it as preferred, but, I think, for amendment
18 purposes, it's reasonable for analysis.

19

20 For Alternative 3, and we just got done with deepwater grouper.
21 It's a little bit different, in terms of multi-year average, but
22 I'm curious if the council would want to consider building into
23 this accountability measure if either the - It's kind of a two-
24 step, you know, accountability. If the recreational ACL is
25 exceeded, and the total ACL is exceeded, then the accountability
26 measure is triggered, because then we're looking at the overall
27 ACL for the fishery as a whole.

28

29 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Andy. Any other comment?
30 Captain Walker.

31

32 **MS. WALKER:** Yes, and I like John's suggestion of either getting
33 rid of Alternative 3 or leaving it there, as Andy said, and making
34 Alternative 3 the preferred, but I guess it doesn't -- It doesn't
35 say the total ACL here, and we could we could go with that, if we
36 don't -- If we exceed the total ACL, rather than the recreational,
37 in Alternative 3, and is that correct?

38

39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I believe you could either make a motion to
40 modify the language, if you so choose, or to eliminate Alternative
41 2 from the document, or create an Alternative 4, if you like.

42

43 **MR. WALKER:** I just wasn't -- Andy would have to help me out on
44 that, but I wasn't sure if that's even possible, if you could make
45 it the total ACL, rather than the recreational, and I don't know
46 the legalities of doing that. That needs some help on it, but I
47 like the idea, and I would make a motion to that, if it's viable.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I think we have that in other amendments, but
2 I'm leaning towards Ms. Levy to say whether we could or can't. We
3 can? Everybody is shaking their head yes, and so, if you wanted
4 to make that motion, or we can come back to this later Thursday,
5 and it's your choice. Dr. Sweetman, you had your hand up briefly
6 before?
7
8 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and so, Dr. Hollensead, Action 1, or
9 Alternative 1, here is not viable?
10
11 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** It doesn't sound like it.
12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.
14
15 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'm going to recommend, you know, some language
16 for Full Council, but maybe we can just make a note in the committee
17 minutes, or summary, that we'll come back to this for discussion
18 and propose a modification of the accountability measure that
19 includes the total ACL.
20
21 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. We have that in the notes. Any
22 other comments for this action? Seeing none, I think we're
23 scheduled -- Dr. Allen, did you want to say --
24
25 **DR. ALLEN:** Thanks. I was just going to say one thing, and I would
26 support removing Alternative 2 as well. I think that's -- Maybe
27 we can do that in Full Council, but I think post-season is really
28 the only viable option here.
29
30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Understood. Thank you. Seeing no other
31 comments, Mr. Chair, I recommend we take our scheduled break before
32 we dive into the next four action items, if that's good with you.
33 All right. What time do we have to be back?
34
35 **MR. DUGAS:** 10:25.
36
37 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)
38
39 **MR. DUGAS:** Okay, folks. If we can get the council members back
40 to the table. If we can quiet down in the back of the room please,
41 and we're going to get started. We're going to get started again.
42 Okay, Mr. Schieble.
43
44 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'll pick
45 back up in 58A, Action 5, Established Biological Reference Points
46 and Status Determination Criteria for the Scamp Complex. Dr.
47 Hollensead.
48

1 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we've completed two
2 of the three steps, right, and so, considering those, we've sort
3 of knocked down the existing complex, and we've built up the black
4 grouper complex, looking at that, and so now we're going to focus
5 on the scamp complex throughout, and so the rest of the document
6 will just be focused on the scamp complex.

7
8 Like we did for the black grouper complex, we're considering
9 establishing biological reference points and SDC for this complex.
10 Again, the Alternative 1 would be the no action, to not establish
11 any of these reference points, which, obviously, makes it
12 incredibly difficult to manage, and you would not being able to
13 manage it at all, and so not particularly a viable option.

14
15 Alternative 2 would establish these various criteria here for MSY
16 and maximum fishing mortality threshold, and so, as Dr. Allen had
17 alluded to, the SSC has reviewed scamp here recently, based on
18 SEDAR 68, and also discussed what a proper proxy for MSY would be
19 for scamp, and so that's why it's a little different for black
20 grouper, as he noted here, and so it's going to be the yield at F
21 40 percent SPR associated fishing mortality, with that MSY proxy.

22
23 The MSST is 75 percent of the MSY. As you recall, speaking from
24 the other amendments that we had that put in these criteria, you
25 don't really expect a population to go below that without some
26 sort of fishing mechanism being in place, right, and this is the
27 threshold that you would accept for the biomass, given permutations
28 and recruitment and other environmental factors, and so that's why
29 it's set at that, and it's sort of been the rule-of-thumb that
30 we've been using when we set up these criteria.

31
32 Then an OY of 90 percent MSY, which, again, was discussed through
33 the Amendment 48, and it was settled on as an OY that's appropriate
34 for scamp, and so, Mr. Chair, I would stop there for any questions
35 anybody had.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Hollensead, and so, in
38 Action 5, we have two alternatives, Alternative 1, which is not
39 consistent with Magnuson, and so any discussion, or comments,
40 regarding Alternative 2 in this action? All right. Seeing none,
41 I guess we can roll on to Action 6 then.

42
43 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** Sure thing, and so Action 6 is going to look at
44 establishing catch limits and sector allocations for the scamp
45 complex, and so, you know, note the OFL and ABC have been informed
46 by SEDAR 68, which is now in MRIP-FES. Those values were
47 deliberated by the SSC, and then recommended, and so those are
48 sort of locked in, and so what we're really looking at in this

1 action is the sector allocation.

2
3 Alternative 1 would not establish catch limits for the new scamp
4 complex. Again, that's not a viable option. Alternative 2 would,
5 again, establish catch limits for the scamp complex. The ABC would
6 be set equal to the stock ACL, which equals the combined sector
7 ACLs.

8
9 Alternative 2 goes ahead and sets those the various options. Like
10 I said, the OFL the ABC, and the stock ACL are going to remain the
11 same throughout the options. It's that commercial ACL and rec ACL
12 that's going to vary between the three options.

13
14 Option 2a, the commercial and recreational allocations would be
15 based on the apportionment of the stock ACL to the commercial
16 sector, as established by the Generic ACL/AM amendment, and so, in
17 that case, the commercial sector is allocated 80.1 percent of the
18 scamp and yellowmouth grouper combined ACL, and the recreational
19 sector is allocated 19.9. Bernie, scroll down for me please.

20
21 Another way to look at this is the commercial and recreational
22 allocations can instead be based on the apportionment of average
23 landings from 2012 to 2023, excluding the 2020 COVID year as an
24 anomalous year. The commercial sector would then be allocated
25 38.6 percent of the of the ACL, and the recreational would be given
26 61.4 percent of the stock ACL.

27
28 Option 2c, the commercial and recreational allocations are based
29 on reducing catch limits equally, and so percentage-wise between
30 the commercial and recreational sectors, based on the most recent
31 three years of landings, and so that's going to be 2021 to 2023.
32 The commercial sector, in that case, would be allocated 29.7
33 percent of the scamp and yellowmouth combined ACL, and the
34 recreational sector would be allocated 70.3 percent. Mr. Chair,
35 I'll stop it there for any questions.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Hollensead, and so we
38 have Alternative 1, which is inconsistent with Magnuson, and we
39 have Alternatives 2a, b and, c with different allocations between
40 the commercial and recreational sector. Do we have any comments
41 between -- Dr. Sweetman.

42
43 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good old allocations again,
44 and, yes, it's a big swing. This is going to be another challenging
45 one, I've got a feeling, but, I mean, part of -- So Alternative 2,
46 you know, it's looking at data from 2012, up to 2023, and, just
47 looking at the historical landings on this, and I asked this at
48 the last meeting, but I -- I would ask again, for our commercial

1 folks in the audience that wish to speak about this item, but there
2 was a shift, an abrupt shift, in 2018, and a decline in commercial
3 landings.

4
5 Before that, you know, it had been very consistent, and so I was
6 just -- I don't know why that shift occurred from 2018 and onward,
7 and I think that would be -- For me, it would be helpful to
8 understand why that happened, because, when you're just using
9 landings data, obviously now there's a big shift in this fishery
10 from commercial to recreational, and not saying that recreational
11 doesn't need anything, obviously, but I'm trying to understand why
12 that shift occurred, and how ultimately that factors in here,
13 because, yes, it's concerning having these large changes, based on
14 these landings data, without understanding what actually happened
15 there.

16
17 I guess a question, Lisa, and are there any options in here that
18 are kind of -- So, in the last -- In the deepwater amendment, you
19 know, I was highlighting that the equal pain might be something
20 appropriate here, and more fair and palatable, but do any of these
21 options equal cuts across the board there?

22
23 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** I think Option 2c is looking to -- It's sort of
24 analogous to what you were talking about in the document.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Bernie, can
27 you scroll up on the document to Table 2.6.1, I think it is, to
28 reference what Dr. Sweetman is talking about? All right, and so
29 this is the change in landings that he's mentioning, starting in
30 2018, where you can see an abrupt shift, or reduction I guess, in
31 the commercial percent of the ACL landed, and the increase in the
32 recreational percentage landed, correct?

33
34 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and thanks for bringing up -- For pulling up
35 this table, and you can see it there, where there's just that shift
36 that occurs, and I don't know, and maybe it's 2016, where you just
37 it drops pretty precipitously beyond there, and so I'm just
38 wondering, and is there a change in effort, where people focused
39 on other species, or was -- You know, obviously, relative to how
40 much has landed in Florida, obviously, we've had some pretty
41 intensive hurricane seasons that might be impacting some of these
42 things here, but I'm just trying to understand why this change
43 happened.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** You know, looking at the table, it seems like
46 a complete shift, and you would look at, if it's potentially around
47 that same time period, technology increases, right, and, you know,
48 bottom sonar technology, and electric reel advent technology, but

1 it doesn't explain the commercial reduction, I guess, and so I'm
2 not quite sure either what's happening, but, Dr. Froeschke.

3
4 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Well, I don't I don't have the answer, but just
5 some additional information. Just kind of looking at the table,
6 since 2019, the recreational has also experienced year-over-year
7 declines every year, and what occurs to me is, when we looked at
8 the stock assessment, and I always remember looking at those Kobe
9 plots, and for the last I think twenty years, every single year,
10 the biomass has been reduced, at least the standing stock biomass,
11 and so that may just be a reflection of that, and I don't know.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr Sweetman.

14
15 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I appreciate that, and so, Lisa, I'm wondering, you
16 know, because of these changes here, and I'm not understanding it,
17 quite frankly, and, I mean, maybe I'll save this for Full Council,
18 but looking at that equal reduction across a longer time series
19 might be more reflective of what's going on here with this fishery
20 overall, and I might hold that for if we wanted to add something
21 here, but, anyways, just a thought.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Sanchez.

24
25 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Kind of following C.J.'s lead, and I don't know, and
26 I don't want to put words in his mouth, but, looking at 2012 to
27 2023, which is, you know, a good length of time, if we're trying
28 to get to that maybe more equitable approach to this, then maybe
29 we remove the COVID year, because that was COVID, 2020, and then
30 we take out each sector's high year and low year, and then go with
31 that average, for that same time series, and maybe that levels
32 this thing off a little bit, and makes it fair. I don't know,
33 without that, looking at the analysis.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So you're thinking of a potential 2d
36 alternative to add into the document?

37
38 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I would like to hear from the public more,
39 in case we get an explanation as to what happened with 2018, but,
40 if not, then, yes, that would probably be something to add, maybe,
41 and get us -- Maybe as a means to get us where we want, unless we
42 hear something better.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so maybe something to come back in
45 Full Council, after we hear public comment tomorrow. Any other
46 comments, or questions? Dr. Banks.

47
48 **DR. BANKS:** I see where C.J. talking about, but, if you look

1 further up the time series, it's not as big a shift, I think, as
2 you're looking at. I mean, the 2012 to 2013 are both almost 50/50
3 splits, and then there's a higher rec for two years, and then it's
4 back to almost a 50/50 split, a 50/45 split, and then it jumps
5 back up to -- Are we not talking about the same thing? Hold on.
6

7 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Sweetman.
8

9 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No, and I was I was talking about the commercial
10 shift there and not the shift between the sectors.
11

12 **DR. BANKS:** Okay, and I don't -- We weren't looking at the same
13 thing then. Thank you.
14

15 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I think you were talking about the recent drop-
16 off, right, in the commercial ACL. Okay. Any other questions, or
17 comments, for this action? All right. Dr. Hollensead, do you
18 want to take us to Action 7, Establish Recreational Catch ACT
19 Buffers for the Scamp Complex?
20

21 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, and so, for
22 this action, it would be considering establishing a recreational
23 ACT for the scamp complex, and so that Alternative 1, no action,
24 would be to not establish an ACT buffered below the recreational
25 ACL for this complex.
26

27 Alternative 2 would establish an ACT, by applying the council's
28 ACL/ACT control rule, assuming the scamp and yellowmouth grouper
29 are considered a single stock, and this is what was done in SEDAR
30 68, and using landings data from 2019 to 2023, excluding that 2020
31 COVID year. The ACT, that would result in an ACT that would be
32 set 14 percent below the recreational ACL.
33

34 The third alternative would, again, establish a recreational ACT
35 for the complex, but it would categorize the complex slightly
36 differently in the control rule, such that scamp would be used as
37 an indicator species for the complex. It is the substantial
38 portion of the landings.
39

40 When you do that though, the control rule puts a little bit more
41 uncertainty on it, because you're using one species as a proxy for
42 the whole complex, and so it assumes a little more uncertainty,
43 and so that was why you see the ACT that would be set to 18 percent
44 below the recreational ACL. Mr. Chair, I'll take any questions.
45

46 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. Do we
47 have any discussion regarding the alternatives in Action 7? Dr.
48 Sweetman.

1
2 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I mean, scamp is, obviously --
3 If we ultimately split this out like this, scamp is, obviously,
4 the predominant target here, and so it does make sense about the
5 indicator species, looking at it from that perspective, and
6 certainly, if you're looking at, you know, across this 2019 to
7 2023, excluding 2020, you know, there is some uncertainty with the
8 data.
9
10 It's better than deepwater grouper, right? I mean, we only have
11 -- There's one year where the PSEs are higher than 50, and a couple
12 years where we treat them with caution, and then a couple years
13 that are okay, and so just having a little buffer, given data
14 uncertainty, probably does make sense.
15
16 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so we're deciding between two
17 different buffers here. Dr. Froeschke.
18
19 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Just thinking about it a little bit though, if you
20 look at the ACL for scamp on the recreational side, I think the
21 yellowmouth grouper is only about 5,000 pounds of landings, and so
22 it seems like the difference between the 18 percent and the 14
23 percent is almost that whole thing. You would almost be better
24 off -- You could harvest more scamp by just closing yellowmouth
25 grouper. I'm not suggesting you do that, but it would seem like
26 you would buffer out almost all those landings by considering it
27 as a complex, rather than a single species.
28
29 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Captain Walker.
30
31 **MR. WALKER:** I think that was the discussion, if I'm not mistaken,
32 all the way through some of the APs, and at some of the last
33 meetings, was that yellowmouth is practically insignificant in
34 that, and that was the 4 percent difference, and so, based on the
35 discussions we've had, I would like to see Alternative 2b our
36 preferred.
37
38 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** You can make a motion now, if you would like.
39
40 **MR. WALKER:** Sure, and I would like to make a motion to establish
41 **Alternative 2 in Action 7 as our preferred, and I'll let Bernie**
42 **fill in all the details, if she would.**
43
44 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. While we're getting that pulled up, do
45 we have a second for a motion? Dr. Allen. Any discussion? We
46 have a preferred on the board in Action 7 for Alternative 2, with
47 a 14 percent buffer. Any further discussion? Motion on the board.
48 Seeing none -- Dr. Sweetman.

1
2 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just a question, and so would that impact the
3 subsequent action for the recreational season length?
4

5 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, and, if you wanted to select this as
6 preferred, I mean, you could still look at the whole suite of the
7 analyses, and look at it, but, yes, you might be focused on that,
8 if you just --
9

10 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay any other comments, or questions? **Seeing**
11 **none, anyone opposed to Alternative 2 being preferred in Action 7?**
12 **Okay. Seeing none in opposition, the motion passes.** Okay. Moving
13 to the final action in the document, Action 8, Establish Fixed
14 Closed Season, Recreational Sector Accountability Measures, and
15 Establish Recreational Payback Provisions for the Scamp Complex,
16 Dr. Hollensead.
17

18 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so this one is actually
19 broken into two sub-actions here, and so we're going to -- Again,
20 just like a tomahawk steak, we're going to eat this one bite at a
21 time.
22

23 The first thing we're going to look at for Action 8.1 is
24 establishing the fixed closed season and recreational sector AMS
25 for the scamp complex, and so, as Dr. Sweetman noted, you know,
26 this action has some analyses in it associated with looking at the
27 season duration, and so, you know, whatever you think might be
28 your winning horse for picking the catch limits for this, the ACL
29 and the ACT, you may focus on that, but certainly that whole suite
30 of numbers are there for you all to look at and compare.
31

32 The first alternative would be not to establish a fixed closed
33 season. In that case, the scamp complex would be open to harvest
34 by the recreational sector from January 1 through December 31, the
35 whole calendar year, and there is no closure accountability
36 measure, and so that's probably not realistic.
37

38 Alternative 2 would establish a fixed closed season, and I will
39 actually note that it goes -- So these are largely reflective of
40 what was just done in the framework action, and so that was
41 borrowed largely for this, with the updated season duration
42 analysis, and so you guys have looked at this, and, if this looks
43 familiar, it's because it is.
44

45 This would establish a fixed closed season for the recreational
46 sector for the scamp complex. The scamp complex would be closed
47 January through May, and so it's going to open June 1, until the
48 calendar year, unless a closure is implemented because NMFS

1 projects the recreational ACT, which would be established in Action
2 7, to be met.

3
4 Alternative 3 has the same mechanisms associated with it, but it
5 would be open July 1. The season would be open on July 1, and
6 it's my understanding that, from the framework action, the
7 preferred alternative was that July 1 date.

8
9 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind scrolling down, please, to Table
10 2.8.1.1, and so one of the things the IPT had discussed, in
11 presenting you all this updated analysis from what you saw from
12 the framework action, and this first table does this. This first
13 table is informed using the three-year average landings to estimate
14 the number of days the recreational season would be open, and, you
15 know, depending on what is selected in Action 6 for those various
16 options, and then what is selected in Action 7, that's where you
17 get the various numbers. That's how they differ.

18
19 Of course, using a three-year average is, you know, mathematically
20 ideal, right, and you can get an average and a standard deviation,
21 and so it infers you know a little bit about something there.
22 However, the -- That's what is presented here in this first table.
23 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going to -- That ranges from -- The
24 dates there range from anywhere from a season duration of twenty-
25 one days to ninety-nine days, depending on the various
26 combinations, but, Bernie, if you wouldn't mind please scrolling
27 to Table 2.8.1.2, and so the next table down.

28
29 The IPT also had some discussions recognizing the changes that
30 have been made to the recreational season for the gag grouper,
31 that that might influence what we're seeing here for scamp, and
32 so, just for your all's consideration, we also did sort of the
33 technical, and here's the latest three-year average information,
34 to inform some of this analysis, but we also decided to look at -
35 - To focus on just the last two years, when those measure changes
36 for GAG went into place.

37
38 It gives you all an idea about what's happening, you know,
39 understanding that these things don't happen in a vacuum. When we
40 change one thing, it often affects another, and so this tries to
41 take this into account and focus a little bit better, and so you're
42 only using a two-year average, and so, you know, you can't get a
43 standard deviation, or anything like that, but at least it tries
44 to account for those recent management changes in gag, in which
45 case you have a range of season duration, depending on what is
46 selected in Action 2 for the ACL and Action 7 for the ACT, of
47 twenty-seven to 110 days, and so that's why these two analyses are
48 presented to you all.

1
2 Should you decide to select from one of them, you know, of course,
3 going forward, that's what we would be implementing, and so I just
4 wanted to clarify that, since that's a little different from the
5 framework action that you all had just looked at. Mr. Chair.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Hollensead, and so this
8 is what Dr. Sweetman was talking about earlier, when we were
9 looking at Action 6 and the impacts of the choice for a, b, and c
10 and ramifications on the season length, and so we're looking at a
11 fixed closed season for Alternative 2 or 3 in Action 8.1 regarding
12 -- Basically, I like referring to it as open versus closed, and so
13 June 1 through December 31, or an earlier closure, if we reach the
14 ACT, or a July 1 start date through December 31, potentially
15 staying open through the end of the year. Do we have any discussion
16 regarding Alternative 2 or 3 in 8.1? Dr. Sweetman.

17
18 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I just would like to hear from the public on this
19 one during public testimony, to see kind of their perspective on
20 it. Certainly you start it -- I can see pros and cons associated
21 with both, quite frankly.

22
23 I mean, you start it in June, and that's typically going to be,
24 you know, red snapper people, and a lot of fishing and whatnot,
25 and so you might mitigate discards, but it's going to come probably
26 high effort during that time, and so I would imagine the season
27 length would be much shorter, compared to that, and so just some
28 things to consider for the public as we're kind of working through
29 this.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Looking at these projected closures on here,
32 I don't really see any of them taking us to December anyway, and
33 so it's really going to be that start date is the negotiation
34 point, and so well said. Any other further comments around the
35 Table on 8.1, Alternative 2 or 3? Okay. Dr. Hollensead, can you
36 roll us into 8.2, which is the last, I believe. Is that right, or
37 correct?

38
39 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** Yes, sir. Yes, and it's the last one, and so
40 this one is sort of a, you know, decision point. Either you would
41 like to do it or you would not. Bernie, it's Action 8.2, and so
42 this would consider establishing a recreational payback provision
43 for the scamp complex.

44
45 Alternative 1 would just say no action, and you're not going to
46 establish any kind of recreational payback provision. Alternative
47 2 would say, if the recreational scamp complex landings exceed the
48 complex recreational ACL in a fishing year, NMFS would reduce the

1 recreational ACL and ACT for the following fishing year by the
2 amount of the ACL overage in the prior fishing year, unless the
3 best scientific information available determines that a greater,
4 less than, or no overage adjustment is necessary, and so, you know,
5 you can either do it or not.

6
7 **UNIDENTIFIED:** (The comment is not audible on the recording.)

8
9 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Yes, and Alternative 1 is viable. You don't have
10 to have a payback provision. Ms. Levy has got her hand up, and so
11 I defer to her.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Good point. Ms. Levy.

14
15 **MS. LEVY:** Just a couple of things, and so I guess I would suggest,
16 in Alternative 2, linking the payback to the overfished status,
17 because that's really when the guidelines say that you should have
18 a payback. If something is overfished, right, it's more important
19 to pay back the biomass that was exceeded, and then, once it's not
20 overfished, we have that -- That's how most of our other paybacks
21 are set up, and greater amberjack is a little different, but like
22 red snapper and things like that, and they're all linked to
23 overfished status. We don't just do a payback if we go over, and
24 so that gives you a little more wiggle room, once it's not
25 overfished anymore. Thanks.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Levy. Any other further
28 comments, or discussion, here? Dr. Hollensead.

29
30 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Sorry, and so, just for my -- To sure my
31 clarification, but the Alternative 1, as it's written, is a viable
32 action, and you could decide not to have a recreational payback
33 provision, even if the status changed, and it was overfished, or
34 is that something that automatically has to happen?

35
36 **MS. LEVY:** I mean, it's viable if you explain why it's unnecessary,
37 given the status of the stock and things like that. I mean, I'm
38 not going to say you have to have a payback, but you should probably
39 articulate why you wouldn't do it in a circumstance in which you
40 anticipate a potential overfished scenario, or, I mean, explain
41 why, I guess.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Levy. Any other comments
44 regarding Action 8.2 with potential payback or not? Do we consider
45 making a preferred here, or do we want to wait till we get more
46 public comment and go in? Mr. Strelcheck.

47
48 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I'll take a stab at modifying Alternative

1 2, given Ms. Levy's comments. To modify Alternative 2 in Action
2 8.2, and I think the only addition would be after "if recreational
3 scamp complex landings exceed the complex recreational ACL in a
4 fishing year and the stock is overfished, NMFS" and the rest would
5 remain.
6

7 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I think that's a good edit. Do we have a
8 second for this motion? Dr. Banks seconds. Any further discussion
9 regarding the language change in Alternative 2? Hearing no further
10 discussion, anyone opposed to the motion to modify Alternative 2
11 with the language included in the board? Seeing none -- Ms. Levy.
12 Sorry.
13

14 **MS. LEVY:** It's a little bit of an interesting situation, because
15 it's a complex, but I think we're basing a potential overfished
16 based on the scamp stock, right, because that's the -- That's
17 essentially what -- Or maybe they were together, and I'm confused
18 about how they were assessed, right, and they were assessed
19 together? Okay, and so just -- I would say and the complex, stock
20 complex, is overfished, so we're clear that we're talking about
21 the complex, right?
22

23 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So add "complex" between "stock" and "is
24 overfished". Kesley, are you good with that?
25

26 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. The seconder is good with that
27 modification. A comment from Mr. Sanchez.
28

29 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I don't know, and, if I'm thinking through the logic
30 on this, and I understand the distinction between it's kind of
31 okay until it's overfished, but, I mean, if we're not putting in
32 conservative management measures, like accountability measures
33 with substance and meaning and paybacks, it would seem like that
34 we're encouraging it not -- To become overfished before we actually
35 do something.
36

37 I don't know if that's the direction we want to take, generally.
38 I mean, I think we put a lot of mindset into arguing over these
39 allocations. That's the most contested thing we do. Once we
40 arrive at them, I think we should kind of try to keep people within
41 their prescribed box, and not just, oh, well, if it's not
42 overfished, let's keep banging away until we are. I don't -- I
43 don't know if I agree with that.
44

45 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Right. Understandable, and I think, you know,
46 there's a difference between certain stocks where we set the ACL
47 equal to the ABC, and then other ones where we have a buffer, and
48 so we have the 14 percent here currently, if that's the choice we

1 make in that action in the document, and so there's the buffer to
2 help. Ms. Levy.

3
4 **MS. LEVY:** Well, and there is another accountability measure in
5 that action that deals with the buffer, right, and so -- I mean,
6 that deals with the season, and we have the season. We have an
7 ACT, which is an accountability measure, and we're going to close
8 if that ACT is projected to be met. This only addresses if there's
9 an overage after all those things happen, right?

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Ms. Levy. Any follow-up comments,
12 or questions, to that? Okay, and so we have a modified motion on
13 the board. The seconder approves the language as written. **Is**
14 **anyone opposed to the motion as written on the board? Seeing no**
15 **opposition, the motion passes.** I believe that takes us to the end
16 of the document. Do we have any -- Mr. Strelcheck, did you want
17 to venture back?

18
19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Mr. Chair, if we could go back to Action 4, and,
20 Bernie I have a motion. Can you bring that up please? **So, while**
21 **they're cleaning it up, this is what we were talking about earlier**
22 **about the total ACL, and so modify Alternative 3 in Action 4 as**
23 **follows, and so it includes not only the provision where the black**
24 **grouper complex recreational ACL is exceeded, but also the overall**
25 **complex ACL has to be exceeded, and then, in the following year of**
26 **an overage, NMFS would close the recreational complex to harvest**
27 **when the recreational ACL is met, or projected to be met, and so**
28 **this is essentially adding that overall total black grouper complex**
29 **ACL in addition to the exceedance of the recreational ACL.**

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. We have a motion on the board. Dr.
32 Sweetman seconds. Okay, so motion on the board, and we have a
33 second. It says to modify Alternative 3 in Action 4 with the
34 language as drafted on the board. Any other comments, or
35 questions, regarding this? Has everyone have a chance to read it?
36 Bernie, can you scoot it up?

37
38 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So we can delete the "in Action 4", the second
39 time, in the motion.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. I'll read this, real quick, and
42 **so, in Action 4, to modify Alternative 3 as follows: Alternative**
43 **3 is a post-season recreational accountability measure would be**
44 **implemented for the black grouper complex if the recreational ACL**
45 **and the black grouper complex ACL are exceeded. In the year**
46 **following an overage, National Marine Fisheries Service would**
47 **close the recreational black grouper complex to harvest when the**
48 **recreational ACL is met, or is projected to be met, unless NMFS**

1 determines, based upon the best scientific information
2 available(BSIA) that closure of the recreational fishing season is
3 unnecessary. Any further comments, or discussion, on this motion?
4 All right. Seeing none, is anyone opposed to the motion on the
5 board in Action 4? Seeing none, the motion passes. We are now -
6 - Captain Walker.

7
8 **MR. WALKER:** Just I wanted to go back. I don't want to go back,
9 but I did we do any -- Did we make any decisions on Action 6,
10 because that seems to be the big snag here. We can't do anything
11 in Action 8 until we know Action 6, and Action 6 is a really,
12 really difficult decision, that it seems like nobody wants to make,
13 or talk about. Are we just going to talk about that at Full
14 Council, because it would seem like we just skipped over that
15 decision here, or discussion at least.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Well, yes, and we went through it, but then we
18 moved on to the next subsequent action, because, in the table that
19 we looked at, it's -- The two are combined, kind of, right, and we
20 have to make multiple choices to get to the season length
21 determination, and so, yes, I agree it's very complicated. Dr.
22 Banks.

23
24 **DR. BANKS:** Were we not waiting, for Action 6, based on C.J.'s
25 comments, to hear from the public, because we're we've got
26 questions about the commercial landings, and am I mixing that up?

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Sweetman.

29
30 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, that's part of it, and I also referenced that
31 I could put forward a motion at Full Council relative to looking
32 at a longer time series across the equal pain, if that makes sense.
33 Dr. Froeschke, what have you got?

34
35 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So our understanding was the 2012 through 2023,
36 minus the 2020 -- We'll try to have that recalculated and available
37 by Full Council.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. That will be helpful. Any other
40 comments? Ms. Levy.

41
42 **MS. LEVY:** Since we're talking about that, I thought I would just
43 ask a question, because I can't remember if we had a conversation
44 about this. Is there a reason why we did not look at the whole
45 time series? Like we stopped -- We started in 2012, because that's
46 when the Generic ACL Amendment -- But is there a reason why we
47 just didn't look at all and see what that -- Or was --

1 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I don't recall a specific discussion.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Any other comments for 58A? Seeing
4 none, Mr. Chairman, our lunch is scheduled at 12:15, and we're at
5 11:10. I recommend we move to red grouper, to try to get a couple
6 of things done, if you're in agreement with that, and then stick
7 with the 12:15 lunch. Does that work?

8
9 **MR. DUGAS:** Yes, Mr. Schieble, and we can re-evaluate the time
10 closer to noon.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Freeman, are you ready to go with
13 red grouper, or no? We have Amendment 62, which is the Fishery
14 Management Plan for Red Grouper, and Dr. Freeman will run us
15 through the action guide here, briefly.

16
17 **DRAFT OPTIONS: REEF FISH AMENDMENT 62: MODIFICATIONS TO GULF RED**
18 **GROUPEr MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

19
20 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay, and so, for this agenda item, council staff
21 will present Reef Fish Amendment 62, which will consider management
22 modifications for red grouper based on the results of the most
23 recent stock assessment, SEDAR 88. The stock assessment found red
24 grouper to be healthy, and, as a result, the SSC recommended
25 modifications to the stock status determination criteria and catch
26 limits.

27
28 The recent red grouper stock assessment utilized the State of
29 Florida's State Reef Fish Survey, instead of from the federal
30 Marine Recreational Information Program for private recreational
31 vessels.

32
33 The document has proposed actions that consider modifying status
34 determination criteria, catch limits, and sector allocations. It
35 also considers removing the twenty-fathom recreational season
36 closure for shallow-water grouper. The committee should review
37 the information presented, ask questions, and give direction to
38 staff regarding modifications to the actions and alternatives
39 presented.

40
41 Staff will plan to bring a revised draft to the committee to
42 consider at the November 2025 council meeting. Council staff will
43 plan to develop a public hearing draft of that amendment for
44 consideration at that meeting. In preparation for that, and in
45 addition to the virtual public hearing webinar, the committee
46 should recommend public hearing locations, if desired.
47 Consideration of final action on this document will be planned for
48 the January 2026 council meeting.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Freeman. Can we roll up
3 the document here? There we go. Do you want to go through the
4 purpose and need, real quick, for us, and then --
5

6 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes. Thank you, and so this is the first time that
7 the committee is seeing a draft document, and so I'll go through
8 the purpose and need statements. The purpose of the action is to
9 modify the catch limits and sector allocations of Gulf red grouper
10 and to consider eliminating the recreational closed season for
11 shallow-water grouper in federal water seaward of the twenty-
12 fathom boundary.
13

14 The need for this action is to use the best scientific information
15 available to increase catch limits and reduce economic hardship on
16 the commercial and recreational Gulf red grouper sectors and to
17 eliminate the recreational closed season for shallow-water
18 grouper, consistent with the authority under the Magnuson-Stevens
19 Fishery Conservation and Management Act, and so, if there's no
20 questions -- I see one.
21

22 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Sanchez.
23

24 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I just wanted to ask, and how come the
25 purpose and need doesn't mention the need to revisit the catch
26 limits based on the change from MRIP-FES to SRFS?
27

28 **DR. FREEMAN:** You were talking about the purpose statement?
29

30 **MR. SANCHEZ:** The purpose and need.
31

32 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay, and they do refer to modifying the catch
33 limits. They just don't specify the inclusion of SRFS. I can
34 look over to General Counsel for any thoughts.
35

36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Ms. Levy.
37

38 **MS. LEVY:** Well, the need does refer to the best scientific
39 information available, and so I think it captures what data you're
40 using, but --
41

42 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Mr. Sanchez.
43

44 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Given the history in this fishery of allocations and
45 litigation, and the change from MRIP-FES to SRFS, I would feel a
46 lot better if we added that, some SRFS reference, into that purpose
47 and need.
48

1 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay. I'll make a note of that and run it by the
2 IPT following the council meeting. Thank you, sir.

3
4 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I'm not sure if we can be that prescriptive of
7 the purpose and need, but that would be a good question to get
8 some feedback on. Okay. Moving on to Action 1 in the document,
9 of three, it's Modification of Gulf Red Grouper Overfishing Limit,
10 Acceptable Biological Catch, and Total Catch Limit. Dr. Freeman.

11
12 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay. Certainly, and so Alternative 1 is our no
13 action alternative, and this action looks at modifying the total
14 -- Sorry. The OFL, ABC, and the total ACL. Alternative 1, our no
15 action, there is currently a note, on the top of the next page,
16 that states that Alternative 1 is not a viable alternative, because
17 the catch limits were set using MRIP-FES recreational data, and
18 SRFS recreational data are recognized as consistent with BSIA for
19 red grouper. So, Bernie, if you can scroll back up, and so the
20 focus will be on Alternatives 2 and 3.

21
22 Alternative 2 was presented to the council in June, and so the key
23 things here were revising not only the catch limits, but also the
24 MSY proxy, as recommended by the SSC. Currently, the MSY proxy
25 uses an F 30 percent SPR. Alternatives 2 and 3 would change that
26 to F 40 percent SPR.

27
28 The resulting OFL, ABC, and total ACL are listed below for
29 Alternative 2. You'll see it's a notable increase. Alternative
30 3 was -- It stems from a motion from the council in June to use a
31 multi-year tiered approach, and so we would still wind up reaching
32 the OFL, ABC, and total ACL listed in Alternative 2, but in --
33 Bernie, if you can scroll down just a little bit.

34
35 The total ACL is set at 70 percent of the ABC in 2026, then moves
36 to 80 percent of the ABC in 2027, 90 percent in 2028, and then it
37 would be 100 percent of the ABC in 2029, and in subsequent years,
38 and so those resulting values are listed in tables after each of
39 the alternatives, and so I will pause there and see if there's any
40 questions, or discussions, before moving on to Action 2.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Freeman. So, in Action
43 1, we have Alternative 1, which is not viable, Alternative two,
44 which uses the SSC's recommended three-year constant catch
45 scenario, and then Alternative 3, which uses a phased-in approach,
46 in combination with the constant catch scenario, and so, Dr.
47 Sweetman, you had your hand up?

1 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. A couple points here, and
2 so, first, let's talk about Alternative 3 there, and, Matt, we
3 would be projected to have closures within that first phase-in, if
4 we buffer it to 70 percent, and is that correct?
5

6 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir. We've got a table in Action 2 that
7 references the projected recreational season closure dates, and,
8 if you want, I can refer to it now, or we can wait until we go
9 into Action 2. It's your pleasure. Bernie, could you go ahead
10 and move to Table 2.2.3?
11

12 It's a busy table. The first portion, if you look at your left,
13 it's segmented. We've got Action 1, Alternative 2, which is simply
14 setting the total ACL equal to ABC. Then the second portion is
15 referring to, if the phase-in approach is used, through Action 1,
16 Alternative 3, in that next column, where you see the four
17 alternatives, which I've not gotten to yet, but I will, it refers
18 to the sector allocations and then the resulting sector ACLs and
19 ACTs/quota.
20

21 What the question was is that, with Action 1, Alternative 3, you'll
22 see that, in 2026, which would have the total ACL at 70 percent of
23 the ABC, with Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, there is a projected
24 closure, ranging -- Bernie, I apologize, and it's ranging from
25 November 11 to November 23.
26

27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Sweetman.
28

29 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that, Matt. I appreciate you walking
30 through that. I do have some concerns on that, and I'll just put
31 it out there. I mean, it's kind of inconsistent with the emergency
32 rule that we put in place, to then subsequently go back and say
33 we're going to have closures there, and so I don't know, and I
34 know, John, this was -- You know, I understand the concerns that
35 it might be just an overly rosy assessment, and to provide some
36 levels of caution, and we did do that within the emergency rule
37 request, right?
38

39 We provided a 10 percent buffer there, but I didn't know -- I'm
40 going to put you on the spot, Mr. Sanchez, and relative -- I don't
41 think we want closures, to be inconsistent with what we just put
42 forward as an emergency, but the numbers here, in and of
43 themselves, I mean, is there anything -- 70, 80, 90 to 100, is
44 there anything special about it?
45

46 I mean, I think I would feel more comfortable, and I'm okay, I
47 think, with allowing some sort of, you know, buffer in here to
48 account for that uncertainty with the assessment, but the 70

1 percent is the one, when you're instituting closures there, that
2 I do have some concerns with, because, overall, it was a positive
3 assessment.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Sanchez.

6
7 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you. To that, when I thought about this phase-
8 in scenario, it was in response to the assessment, which, you know,
9 it is BSIA, and it's been deemed such, but, having gone through
10 this history of a very optimistic assessment before in red grouper
11 in the past, only to see the consequences and impacts of that,
12 where it was throttled back, because I think there was something
13 wrong, and I'm not suggesting there was something wrong in this
14 one, but I wanted to be a little conservative in such a dramatic,
15 optimistic increase.

16
17 That's where the genesis of this phased-in approach came, and, you
18 know, I wasn't particularly married to any percentages, 70, 80,
19 what have you, but I will say that, in approaching this, a couple
20 of things come to mind.

21
22 Where we started from, pre-emergency rule season length, and going
23 to one that, hypothetically, you know, ends in November, that's
24 still far better than what we're starting from, again, pre-
25 emergency rule, and so I don't see it as dramatic, and then, in
26 the subsequent years, there's no closure, no closure, as per the
27 table in front of us, and so I prefer to err on the side of being
28 a little conservative in things that I'm not 100 percent confident
29 in, number one.

30
31 I think what's maybe missing in this too is I would be curious to
32 see, if possible, if we could have some landings idea of where
33 we're at this year, you know, emergency rule, and see how it really
34 relates to this over here, because I think that has a bearing in
35 this, too.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. To that point,
38 Dr. Sweetman?

39
40 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and thanks, John. I -- The 70, 80, 90 seems
41 fairly arbitrary, to me, and I was looking for like justification
42 for the 70 percent, aside from not sure about this assessment. I
43 do -- We did provide that buffer there, but 70 percent is a bit
44 much for me, and it does go against the emergency rule that we put
45 in place, and so, I mean, if we could tweak this in some capacity,
46 where there wouldn't be closures, and I just don't see why it's
47 necessary to have that, considering what the assessment told us,
48 even with that uncertainty there, John, because it would just be

1 one more year, you know, in 2027, where we would have no closure.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Freeman.

4
5 **DR. FREEMAN:** Thank you, and so, as mentioned by Mr. Sanchez, a
6 November closure would be an improvement. Just for the sake of
7 the committee, I want to note what the recent recreational season
8 closures have been, and so, in 2024, it closed July 1. In 2023,
9 was July 21, and, in 2022, it was August 30.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Freeman. That's helpful.
12 Dr. Banks, and then Captain Walker.

13
14 **DR. BANKS:** Thank you, and so I think I'm leaning more like C.J.,
15 towards starting with that 80 percent and working up, especially
16 since -- Correct me if I'm wrong, C.J., but you were suggesting
17 that FWC might do an interim analysis in the coming years for red
18 grouper, back when we were talking about the SEDAR Committee?

19
20 **DR. SWEETMAN:** So, when I brought that up, we were talking about
21 doing a full-blown assessment.

22
23 **DR. BANKS:** Okay, and so, with that on the table, can you remind
24 me what year you were suggesting?

25
26 **DR. SWEETMAN:** There's no formal motion yet, but 2028.

27
28 **DR. BANKS:** Okay, and so, starting at 2028, or having an assessment
29 in 2028, I don't see a problem then starting at 80 percent, because
30 I think we get the gut check then, with the full assessment coming,
31 if that were to go through, and I would be fine necessarily, you
32 know, maybe marrying those two together.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Simmons.

35
36 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I think
37 we have requested an interim analysis from the Science Center,
38 just to get an idea of looking at those independent indexes and
39 seeing where we are with red grouper, and I believe that's slated
40 to come to the SSC in February of next year, just to get a pulse
41 on what's happening before we get the next --

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So we would have that before 2027. Okay.
44 Captain Walker, you had your hand up earlier.

45
46 **MR. WALKER:** I kind of agree with Dr. Sweetman here. I don't know
47 that you can really justify making a selection here that is most
48 likely going to cause a closure, when you have such a rosy stock

1 assessment in your hand that says you don't need to go down that
2 road.

3
4 I mean, it would be hard to explain to the recreational guys why
5 it's closed in December, with such a glorious stock assessment,
6 and I know where you're coming from, because I don't know that --
7 I have questions about that assessment as well, but I don't know
8 that, you know, not allowing anybody to realize the potential
9 benefits of a great stock assessment is justifiable, at least in
10 this avenue.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you. Mr. Sanchez.

13
14 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Well, I can see where this is going, and so I'm not
15 going to belabor the point, but I guess we can also explain, at
16 some point, I'll predict in the future, why the rosy stock
17 assessment resulted in us ultimately beating this back down and
18 going back to, you know, things. I'm just trying to be conservative
19 and avoid going back to pre-emergency rule short length seasons,
20 but, if that's the will of this body, then, you know, let the --
21 Full speed, and damn the torpedoes.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and I think, to that point, we have Dr.
24 Sweetman, and then Mrs. Strelcheck.

25
26 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Respectfully, John, I don't agree with that. Like,
27 I mean, I understand where you're coming from here, and I'm in
28 favor of placing some level of buffer here, but I was just trying
29 to inquire about the 70 percent, if there was anything in
30 particular to that, and it didn't really seem like that there was
31 any justifiable reason to put that in place.

32
33 I think, even if we did 80 percent, like that's even more
34 conservative than what we did in the emergency rule, and so I'm
35 respecting, and I agree with the uncertainty on some of these
36 things here, but just I don't see the need for that one particular
37 70 percent, and I don't think it will go off the rails if we put
38 in some other more palatable buffer in there.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

41
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, given the presidential executive order
43 for seafood competitiveness and recreational fishing
44 opportunities, and I don't see strong justification for why we
45 would impose a closure, and, with that said, I mean, there's
46 another option, and I'm not promoting this, but just suggesting we
47 could consider it as like we did in the emergency rule, where we
48 provided a buffer between the ABC and ACL. You could set a fixed

1 buffer that's essentially going to be in place until now, until
2 the next stock assessment, and set it somewhere in that 80 to 100
3 percent range, right?
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Any further discussion on Action 1 here?
6 I think it would probably be helpful if we move to Action 2 then,
7 and we could revisit this table, since we sort of incorporated
8 that already, and so, Dr. Freeman, can you -- I'm sorry. Mr.
9 Strelcheck.

10
11 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, before we leave this, I mean, there was a
12 lot of discussion about the potential to want to modify the
13 alternative, but no motion, and so I don't know if there's interest
14 in modifying the motion. I wanted to cover that before we moved
15 on.
16

17 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Mr. Sanchez, then Dr. Sweetman.
18

19 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I appreciate that. It seems like the rub seems to
20 be with the 70 percent, and just take it out.
21

22 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Sweetman.
23

24 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I would be agreeable to that, if Dr. Sweetman would
25 entertain something along those lines.
26

27 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think so. I mean, I can try and work on
28 a motion on the fly here. It might be a little tricky, considering
29 it's a stepwise phase-in here, but, effectively, I mean, we would
30 be starting in 2026, with the 80 percent, and we would just get up
31 to that 100 percent, a 10 percent increase each year, but we would
32 get there one year sooner, and more or less just shift everything
33 down, and I can work on a formal motion there, but that's my
34 intent.
35

36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Bernie, can you copy Alternative 3 language,
37 and then paste that up there, and we can work with that, to help
38 wordsmith this, pretty please? Dr. Freeman.
39

40 **DR. FREEMAN:** Sure. I was going to say, if Bernie copies it over,
41 you know, the motion could simply be to modify the language of
42 Alternative 3 as follows, and we could do a strikethrough -- I'll
43 wait for -- It's Action 1, Alternative 3.
44

45 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Okay, and then we can basically copy most of that,
46 except for that last sentence there, right?
47

48 **DR. FREEMAN:** Right and I was going to say, so, Bernie, that -- It

1 says, "the total ACL is set at", and, if you want to, where it
2 says, "70 percent", delete from there to that comma after "2026",
3 and so it would just be "is set at", and just start with 80 percent.
4 I believe that captures the intent.

5
6 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and so it's going to be 80 percent in 2026, 90
7 percent in 2027, 100 percent in 2028, and, obviously, 100 percent
8 in 2029.

9
10 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, and so, Bernie, the "2027" will need to change
11 to "2026". Yes, and that one will be 2027, and then where it says
12 "2029", that will change to "2028".

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Sweetman, is this the way you intend
15 your motion to read?

16
17 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Do we have a second? Mr. Sanchez
20 seconds the motion on the board. Any further discussion? Seeing
21 no other discussion, anyone opposed to the motion on the board in
22 Action 1 to modify Alternative 3? Hold on. We're going too fast.

23
24 **DR. FREEMAN:** Since the table will also need to be updated, should
25 we perhaps just delete the table for now, and we can update it
26 afterwards? Okay. Thanks, Bernie.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so we modified the language in the
29 last sentence from the original motion. Secunder, are you good
30 with this as-is, including the "to be updated" that follows? Okay.
31 Any other discussion? Captain Walker.

32
33 **MR. WALKER:** Maybe it's not the same issue, but this is just
34 recreational, or this applies to commercial as well?

35
36 **DR. FREEMAN:** So this is the total ACL, which in Action 2 gets
37 subdivided between the two sectors.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Right, and so we move through this
40 collectively, and then the next action is where we divide the
41 percentages between the recreational and commercial ACLs in Action
42 2. Any further conversation? **Anyone opposed to the motion on the**
43 **board as written? Seeing no opposition, the motion passes.** Dr.
44 Sweetman.

45
46 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Just to -- I kind of agree with what Andy was
47 saying, just to add another alternative in here, and so I'm going
48 to make another motion to add that, where basically -- We're

1 applying a 10 percent buffer, similar as we did in the emergency
2 rule, just for consideration there. **In Action 1, to add an**
3 **alternative where the ABC -- I don't see appropriate language here,**
4 **but has a 10 percent buffer relative to the ACL.**

5
6 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I think it's we would want the total ACL reduced
7 10 percent from the ABC.

8
9 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes. Good call. My bad.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Freeman.

12
13 **DR. FREEMAN:** Just for clarification, so that would be permanent?
14 Okay.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So, Bernie, it's where the ACL is reduced 10
17 percent from the ABC, and so just switch those. Ms. Levy.

18
19 **MS. LEVY:** Can we maybe just use similar language as the other
20 alternative? The total ACL is set at 90 percent of the ABC, right,
21 and that's what you're saying, just so it's consistent between the
22 alternatives. The total ACL is set at 90 percent of the ABC.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Banks.

25
26 **DR. BANKS:** Just to clarify, this would be an option in place of
27 the phase-in, or are you asking to do it in addition?

28
29 **DR. SWEETMAN:** An additional alternative for consideration.

30
31 **DR. BANKS:** Right, but you would not pick the phase-in and this.
32 It would be the phase-in or this?

33
34 **DR. SWEETMAN:** That is correct. One or the other.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So this is Alternative 4 then. We should put
37 a "4" in there. I don't have a second for this. Dr. Banks seconds
38 the motion. Okay. Dr. Sweetman, is this drafted as you intended?

39
40 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and my poor intent, but, yes, this was -- Yes.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I think we did well. All right. Any discussion
43 on adding an Alternative 4 to Action 1? Mr. Strelcheck.

44
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Maybe C.J. or Kesley could add, but, you know,
46 what I'm hearing with the assessment is there's a large increase
47 in the quota, and there's maybe some skepticism as to whether or
48 not that increase will be realized or not, and so this is

1 essentially an effort to set the catch level a little closer to
2 where kind of current catch levels are at, as we see how this plays
3 out and whether or not, you know, commercial recreational harvest
4 is able to go out and harvest these higher catch limits.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Sweetman.

7
8 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and, to that point, I mean, if -- I'm not sure
9 who listened to the SSC meeting where they were deliberating this,
10 but, yes, there was some concern about some of the data that fed
11 into it, and it painted an overall rosy picture, and so, I mean,
12 it's accounting for management uncertainty here, is basically what
13 I'm trying to account for, yes, with this motion, Andy, and that's
14 exactly what you were highlighting.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

17
18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and you referenced the SSC conversation, and
19 so I just would look to staff to maybe integrate that as we continue
20 to work on the amendment, and I don't know, and I don't want to
21 put Mike on the spot, but, if there's anything you can recall from
22 the conversation, we could, obviously, discuss that as well.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Allen.

25
26 **DR. ALLEN:** Yes, and it was -- The SSC had a robust discussion
27 about this, and Tom Frazer was the council rep at the discussion
28 there, and he brought in some caution about, you know, such a large
29 increase. I'll just say we debated this assessment pretty
30 strongly, and found it to be credible, and so that's where it
31 stood, but there was definitely a solid, lengthy discussion about
32 such a big increase, but, ultimately, the SSC supported the
33 results.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Freeman, I think we could capture some of
36 that in the discussion when you add this alternative to the
37 document, correct?

38
39 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so, moving forward, is anyone opposed
42 to the motion on the board as written? Seeing none, the motion
43 passes. Okay. Dr. Freeman, can you take us to Action 2 in the
44 document, when you get your notes completed? Action 2 is
45 Modification of the Gulf Red Grouper Sector Allocations and Sector
46 ACLs, with four alternatives.

47
48 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay. Bernie, when you have a moment, if we can go

1 to Action 2. Okay, and so Alternative 1 is our no action, and so
2 it would retain the sector allocations that were established in
3 Amendment 53, such that the commercial sector would be at 59.3
4 percent of the total ACL. The rec sector would be at 40.7 percent
5 of the total ACL.

6
7 As a reminder, that's using average landings, using the MRIP-FES
8 data from 1986 through 2005. There is a commercial buffer between
9 the ACL and quota of 5 percent. The recreational buffer is at 9
10 percent.

11
12 Alternative 2 retains that time frame of 1986 through 2005, but it
13 incorporates SRFS data with those landings. The resulting
14 allocations would be 68.2 percent for the commercial and 31.8
15 percent for the recreational, and it would retain the commercial
16 buffer of 5 percent and the recreational buffer of 9 percent.

17
18 Alternative 3 would revise sector allocations using landings from
19 1986 through 2009, again incorporating SRFS data. The resulting
20 allocations would be 69.2 percent commercial and 30.8 percent
21 recreational.

22
23 Alternative 4 uses a longer time series, from 1986 through 2024,
24 excluding 2020. Bernie, if you could scroll down just slightly.
25 The resulting allocations are 68.4 percent to the commercial sector
26 and 31.6 percent to the recreational sector. Again, the commercial
27 buffer would be retained at 5 percent, and the recreational buffer
28 would be retained at 9 percent. I can pause here, if there's
29 questions, or I can also have Bernie move ahead, and this might
30 perhaps be more helpful, to look at what the values for the
31 resulting sector ACLs and ACTs are, and so it's your pleasure.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I think it would be helpful to go to Table
34 2.2.2, and just go through that real quick, and then we could come
35 back.

36
37 **DR. FREEMAN:** Sure, and so, Bernie, if you could start with Table
38 2.2.1, and so, Table 2.2.1, this is, if the council were to select
39 Action 1, Alternative 2, which is setting the total ACL equal to
40 the ABC, and so, depending on which sector allocation is chosen
41 from Alternatives 1 through 4, you'll see, in that third and fourth
42 column, the resulting commercial ACL/quota and the resulting
43 ACL/ACT, and, again, those are in million pounds gutted weight.

44
45 Bernie, if you could scroll down a little bit for Table 2.2.2, and
46 so this first portion started, obviously, with the 70 percent of
47 the ABC for the total ACL, which the committee has made a motion
48 for that to be removed, and so here, really, you can start to focus

1 in on the 80 percent, and this table goes through, if Action 1,
2 Alternative 3 were selected, that phase-in approach, and so you'll
3 see what the commercial ACL and quota and rec ACL and ACT are for
4 the 80 percent and 90 percent.

5
6 You'll notice that last portion, where the ABC is equal to ACL,
7 looks identical to what's in Table 2.2.1, because that is when
8 again, in essence, if there were no longer a phase-in period, and
9 so I will pause there, to see if there's any questions.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Froeschke.

12
13 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Would it be helpful if we kind of provided you
14 some of the rationale for the various alternative time periods, so
15 you have that background?

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes.

18
19 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Okay, and so I'll just try to breeze through this,
20 and Matt can correct me if I mess anything up, but I'll start with
21 Alternative 2, which is the 1986 through 2005, and so this is
22 essentially a continuation of what was done previously in both
23 Amendment 30B, when we first did the recreational, the interim
24 allocation, and then we revisited this in Amendment 53, and so
25 that was the reference period. 1986 sort of starts the time period
26 when the data were available on a species-specific basis. 2005
27 was the terminal year of the data that were in Amendment 30B.

28
29 **DR. FREEMAN:** Just to add, and that was because, at the time of
30 30B, that was the most recent year of landings.

31
32 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Amendment 53 migrated from what originally, I
33 guess, was then the MRFSS data to the MRIP-FES, and so that's what
34 started this, and so the council's decision was we're going to
35 keep the same reference period, and we're just going to update the
36 recreational landings, and the resulting allocations, and so
37 Alternative 2 would stay with that same rationale and approach.
38 It would just use the SRFS data.

39
40 Alternative 3 would retain that 1986 start date, sort of for that
41 same reason, that that's the earliest date that we have reliable
42 data, we think. It would extend it through 2009. In 2010 is when
43 the IFQ program started for red grouper, the grouper-tilefish IFQ
44 program started, and so that changed the way that the fishery
45 operated, and it constrained the landings in a way that it wasn't
46 previously constrained, and so that was the rationale for that.
47 The benefit is that you get a slightly longer and more recent time
48 series. I guess the rub is that it doesn't exactly match what

1 we've done in the past.

2
3 Alternative 4 extends the data from 1986 through 2024. It excludes
4 2020, based on the COVID aberrations in the fishery. The sort of
5 pros and cons of this is it captures more recent years. You get
6 a longer, and perhaps more stable, reference period to base the
7 landings. It does include this IFQ period, which constrained the
8 recreational fishery. I mean, that was very effective in
9 constraining that.

10
11 The recreational did have catch limits and things, and, although
12 there were overages and things during that period, there was never
13 an overage of the IFQ system, and so there is sort of that to
14 consider. The 2020, the COVID year is in there. The thing that
15 the IPT discussed is, despite all of those considerations, the
16 allocations are very similar across the board, and so within a
17 percentage, and so it's less impactful on what the actual numbers
18 are, and we just wanted to provide you the rationale of how we
19 arrived at those, so you have that information going forward.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Froeschke. We have any
22 questions, or comments, regarding that synopsis of time series?
23 Captain Walker.

24
25 **MR. WALKER:** I just would point out that, in the other discussions,
26 I guess on deepwater, we recommended going with the more recent
27 time series, and so maybe something to be consistent with here,
28 but they're all nearly the same thing, and so I'm okay with any of
29 the 2 through 4, but, if we had to pick a rationale of why, maybe
30 we could use that.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Sweetman.

33
34 **DR. SWEETMAN:** We've got some extremely similar options here, and
35 I'm just wondering, for council staff, if it would be appropriate
36 maybe to consider but reject maybe an option in here, to make it
37 easier.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Ms. Levy.

40
41 **MS. LEVY:** I guess I'm going to encourage you not to do that. I
42 think that the three options focusing on the rationale, and not
43 the percentages, provide three distinct reasons, or rationales,
44 for what they come up with, right? What we did in Amendment 53,
45 which was to address the change in recreational data collection,
46 we have a new change in recreational data collection, and so it's
47 appropriate to consider that same time series. Alternative 3,
48 it's appropriate to consider cutting off when the IFQ system

1 starts, especially if you're talking about a species that is
2 actually constrained by the IFQ system in particular years, and
3 then the longest time series seems appropriate, just because we
4 have much more data, and maybe that constraint is offset by the
5 fact that we want to include the more recent data.

6
7 I guess I would just, in this particular case, encourage you to
8 leave all three in there, and, actually, when you pick a preferred,
9 articulate based on the rationale for the years, as opposed to
10 what the outcome is and the percentages.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Ms. Levy. Any comments regarding
13 that? Dr. Sweetman.

14
15 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I don't necessarily agree, but I'll go along with
16 it, Mara.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Well, there's always the option to pick
19 preferreds, too. I mean, I think it may be a little early. We
20 could look at that in Full Council as well, after you have time to
21 digest these tables. I think they are probably the key to this,
22 especially considering the closure in November, those dates that
23 we saw in 2.2.3. Any further discussion on these tables or
24 alternatives in Action 2? Dr. Allen.

25
26 **DR. ALLEN:** Mara, thank you for that clarification. You know, I
27 normally -- I'm fine with keeping all of these alternatives in
28 there. I'm fine with keeping all four of them in there, and,
29 normally, I would love to see the most recent data included, but
30 Alternative 4, you know, includes post-IFQ, and so the numbers
31 that you get in Alternative 4 are an effect of the past management,
32 and so, I guess, of these, I would lean towards Alternative 2, but
33 I'm fine to keep them all in for now.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Allen. Any other
36 comments, or questions, regarding these? Ms. Levy.

37
38 **MS. LEVY:** Well, and just something to consider. I mean, I think
39 they're still all valid. I mean, I don't think that what you did
40 in Amendment 53 is necessarily constraining to the decision here,
41 because we have a different circumstance, right? Amendment 53 was
42 looking at a total required reduction based on the stock status at
43 the time, right, and then how you were going to address that
44 between the sectors, including the change to MRIP-FES, and so we
45 have a bit of a different situation.

46
47 We are changing the recreational data, but the stock status is
48 different, right, which might justify, you know, not using the

1 1986 to 2005 data, just because you want to update things to the
2 more current. I think you have a lot of wiggle room. I'm just
3 asking that you keep them and then articulate, based on the
4 preferred, why the particular years are appropriate in this
5 circumstance.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Allen.

8
9 **DR. ALLEN:** I was just going to add, and I think it's been
10 mentioned, but, you know, the differences between these, in this
11 case, are so small that there's no -- We would not be able to
12 detect these differences in landings and these percentages at all
13 anyway.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Understood. Okay. Without any other further
16 comments, I think let's move to Action 3, the two alternatives for
17 modification of February to March recreational shallow-water
18 grouper closure, and then we can always come back to Action 2, if
19 you guys have further discussion.

20
21 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay, and so Action 3 has only two alternatives,
22 which is to retain the February 1 through March 31 recreational
23 closed season for shallow-water grouper in federal waters seaward
24 of the twenty-fathom boundary, and Alternative 2 would eliminate
25 the February 1 through March 31 recreational closed season.

26
27 I'll highlight a few things in the discussion of the alternatives,
28 in part since we've also been lately talking about other shallow-
29 water grouper, and so this closed season captures six shallow-
30 water grouper species, black grouper, red grouper, gag, yellowfin
31 grouper, scamp, and yellowmouth.

32
33 Of those, given other amendments that are in play right now, it's
34 the recreational season for red grouper that would currently be
35 affected by Alternative 2, as red grouper has no other recreational
36 fixed closed season. Gag is under Amendment 56, where the start
37 date is until September 1, and black grouper, scamp, yellowmouth,
38 and yellowfin are currently being discussed in another document,
39 that's actually in rulemaking at the moment, establishing a
40 recreational fixed closed season, which would be January 1 through
41 June 30.

42
43 I will pause here, to see if there's any questions, or discussion,
44 as far as further rationale. I will note, Bernie, if you could
45 scroll down just slightly, that second paragraph, under the
46 discussion referring to Alternative 2, provides some of the
47 rationale as far as removing it.

1 Again, the initial intent was to provide additional protection
2 during the spawning season, by limiting harvests in deeper waters,
3 but some of that fishing effort could be currently redirected into
4 inshore waters, where the average size of fish is smaller, and so
5 interactions with undersized fish could be occurring, which would
6 lead to additional fishing effort and discards necessary to harvest
7 the bag limit, and so that could be potentially interfering with
8 some of the conservation benefit of the seasonal area closure, and
9 so I will pause there, see if there's any comments, or questions,
10 about those two alternatives.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Freeman, and so, as a
13 recap, we talked about this back at our April meeting, when this
14 was brought up as a separate action, and we heard public comment,
15 and the AP recommended that we move forward with this, and so we
16 sort of tacked it onto this document, because it was appropriate
17 in order to expedite it as well, and so any comments regarding
18 this? It seems we sort of discussed a lot of this ahead of time,
19 but anyway. Dr. Sweetman.

20
21 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think I've been kind of the
22 one that's opposed this the most throughout this process, at least
23 just relative to the uncertainty of what this is going to actually
24 do here.

25
26 I still have those concerns. We don't really understand how
27 opening this up is going change catch rates, and landings, and
28 everything along those lines, and so it's obviously going to
29 increase it. You're going to have more landings, but we can't
30 clearly measure that, based on that, and so I'm not going to stand
31 in the way anymore on this, and I'm not going to oppose it, but I
32 still have those concerns.

33
34 This twenty-fathom closure was put in place for conservation
35 reasons, and it just -- We're pulling that back without putting
36 anything in its place, and so it is what it is. I'm not going to
37 stand in the way of this anymore.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Understood. Captain Walker, and then Dr.
40 Banks.

41
42 **MR. WALKER:** I would point out that, with the new stock assessment
43 that we have, conservation measures aren't as critical as they
44 might have been at a different time, and I think a lot of us kind
45 of figured that there was some gag involved in the decisions early
46 on in this, and they're closed almost all year now anyway. Scamp
47 is not going to be affected by this anymore, with some of the
48 things we have on the table. There's room in the stock assessment.

1
2 **There's not much other things for fishermen to do in February and**
3 **March, where I live anyways, in red grouper land, and so I am going**
4 **to wholeheartedly support Alternative 2 and recommend that we make**
5 **it our preferred.**
6

7 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Banks.

8
9 **DR. BANKS:** Do you need a second before I say something, since he
10 just recommended it?

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I didn't know if you want to discuss it before.

13
14 **DR. BANKS:** Yes, and so I'm just going to remind the committee
15 that, in our executive order discussion yesterday, this is actually
16 on one of our deregulatory items on that second EO, and so just
17 putting it at the forefront of everybody's mind.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. So, we have a motion for Alternative 2,
20 correct, from Captain Walker. Do we have a second for the motion?
21 Mr. Burris. All right, and so discussion? I know we -- You know,
22 a lot of the origination of this came from public comment, that
23 we've heard multiple times, and so I think that would be good, if,
24 tomorrow, we also hear some more public comment included, and that
25 would be helpful with regards to this, while you're addressing
26 other issues. It would be beneficial for us.

27
28 Any other comments moving forward with Action 3, on the motion to
29 make Alternative 2 the preferred? **Seeing none, do we have any**
30 **opposed to making Alternative 2 in Action 3 the preferred? We**
31 **have one abstention from Mr. Sweetman. Seeing no other opposition,**
32 **the motion passes with one abstention.** All right. Mr. Chair, we
33 made it through. Go ahead.

34
35 **DR. SWEETMAN:** So, timing is important on this one, right, and so
36 we've got the emergency rule that's good until the end of December,
37 six months, whatever it is, and so I just want to make sure -- Is
38 it January? Okay. I just want to make sure that like we're on
39 the same page here, that we need to kind of hit the pedal to the
40 metal, so we don't have any issues associated with just the
41 emergency rule is done, and then we enter this lag period, where
42 we go back -- Anyways.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Along those lines, we only need to make two
45 more preferreds, which we could do in Full Council, if no one wants
46 to do that now. It's up to you all. Mr. Strelcheck.

47
48 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, to C.J.'s point, we're on track to take final

1 action in January. In order to do that, I think it would be good
2 to try to get as many preferred selected as early as possible. I
3 know we're at lunchtime. I actually have a new action that I want
4 to propose for this, which I've talked to council staff about, but
5 I think it's going to take some time to, obviously, discuss, and
6 so I would prefer, I think, coming back after lunch and talking
7 about it afterwards, since we're ahead of schedule.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** That's fine. We're ahead of schedule. I think
10 we can do that. We can put a hold on this, and return back to
11 this after lunch, and still probably be with some extra time. We
12 have Dr. Simmons, and I think Dr. Freeman also had his hand up,
13 briefly.

14
15 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so that's
16 fine. This was a separate item, as we're thinking about expediting
17 this, and we just kind of need some feedback if we can do virtual
18 hearings for this, or if we need to schedule in-person public
19 hearings, and so we kind of need to be thinking about that. This
20 is a Florida-centric species. Do we need to hold in-person
21 hearings? If so, if we can identify those by Full Council, that
22 would help us a lot for planning purposes. Thank you.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Could we pull up where the public hearings
25 were for Amendment 53, and get a roster of those? That might be
26 helpful.

27
28 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** We can have those ready, sure, by
29 Full Council.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and we can plan around that. Dr. Freeman,
32 did you have your hand up, or are you good?

33
34 **DR. FREEMAN:** Sure, and I was just going to add, if the committee
35 isn't comfortable selecting preferreds for all the other actions
36 -- Again, the intent is to have a public hearing draft in November,
37 and so Chapters 3 and 4 would be developed by then, if anyone feels
38 like the decisions would be better informed at that point, and we
39 would have those preferred alternatives then prior to the public
40 hearings.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** You're strongly encouraging us to come out of
43 this meeting with two more preferreds, so we go to November with
44 a public hearing draft that has three preferreds in it, right?
45 Correct, or potentially four, if we have another action here after
46 lunch, right?

47
48 **DR. FREEMAN:** Well, my comment was simply the committee doesn't

1 necessarily have to select all the preferreds at this meeting, so
2 long as it's done by the end of the November meeting, prior to us
3 going to the public hearings.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** The public hearing draft comes back to us in
6 January.

7
8 **DR. FREEMAN:** That would be final in January, and so a public
9 hearing draft in November, and final action in January.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Well, I guess we'll go back to Mr.
12 Chair, with a recess for lunch.

13
14 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Yes, and we can come back to
15 red grouper after lunch. We have plenty of time. Before we leave
16 for lunch, I would like to recognize a few folks, previous council
17 members here. Ms. Martha Guyas is here, and Dr. Greg Stuntz is
18 here, and thank you all, and, also, Robin Riechers is present,
19 from Texas Parks and Wildlife. Thank you, all. We'll take a
20 lunch break on schedule, and let's reconvene at 1:45.

21
22 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on August 26, 2025.)

23
24 - - -

25
26 August 26, 2025

27
28 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

29
30 - - -

31
32 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf Council convened at
33 the Hilton Palacio Del Rio in San Antonio, Texas on Tuesday
34 morning, August 26, 2025, and was called to order by Vice Chairman
35 Chris Schieble.

36
37 **MR. DUGAS:** Okay, folks. Welcome back from lunch. We're going to
38 start where Mr. Schieble left off in red grouper. Mr. Schieble.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We will pick back up
41 with the Reef Fish Management Committee, working on Reef Fish
42 Amendment 62, Modification of Gulf Red Grouper Management
43 Measures. I believe we had a request from Mr. Strelcheck to
44 continue working on that document. Mr. Strelcheck, can you take
45 us -- Take the lead?

46
47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair, and so my team and I have been
48 spending some time really thinking about IFQ management. We've,

1 obviously, had before this council, for some time, several
2 amendments to the IFQ program that right now are stalled out, you
3 know, that we'll potentially come back to next year, but we've
4 also had, at times, opportunities where there's large quota
5 increases, like we have before with red grouper, to make
6 potentially some decisions, or changes, in terms of how the program
7 operates, and so there's, obviously, pros and cons to that.

8
9 I've tried to spend some time talking to various segments of the
10 industry, but what I wanted to run past the council today was the
11 potential for an additional action, or maybe multiple actions, in
12 this amendment, but, as background, for the new council members,
13 and a refresher for the existing council members, in 2023, we
14 updated the goals of the IFQ program.

15
16 Since that time, we've been working on those amendments I just
17 mentioned. Goal 1 seeks to improve opportunities for participants
18 to enter the program, and it includes an objective to evaluate the
19 merits of limiting share ownership, as well as implementing, if
20 appropriate, alternative mechanisms for equitably distributing
21 shares and allocations.

22
23 Then Goal 2 focuses on reducing IFQ discards and includes an
24 objective to create an allocation bank for further reducing bycatch
25 and discards of IFQ species, and so given, you know, where we're
26 at today, this large proposed increase, there appears to be an
27 opportune time not only to reward shareholders that are in the
28 program with a large amount of, you know, allocation increase, but
29 also to potentially pilot an alternative mechanism for
30 distributing commercial red grouper allocation, and so, based on
31 the conversation we had this morning with regard to the phase-in
32 approach, right, the quota is, right now, 2.94 million pounds.

33
34 The smallest proposed increase would be 3.93 million pounds, and
35 so over a million-pound increase. The largest proposed increase
36 is 5.73 million pounds, 5.44 million pounds of quota, and so a
37 substantial -- Almost a two-and-a-half-million-pound increase, and
38 then, later, on top of this, we have a presidential executive order
39 that is calling for regional councils to identify actions to
40 stabilize markets, improve access, enhance economic profitability,
41 and prevent closures.

42
43 You know, to me, there's an opportunity here that I would like at
44 least the council to discuss and consider. One of the main caveats
45 I'll place on this is that my goal with doing this, if the council
46 supports this, is that we do not slow down Amendment 62, because
47 we need to have that quota increase in place next year, and so if,
48 at any point in time, this would slow progress, obviously, we would

1 have to think of an alternative mechanism.

2

3 Bernie, if you could bring up the draft motion, and I'm not going
4 to make it as a motion right now. I would like to just read it,
5 and I think it would be good to have a conversation around it
6 first, if people are okay with that, and then, based on this, we
7 can decide whether we want to move this forward or if we want to
8 come back to this in Full council.

9

10 The motion would read to include one or more new actions in
11 Amendment 62 that establish a commercial quota set-aside for red
12 grouper allocation. Those actions would distribute 100 percent of
13 the quota to existing shareholders, up to a certain threshold, and
14 I'll just use round numbers.

15

16 Let's say the quota is five million pounds, and we distributed all
17 the shareholdings up to four million pounds, and then the set-
18 aside would essentially be that remaining one million pounds,
19 right, and so the first portion would be distributing the shares
20 in full, up to a certain threshold, and the remaining portion would
21 be allocating only quota, and not shares, to the potential people
22 that qualify for those allocation-only accounts.

23

24 Here we have a number of criteria that we've been thinking through,
25 in terms of kind of a threshold, in terms of you can't currently
26 hold more than a certain percentage of shares in order to qualify
27 for this program. You can't have previously held shares, and then
28 sold them, but you're still participating in the program.

29

30 You must have a valid reef fish permit, an IFQ account, an
31 associated vessel account, and then reported recent, and, when I
32 say recent, red grouper landings within the catch-here online
33 system, and we, you know, suggested just within the last year-and-
34 a-half, and so the day before today, right, all the way through
35 last fishing season, and the proposal here would be a pilot.

36

37 It gives us time to evaluate this, and it would start in 2027, and
38 so the allocation, or set-aside, wouldn't begin next year, but it
39 would begin in 2027, and the allocation would not be transferable,
40 right, and so we don't want to essentially have people qualify and
41 then they immediately turn around and sell that allocation out of
42 their accounts.

43

44 Then, to give us a little bit of time, you know, rather than
45 releasing this all on January 1, we would release it sometime after
46 January 15, and then we've also proposed an allocation scheme,
47 where those that qualify -- It will be equally divvied up amongst
48 the participants, based on half of the set-aside, and then the

1 remaining set-aside would be based on their landings history during
2 that recent time period.

3
4 That's a lot of detail, a lot of information there, but I think
5 the emphasis that I want to place on this is that we see an
6 opportunity here where we have a large increase that we can reward
7 shareholders that are in the program with more quota, based on
8 their existing shareholdings, and we can also start to address
9 some of these goals that we've laid out for the program.

10
11 The last component of this, which we think is really critical, is
12 that we could also have a social and economic and a research
13 component to this, to understand the benefits, tradeoffs, and
14 challenges of a program like this, so that it can inform future
15 management, and so we're not saying that this is the perfect
16 system. We're going to evaluate it, and, based on that, we'll
17 learn from it and see how it would work.

18
19 Then I might have skipped over it, and I can't recall where it
20 might be, but if, for whatever reason, future quota levels dropped
21 below what was distributed to the shareholders, then we would
22 essentially end the program, right, and so we're not intending to
23 take any of that quota away from those shareholders, but the set-
24 aside would be above that kind of above that certain threshold.

25
26 We recognize we haven't figured all this out, and so we also have
27 a caveat with the motion, if this is something that moves forward
28 today, where we would want, obviously, my team and the council
29 staff to consider, you know, any other administrative things that
30 we need to add to this in order to bring this back at the November
31 meeting and really have a solid action and alternatives around it.

32
33 That's a lot. I recognize it's a lot to digest, but I'm really
34 interested in kind of initial feedback reactions. As I said, I'm
35 not necessarily prepared to where we need to discuss this and bring
36 this up as a motion now, but I think it's important that we at
37 least consider this and whether or not Amendment 62 is the right
38 vehicle for it.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Andy. Questions, or
41 comments? Mr. Sanchez.

42
43 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Andy, I like the thought process. I think it has
44 merit and it's definitely worth doing. I do have concerns with
45 doing it in 62, because we're trying to push this over the finish
46 line in January, and I'm sorry, but we haven't demonstrated our
47 ability to work very slowly, and I think adding more to it right
48 now -- I would like to do two things, to hear from the public

1 during public comment about this, to get a little better sense of
2 the industry's perspective on this, and, two, I would volunteer
3 that I personally would support you in doing this in a separate
4 document right away, but I think it might jam up 62 a little bit,
5 and we need to get that done by January.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Captain Walker.

8
9 **MR. WALKER:** I like the concept. I think there's a few things to
10 iron out, like what the threshold would be. Are you talking the
11 lower 10 percent, I mean, as far as landings go, or is it 30
12 percent of the individuals who participate in that particular
13 fishery?

14
15 Also, the last -- Can we scroll up on that screen just a little
16 bit? The last one, I got a little worried, and I was having a
17 hard time -- 50 percent of the set-aside, and the remaining 50
18 percent would be distributed based on each qualifying
19 participant's percentage of red grouper landings. Can you explain
20 that second part of that one to me? It sounds like you're going
21 to give it back to the same people you subtracted it from the first
22 time.

23
24 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so, based on those that qualify for the
25 set-aside program, we could determine that universe. Let's say
26 it's 200 individuals, and 50 percent of the amount that's set aside
27 would be equally distributed, and so everyone gets the same amount
28 for all 200 individuals. Then, the remaining 50 percent of the
29 set-aside would be based on those individuals' landings history in
30 the most recent time period, relative to everyone else that
31 qualified for the set-aside program.

32
33 **MR. WALKER:** I see, and so it's like a bit of a catch history type
34 thing. Also, to John's point, I wonder -- I don't think anybody
35 wants to slow down our momentum on this, but maybe -- But I
36 understand why you kind of need to get it in there, because this
37 is the year of the increase, and this would have to be introduced
38 before that increase, and maybe there would be a way to set your
39 level -- Make it okay next year to start it at this year's level,
40 if we could do that, because I think, when you get to next year,
41 then your level is already up here, and any more increases after
42 that might get weird, but, if you could set the level now, and
43 still use the increase that we're getting ready to vote in in this
44 program, maybe that would be a way to get around stalling momentum.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Geeslin.

47
48 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Andy, an innovative

1 approach, no doubt. As we've thought about many of the issues
2 concerning IFQs, one of the things that keeps coming up is barriers
3 to entry, new entrants, and where did that -- How did you think
4 about that, because I'm not seeing any avenue for new entrants
5 into participating into this particular fishery, and I may be
6 missing something.

7
8 I understand there's set-asides here, but is that a viable pathway
9 for entry with the set-asides?

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

12
13 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, it's very difficult, obviously, to
14 identify the potential universe of who might want to get into the
15 fishery going forward, and so the way we thought about it was
16 simply based on, you know, people that maybe have existed in the
17 fishery for quite some time, as well as newer entrants that are,
18 you know, operating in the fishery as it stands today, right, and
19 looking at kind of that recent time period, knowing that, if
20 someone has entered the fishery recently, maybe they don't have as
21 much resources, allocation, quota that others would, but, yes, in
22 terms of someone that is strictly operating outside the program
23 right now, no, we haven't been able to figure out how to address
24 that.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Anson.

27
28 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, and so I recall, when we've had discussions
29 about share distribution in the past, Andy, that, with the IFQ
30 programs, that significant changes in the program would require a
31 referendum. Does this fall into a referendum-type situation, or
32 requirement?

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Ms. Levy.

35
36 **MS. LEVY:** We've discussed that related to red snapper. I don't
37 believe we've discussed it related to grouper-tilefish, but, I
38 mean, this is -- I think we've kind of gone down this road before.
39 I don't -- If that's like an official ask for an official legal
40 opinion, like we did with red snapper, then we can go back and do
41 that, but, with red snapper, you know, the conclusion we came to
42 is that you can -- It's established, and so changes are changes.
43 You're not reestablishing it, right? That was what came from the
44 agency after that official ask. Unless you're creating a new one,
45 you're not creating it again.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Captain Walker.

1 **MR. WALKER:** To Mr. Anson's question, I think the fact maybe is
2 this is an allocation. This isn't changing any share hands.
3 Allocation is more of the currency, but the shares would still be
4 in the original shareholders, and if this -- My understanding is,
5 if this overall ACL were to go down, then everybody is still back
6 in their same place, and so this is just -- I think the allocation,
7 and the share, is what makes it perhaps outside of what you're
8 talking about.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Do we have any other discussion? We
11 have a motion on the board here. I think we need a second.

12
13 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I haven't made a motion.

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** You haven't made a motion? This is just --
16 Mr. Sweetman.

17
18 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thinking outside the box here,
19 so credit there. Since this is just allocation, and it's almost
20 like just setting aside a quota pool that NMFS would determine
21 where that goes to, I think, at a minimum, Andy, and, obviously,
22 we would flesh this out a bit more, and I would like to hear from
23 the public, to see if, you know, they're interested in doing
24 something along these lines, and what that percentage is, because
25 it would come straight from commercial, but I think that there's
26 a lot in here.

27
28 I'm not sure this is the appropriate amendment, just based on the
29 timing issues that we have with trying to get this one through. I
30 think there's going to be some things that we need to work out, if
31 this moves forward.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Sweetman, and so I guess,
34 Mr. Strelcheck, I overlooked the word "possible". That's why I
35 thought it was an actual motion, and, I mean, I guess, what is
36 your intention going forward with this? Do you want -- So we're
37 in a discussion of some people saying this may bog down the process
38 for this amendment, and others are saying it's worth looking at,
39 potentially including, and what do you want to do with this? Do
40 you want to make a motion to include it, or maybe vote it up and
41 down at Full Council? J.D.

42
43 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Hearing the comments around
44 the table, I think, at a minimum, we should entertain at least
45 sitting on this until Full Council, at minimum, and not make any
46 decisions today. I would even ask if the council members could
47 have this emailed to them, to possibly look it over in the
48 evenings, or in their spare time, is what I would ask, if we could

1 at least wait until Full Council.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

4
5 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and that's really why I wanted to raise this
6 now, and at least have a little bit of discussion around it,
7 because I know it's a lot to digest, and so I appreciate J.D.'s
8 comments. I think, between now and then, we're going to get public
9 input, and so we can hear from the public on this.

10
11 The council can digest it, and is there things missing, or are
12 there things that you would like us to further explain, and we
13 certainly acknowledge that there might be some more details we
14 need to add.

15
16 I'll continue to emphasize, right, that my intent is not to slow
17 down Amendment 62. This could very well affect that, but if, at
18 any point, we think it's slowing it down, my recommendation is to
19 pull it from Amendment 62. I think, if we do a separate document,
20 like John and maybe others were suggesting, you really have to
21 have that following very closely behind this, because, otherwise,
22 you're going to potentially miss an opportunity to do something
23 fairly quickly, given the large quota increase, and so I think it
24 will be good to follow this up in Full Council and hear some more
25 public input. Thanks.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Do we have any
28 other comments regarding this discussion? Dr. Banks.

29
30 **DR. BANKS:** I really appreciate this, Andy. I like the thought
31 process. Following kind of like with what Sanchez was saying, and
32 the phased-in approach that we've been possibly discussing, this
33 might be a way to put in some kind of action, or alternative, in
34 the 62 document that would hold back the quota bank portion, and
35 then we could follow, like Andy said, a document very quickly, as
36 we work through the details that we're all trying to process at
37 the moment, because I do have some concern further down the list,
38 but I do like the innovative thinking, and so maybe, following
39 also J.D., I would like to hear public comment, since this just
40 came to light, but I do think maybe there might -- I don't have it
41 all in my head yet, but a mechanism to incorporate the setting up
42 of the next amendment coming.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Banks. I guess, from a
45 housekeeping perspective, this would just be added into the
46 committee report, correct, and we can bring it back up, with the
47 appropriate language, during Full Council, and that's how this
48 will appear, as a potential motion that we never voted on, correct?

1
2 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I thought the request, Mr. Chair, was
3 to email it around. I mean, without it being a motion, I don't
4 know about putting it in the committee report, but we could, I
5 guess.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Is that what you would like, for it to be
8 described in the committee report verbatim, or not?
9

10 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, the committee report is going to have to
11 summarize our discussion, and so it's an easy way to summarize
12 what was discussed, if you put it verbatim, but I know the council
13 will want to see it sooner, and so, if council staff could send it
14 around to everyone sooner than that, that makes sense.
15

16 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** I guess, just procedurally, it's kind
17 of funny to put it in the committee report if it's not a motion
18 from the committee. That was my only concern, is to keep it
19 separate. We can still summarize concisely what the discussion
20 was, I believe, and point to this. It's just a little odd to put
21 it in the report, I think, without it being a motion. We can do
22 that, I think, but it just seems strange.
23

24 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** That's kind of why I was asking that question.
25 I just wasn't clear how the process would go.
26

27 **MR. STRELCHECK:** That's a fair point from Carrie, and so I'm
28 agreeable to, obviously, however they summarize this in the report,
29 and then you have the more detailed motion, or proposed motion,
30 via email.
31

32 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so we'll look for staff to send it
33 around, and I guess -- I guess that will work. We'll get an email
34 from staff with this included, and that should be fine. Any other
35 further discussion on this for Amendment 62? I guess, Dr. Freeman,
36 we're complete then, correct?
37

38 **DR. FREEMAN:** Yes, sir.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Moving on in the Reef Fish Committee,
41 next up, we have the Review of the Recreational Initiative
42 Recommendations and Prioritization Schedule. Ms. Gardiner will be
43 handling that, I believe, and that is Tab B8(a) in your briefing
44 packets.
45

46 **REVIEW OF RECREATIONAL INITIATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS AND**
47 **PRIORITIZATION SCHEDULE**
48

1 **MS. SARAH GARDINER:** Thanks for that, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon,
2 everyone, and so I'll be discussing the Recreational Initiative
3 Recommendations and Prioritization. I'll walk through the action
4 guide, and then I'll jump right into the document. Ms. Muehlstein
5 is here with me, as part of our presentation, and so council staff
6 will review the recreational initiative working group's outcomes
7 and recommendations presented at the April 2025 meeting.

8
9 Council staff developed a table with the nineteen working group
10 recommendations, and sorted them by type of action, i.e., education
11 or management, the status of the action, the timeline to action,
12 and the contributors that are required to complete the action.

13
14 The committee should review the recommendations and prioritize any
15 potential action items for the council to consider, and, of those
16 that are selected, prioritize action. In prioritizing the working
17 group recommendations, it would be advantageous to consider pre-
18 existing staffing constraints amongst council staff, SERO, and the
19 Science Center.

20
21 Additionally, it would be prudent to consider which
22 recommendations align with the Executive Order 14276, Restoring
23 American Seafood Competitiveness, and 14192, Unleashing Prosperity
24 Through Deregulation, to meet the overarching goals of the current
25 administration.

26
27 With that, I'll walk through the document, and, while Bernie pulls
28 that up, you know, my intent here is to summarize the working group
29 recommendations that came out of the recreational initiative, and
30 then kind of walk through how Emily and I were able to distill
31 some of these into a digestible table, so hopefully the council
32 can move forward with some prioritization of these
33 recommendations.

34
35 For some context, and a refresher for our new council members, the
36 initiative was established in 2023 to review and evaluate past and
37 current recreational reef fish management strategies and explore
38 innovative management tools and approaches.

39
40 It focused on five key species, gag grouper, gray triggerfish,
41 greater amberjack, red grouper, and red snapper, and so, in Figure
42 1.1.1, you can see the timeline of kind of where we're at, and so
43 the working group was initiated in 2023. They met three times,
44 once in October of 2024, in January 2025, and in February of 2025.

45
46 At these meetings, they developed a vision statement and six goals
47 for the Gulf recreational reef fish management, and then,
48 throughout those six goals, they highlighted nineteen working

1 group recommendations and consensus statements that were presented
2 at the April 2025 council meeting.

3
4 At the council meeting in April, the council requested staff to
5 develop additional context to aid the council in prioritizing the
6 working group recommendations, and so there was a draft decision
7 flow chart that was presented in April, and Figure 1.1.2 shows the
8 kind of final summary of that draft, where Emily and I looked at
9 each working group recommendation and then kind of sorted it
10 through this decision tool.

11
12 The first question being whether it's under the council purview,
13 and so most of our working group recommendations were under the
14 council purview. There was only one that was an absolute no, and
15 then there were two that were maybes, and I'll kind of summarize
16 those a little bit later.

17
18 If it was under the council purview, we were able to decide whether
19 it was a management or an educational item, and then from --
20 Bernie, we'll just stay on Figure 1.1.2, please. We were able to
21 kind of distill the potential timeline to short, medium, or long,
22 the contributors that we would have to kind of work through action,
23 and these are just proposed ideas. I mean, obviously, figuring
24 out a proposed workplan would require a little bit more
25 collaboration, but this is just initial thoughts, and then the
26 status of the action, and so whether it had been initiated in the
27 past or not, if it was initiated, and whether it had been
28 completed.

29
30 We only had one working group recommendation that had been
31 completed at this time. It was the red snapper state management,
32 and then, from there, we didn't do the prioritization for you all.
33 We were hoping that you guys can contribute to that, and so this
34 is kind of what that discussion is prompting.

35
36 Emily and I are hoping today that, by doing kind of some of this
37 legwork and background work on providing some insight into each
38 one of these recommendations, how long they might take, what's
39 required as far as staff capacity, and council interest, we can
40 then prioritize them.

41
42 I'm going to walk through a very high level explanation of the
43 management recommendations in Table 1.1.3, and then I'll pass the
44 mic over to Emily to summarize the education recommendations, and
45 so, when we distilled each of these, all these recommendations
46 out, we ended up with thirteen management recommendations and eight
47 education recommendations.

48

1 As I had mentioned just a little bit earlier, only one of these
2 recommendations didn't fall under the council purview, and that's
3 Recommendation 1.3, and I apologize for the tiny text on the
4 screen. To keep the full length of the working group
5 recommendations, we had to make the text a little bit smaller, and
6 so hopefully you can blow it up on your own personal laptop.

7
8 The 1.3 recommendation was an opportunity to increase the
9 applicability of voluntary angler self-reporting efforts, and so
10 we kind of deemed that not under the council purview, and
11 potentially under the Science Center purview.

12
13 If the council is interested in kind of moving that through the
14 process, I think we could discuss the appropriate avenue to
15 initiate that work with the Science Center at this time, but we
16 deemed that that didn't fall under the council purview.

17
18 The other two recommendations that were maybe under the council
19 purview also had to do with trusted data, in that the first being
20 looking at Gulf-wide consistency in data collections, and, as I
21 understand, some of this work has been started with the GulfFIN
22 meetings, where the states have been talking about state-wide
23 consistency in data collection, but I think that's an ongoing
24 process that the council could be privy to in the future.

25
26 Then the second one being promoting transparency in recreational
27 data. The working group wanted to see, or was interested in
28 seeing, the likeness of Mississippi Tails 'n Scales and Alabama
29 Snapper Check. If the council is interested in this, I think that
30 the discussion should be prompted that both these states are moving
31 to the LA Creel, and so I don't really know how that influences
32 the data collection for Mississippi Tails 'n Scales and Alabama
33 Snapper Check being a model for transparency in recreational data
34 collection, and so I think that's something to consider, if the
35 committee and the council is interested in looking at that further.

36
37 The rest of these management recommendations do fall under the
38 council purview, and so, for the next ten, I kind of want to split
39 these up into two bins, whether the work has been initiated or
40 whether the work has not been initiated.

41
42 For the recommendations that fall under the work has been
43 initiated, I think it's important for the committee to consider
44 which of these initiated actions they're interested in moving
45 forward to highlight to the council and prioritize action. I think
46 one that I've heard from the council, time and time again, is kind
47 of an easy target for this, is the DESCEND Act, which is Working
48 Group Recommendation 6.1. I think that would be an easy starting

1 point for the committee to recommend to move forward and then
2 discuss potential prioritization within that.

3
4 There are also a couple of recommendations that fall into the
5 initiated category that were discussed during the executive orders
6 yesterday, those being the carryover provisions, which is Working
7 Group Recommendation 3.2, and then Working Group Recommendation
8 4.1, which is looking at regional and state flexibility in
9 management measures, and so those were discussed during our
10 executive orders discussion, and so I think, if the committee is
11 interested in moving those forward, those might be a good starting
12 place for discussion, as they've already highlighted that there is
13 interest in moving those forward.

14
15 For the management recommendations, I want the committee to really
16 consider, of those recommendations that the working group provided
17 that have not yet been initiated, are there any that they're
18 interested in moving forward to initiate action on and potentially
19 prioritize for the council to look at?

20
21 Some that pop into my mind, and that were discussed during the
22 executive orders yesterday, is Working Group Recommendation 3.1,
23 which would look at multi-year specifications, and/or Working
24 Group Recommendation 4.2, which looks at regional management for
25 red and gag grouper.

26
27 So, before I pass the mic to Emily, I'm hoping that the committee
28 can kind of look at some of these tables and select a few key
29 actions, or key recommendations, that they're interested in moving
30 through the process, and, if there are any at this time that
31 they're really not interested in moving forward with, and that
32 doesn't mean that you can't revisit them at a later time, but it
33 just means that, you know, the committee and the council may not
34 be interested in moving forward with those at this time. I'll
35 take any questions on the management section before I pass over
36 the mic to Emily.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I'm not seeing any questions, and so Ms.
39 Muehlstein, take over.

40
41 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Okie doke, and so, if you guys focus your
42 attention to Table 1.1.2, these are the recommendations that came
43 out of the recreational initiative that we deemed to be relevant
44 to education, rather than management action.

45
46 As I sort of go through these recommendations, one of the things
47 that I would like you all to keep in mind is that, you know,
48 clearly each one of these things is going to require staff

1 bandwidth and resources to do, and so, sort of at the end of, I
2 guess, the Full Council session, our hope is that we will walk
3 away with some directive from you all on sort of which of these
4 education-based items you would like us to prioritize.

5
6 One of the things you'll see, as we walk through this, is most of
7 these things, and not quite all, have already been initiated in
8 some form or fashion, and really just needs some type of
9 amplification, or some way to sort of make it better, or more
10 obvious, and so, just sort of starting from the top, and I know we
11 didn't go through them one-by-one for the management alternatives,
12 and it's a little bit easier, I think, to provide context one-by-
13 one here.

14
15 Working Group Recommendation 1.2 is to promote transparency in
16 recreational data and improve catch and effort estimates, and this
17 is also to sort of promote the use of any sort of voluntary or
18 mandatory electronic reporting. This is the only one that we
19 deemed as maybe under the council purview, since, at this point,
20 most of those efforts are being done by, you know, external
21 partners, or, you know, private companies even, and we think that
22 it would probably be important for us to take this to the council's
23 Outreach and Education Committee to recommend an appropriate role
24 for the council to take in promoting state and potentially
25 independent reporting programs.

26
27 Moving down the list, 2.1 talks about improving messaging regarding
28 the potential on-the-water impact of management actions and what
29 they could do for the recreational fisheries, specifically by
30 projecting outcomes that can be interpreted by non-specialists,
31 and so we already do this. We kind of piloted this.

32
33 I don't know if you all picked up that little public hearing guide,
34 or you looked at the presentation that we gave during the public
35 hearings for Reef Fish Amendment 58, but we added a section where
36 we do that comparison of alternatives, and, essentially, we're
37 summarizing the econ and social, and also sort of just practical
38 impacts of the different management decisions, and so this is
39 something that we could continue to sort of do, and also do larger.

40
41 We have not thought about how we project the longer-term impacts
42 of like let's say rebuilding a stock, and what that's going to
43 look like, and I think there was a lot of discussion about, if you
44 rebuild this stock, is that going to mean a free-for-all, year-
45 round season, a hundred-fish bag limit, and the answer is no, but
46 at what point do we want to get in the game of, you know, trying
47 to build what that might look like?

48

1 Moving to 2.2, the council should better communicate the
2 conservation implications of different fishing activities based on
3 individual species, and so, you know, we do have those species-
4 specific profiles. They're on our Fish Rules.

5
6 You know, if you sort of look at the regulations, we do add some
7 species-specific information. There is some question here if, you
8 know, we need to improve those sort of species-specific pieces of
9 information, and then maybe even develop best fishing practices
10 based on, you know, species-specific characteristics. That is
11 also something that we might consider, you know, talking to the
12 Return 'Em Right folks about, since they already do best fishing
13 practices, and sort of promoting doing that species-by-species, if
14 it's relevant.

15
16 Moving down to 2.3, the council should improve awareness of the
17 tremendous volume of outreach and educational material that's
18 already available, and so, essentially, that's just promoting what
19 we already have, and working harder to do that, and we could also
20 consider, you know, sharing a little bit harder, and asking our
21 partners to push things out a little bit more.

22
23 Moving down this table quickly, Workgroup Recommendation 5.1 is
24 seeking opportunities to partner with the recreational fishing
25 community leaders to educate and engage anglers to be more active
26 participants in the council. We've talked about this at the
27 Outreach and Education Technical Committee. This might involve
28 let's say wrangling in some influencers, or trying to work more
29 closely with leaders, and having them sort of be like our pro
30 staff.

31
32 What I will say is that that's going to necessitate a pretty big
33 review of logistics and ethics with engaging the community leaders
34 and influencers, right, because, once you sort of ask a fisherman
35 to help forward your message, we need to make sure that we're doing
36 that in a way that's completely above board. It's probably going
37 to require financial resources, and it should also be reviewed by
38 our O&E, as well as by sort of our admin staff, to make sure that
39 the federal government can even engage in relationships like that,
40 especially if they are paid partnership situations.

41
42 Moving to 5.2, the council should work with partners to develop
43 scaled-down models of the Marine Resource Education Program, and
44 so that's MREP. So, as you guys know, MREP is a sort of uniquely
45 funded program. It is by fishermen, and for fishermen, and they
46 are discussing separately creating sort of modules that might be
47 able to be used outside of those long MREP workshops.

48

1 However, if it's something that the council would have to do, I
2 will just caution that that's going to be pretty resource
3 intensive. I think it would be really great, but, again, I think
4 we would want to ask our O&E to advise on the return on investment
5 to spending the amount of time that we would need to do that well.
6

7 Moving to 5.3, the council should promote opportunities for anglers
8 to report catch information and on-the-water observations about
9 fish abundance, and so, as you guys know, we already use our
10 Fisherman Feedback tool. We could also investigate additional
11 reporting platforms and promote their use outside of what we're
12 already doing.
13

14 That Fisherman Feedback tool has been reasonably effective in sort
15 of supplementing stock assessment information, and so, you know,
16 if there's something specific here that you think we should move
17 forward, we're all ears.
18

19 Then, finally, the council should work with the recreational
20 community to develop seasons that maximize overlap in focal
21 species, and so this one is sort of both education and management
22 here, and, honestly, there is some ongoing work from Dr. Tom
23 Frazer's lab looking at the intersects of season analysis to reduce
24 discards, and so you guys could tell us if that's something that
25 we want to work with, and we actually want to do a bid to the
26 general public, and develop some sort of survey or informal comment
27 form, that then doesn't qualify for Paperwork Reduction Act
28 requirements.
29

30 That's something that we could also consider moving forward, and
31 so hopefully that context sort of helped a little bit for when you
32 guys have a discussion to decide which pieces of this these
33 education recommendations should be prioritized.
34

35 **MS. GARDINER:** Thanks, Emily. I think now we can open the floor
36 for some discussion. What we're looking for, for the committee
37 really, is to just highlight some of these working group
38 recommendations that they would like to review again at Full
39 Council for prioritization and which ones are should be elevated
40 for the council to potentially initiate or continue action on at
41 this point, and so we'll open the floor for some discussion with
42 that.
43

44 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. We've got a couple takers. Captain
45 Walker.
46

47 **MR. WALKER:** This might have come up before, but 6.2 is still kind
48 of a conflict with itself. One says species should be -- Seasons

1 should be overlapped as much as possible, and then the last
2 sentence says that it's better -- For certain sectors anyway, it's
3 better if they have species available to harvest all year, and so
4 those are still two completely different things. I don't know how
5 we're supposed to act on that.

6
7 **MS. MUEHLSTEIN:** Well, I think, for an education, and maybe the
8 first step here is an education component, right, which is why we
9 added it here, and the idea would be, if there is a conflict,
10 right, understanding especially that maybe the for-hire sector
11 might be different than the private sector, where they want to
12 release that, or even different regions of the Gulf might feel
13 different ways, and so maybe the starting point here, Ed, is, if
14 this is something that you would like to look at, that we would
15 then develop a tool, or find a way to sort of ask for more
16 information from our fishing public, and that maybe the results of
17 that tool would lead us to either focus on one or the other.

18
19 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, and I think, you know, I was on this group, and,
20 personally, I did kind of change my view on it a little bit, when
21 I heard these guys say that they did prefer some overlap on certain
22 species, when appropriate, more than I expected to hear, versus
23 leaving it open all year, and so I definitely took something from
24 that, and I'm just not positive what kind of action the council
25 could take here on this, but --

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Dr. Sweetman, you had your hand
28 up before?

29
30 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I would advocate for 6.1 to be a priority,
31 with the DESCEND Act. I think we've mentioned that before as a
32 council. This is being put forward by the Recreational Initiative
33 Working Group 2, and I think that kind of aligns with what we've
34 been talking about, and we are talking about it through the
35 executive order process as well. The trifecta.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I agree. It's in our action guide
38 already, and so it just makes sense to move it on in this process,
39 and so I think we should have it.

40
41 **MS. GARDINER:** I have a question for Captain Walker. I guess, in
42 regard to your comment, are you interested in bringing this, or
43 6.2, back to Full Council for discussion? I mean, council staff
44 could potentially develop what that might look like, as far as a
45 tool, and then we could decide, at Full Council, if you want to
46 initiate action on that.

47
48 **MR. WALKER:** Sure. Yes, and just something to make a decision on,

1 and make it into a more of a question with an answer, or something
2 we can, you know, vote up or down a little more specifically.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

5
6 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I was also part of the steering committee, and I
7 agree with what's been set around the table, in terms of the
8 priorities. Obviously, regional management, or state management,
9 continues to come up.

10
11 I think we, at this point, have prioritized looking into greater
12 amberjack, and so I think that would be a component of this, right,
13 and I think the other one, that I'm really very much interested
14 in, is the harvest control rule, and what may be possible there.
15 It's been a model that's been used in the Mid-Atlantic, and it
16 seems to have been fairly successful so far, and so looking at
17 those kind of innovative approaches, new ways of doing business,
18 and having that guide us, is really, to me, key for prioritization.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** So you're wanting to prioritize 4.1, correct,
21 and which one is the harvest control rule? What number is that?

22
23 **MS. GARDINER:** 3.1.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** 3.1. Okay. Let's add that to the priority
26 list. Mr. Geeslin, you had your hand up?

27
28 **MR. GEESLIN:** Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm kind of
29 gravitating towards 5.1, 5.2, 5.3. All these fall under the
30 increased recreational community engagement and the management
31 process. These are all squarely within the council contributor
32 purview, and in the education category. The first two, 5.1 and
33 5.2, have not been initiated. The second, or the third, one, 5.3,
34 has been initiated. It's short, short timeframes.

35
36 When I think about, you know, return on investment, and increasing
37 that engagement, and even, you know, some of the baseline
38 understanding of the management process with our recreational
39 anglers across the Gulf, these three pop out for me.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, Mr. Geeslin. I think that we can add
42 those to the priority list. Those are ones Ms. Muhlstein
43 summarized for us. Brenda, way down there, and I can barely see.

44
45 **MS. BRENDA BALLARD:** I would agree with Dakus. I know it was
46 mentioned, when we talked about 5.2 and doing the modules, that it
47 could be costly. There's so many programs out there, that you can
48 do that at little to no cost to create, and I actually think that

1 -- I think the lack of education that some of our recreational
2 anglers have is a cause for a lot of issues, and so having something
3 like that, that we can post somewhere, and they can get access to,
4 to learn more, would be a great advantage to the council as well.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Some good points. Do we have any other
7 priorities to list on here? Mr. Marquez.

8
9 **MR. JOHN MARQUEZ:** A couple that I wanted to address is 1.1, which
10 is dealing with consistency, you know, across the Gulf with state
11 management programs. I think particularly now, as we've got
12 Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama all going to a LA Creel-type
13 model, the more that we can do to have some consistency there.

14
15 There was a lot of conversation within this group, you know, of
16 that frustration, and it's in some of the other stuff down here,
17 talking about Tails 'n Scales, and that gets into some of the
18 communication of anglers knowing what to expect from this, you
19 know, and so, when we had the process with Tails 'n Scales and
20 Snapper Check, anglers bought into that. They were a part of it,
21 and then the whole thing, you know, got turned on its head. That
22 was a lot of what the sentiment was going into this, of how we can
23 have not only consistency for the performance, but to build that
24 trust with the anglers.

25
26 Also, 3.2, and that deals with the carryover. We've brought that
27 up before, and I think Director Spraggins brought it up in a little
28 bit different context yesterday, of being able to move some quota
29 back and forth between states, but, also, you know, we have these,
30 you know, various fisheries where we've got a payback, but there's
31 no benefit to going under, and I think that would be helpful to be
32 able to look at as well.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Marquez. I'm glad you
35 mentioned 3.2, because, if no one else did, I was going to. A
36 technical question, and so, under the timeline to action category
37 there, are we allowed to sort of adjust the X in the box, to move
38 potentially certain ones up to short instead of medium or long?
39 Is that --

40
41 **MS. GARDINER:** So I think that would kind of fall into the
42 prioritization category, where the short, medium, and long is what
43 we anticipate workload being, and so I guess, unless we can lessen
44 the workload associated with the action, then we could move the X
45 in the timeline box, but I think the next step, once everyone has
46 kind of come to consensus on the recommendations, or are
47 comfortable moving forward with, would be prioritization, and, if
48 that is something we want to do at committee, we can, or, if we

1 want to wait until Full Council, and I can provide some more
2 context for some of these, we can do that as well.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Why don't we formalize the list here, I think,
5 and I'm just suggesting, and you guys can tell me if I'm wrong,
6 but then, at Full Council, we can take that finalized list, and
7 then start to maybe prioritize scheduling of that, since we have
8 it whittled down to whatever we come up with at this point, and so
9 that answers my question. Any others going forward? Mr. Anson.

10
11 **MR. ANSON:** Just a couple of points. The first one is, Mr. Marquez,
12 you mentioned something about the Tails 'n Scales and the Snapper
13 Check, and that there were comments that they felt like they kind
14 of got shorted or whatever, the anglers, or it was turned on its
15 head, and is that because the states were transitioning to the LA
16 Creel model, or some other reason?

17
18 **MR. MARQUEZ:** That really had to do with a lot of discussion just
19 around recreational anglers understanding the process, knowing
20 what they're getting out of it, understanding how the data is being
21 used, and, you know, we had regional management for snapper go
22 into effect, and both Mississippi and Alabama created programs,
23 and they were approved, and we had great snapper seasons.

24
25 Then we had a wholesale change, and they didn't understand why.
26 It was hard to communicate that to the recreational sector, why
27 they were now getting a quota cut, and they were moving to a
28 different program, and we spent all this time, money, and effort
29 getting to -- It's difficult to get somebody to buy into a whole
30 new program.

31
32 They were reporting before they went out on every trip, reporting
33 the results when they got back, and then it was all kind of getting
34 thrown out, and so that's kind of an overarching thread, I think,
35 that ran through there, of having consistency in communicating
36 well to anglers. I mean, not to tangle all this up in here, but,
37 you know, there's some other recommendations that talk about
38 communicating to anglers like what they're going to get back for
39 what they put into it.

40
41 When you're talking about discards, for example, you know, what is
42 that going to mean to them? You know, it's not going to be a one-
43 to-one increase in the fishery, and so that's what that had to do
44 with.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Anson.

47
48 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you for that, and so I guess just I would prefer

1 that there be some priority on the 2.2, and any of the
2 communication, I guess, sub-bullets, to try to address what Mr.
3 Marquez just summarized, at least with one of the aspects of
4 fisheries management that we've been dealing with, but, specific
5 to 2.2, and others, they say they're initiated.

6
7 I mean, that has already some emphasis, and priority, because
8 they've already started, and so, I guess, to follow-up on your
9 comment, Ms. Gardiner, about coming back, you know, with some more
10 information about, you know, how these might fit in, the workload
11 issue, those types of things, might be helpful to me, at least,
12 with providing a little bit more guidance on what the priority is.

13
14 Just my comment, on 2.2 specifically, is maybe just a thought would
15 be on how it's presented, or available, on the website, if that's
16 going to be the primary method for which you would engage anglers,
17 is that you make it pretty forward-facing, and not too deep in the
18 menu, and just maybe highlight it as to maybe what type of fishing
19 trip they're going on, and what species, and then they click on
20 that, and then you would come into different pages that, you know,
21 describe some other things.

22
23 Anyways, we could talk about it more offline, but I would probably
24 put some emphasis on those, the outreach-type activities, because
25 I think they're relatively low-hanging fruit. Thank you.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Anson. Any other
28 suggestions, or prioritization, on the list? Dr. Sweetman.

29
30 **DR. SWEETMAN:** No additional suggestions for me, but just, as we're
31 working on the prioritization, I mean, one of the parts of the
32 action guide here was we do need to be considerate of workload,
33 and capacity, and things along those lines, for basically everyone
34 that's involved, and I'm just thinking how this interacts with the
35 EO that we're putting a working plan, or a workplan, for, along
36 with an already full schedule, and so some of these are easier to
37 bite off than others, and just I think we need to be considerate
38 of that in Full Council as we're prioritizing these things.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I agree. I think, you know, some are
41 big asks, and others are fairly easy to achieve, but I also reflect
42 back on the overall amount of time we put into the recreational
43 initiative, and cost to the council staff to compile all this, and
44 so I'm trying to be as comprehensive as possible, I guess, as well,
45 and, maybe in Full Council we start to, you know, look at how big
46 this ask really is, when we have them all together and go on. Mr.
47 Marquez.

1 **MR. MARQUEZ:** One other one area that I wanted to mention was, you
2 know, there was quite an appetite for regional flexibility as part
3 of that group, and so, you know, you see the recommendations in
4 4.1 and 4.2 that talk about implementing regional and state
5 flexibility, and say, for example, in a fishery like the, you know,
6 gag grouper fishery, that's a Florida-centric fishery, but you
7 might be able to think outside the box there, where you -- Kind of
8 like almost the discussion we were having about deepwater grouper,
9 where you had Florida that had a large component of it.

10
11 It's almost a secondary fishery for the rest of the Gulf, you know,
12 and they could be fishing gag a whole lot of the year, instead of
13 that limited amount of time, and so you know, there was -- That's
14 not necessarily a specific one action, and it's probably something
15 that runs through a thread, as we address different species, to be
16 able to look at how we can kind of think outside of the box on
17 those, when it's short of full, you know, state management for a
18 species.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Marquez. Along the same lines
21 within that category, I would like to recommend 4.3 and 4.4 be
22 included, and so 4.3 is exploring different management measures
23 for amberjack, potentially within states, among states, or also
24 within the eastern and western Gulf.

25
26 Then, 4.4, I guess I would need some more feedback, potentially,
27 from, you know, state directors, but it seems like common sense
28 that we want to keep that included, as we're currently under that
29 delegated authority already among the five states, and so I don't
30 see why we would not want to maintain that, but is it needed, I
31 mean, to be added to the priority list, and we're already doing
32 it. It's up for discussion, but let's put it on there, just for
33 that. Any others on the list?

34
35 **MS. GARDINER:** I'm not sure that 4.4 necessarily needs to be on
36 the list to maintain that. We've already implemented it, and I
37 think checking it off our to-do list is probably a good thing.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and that's kind of what I was asking. I
40 mean, we're already doing it right now, and so I think the states
41 intend to maintain what we're doing, barring any meteorites landing
42 in the Gulf, but other than that -- So it doesn't need to be on
43 the list, but I wanted to bring it up for discussion.

44
45 **MS. GARDINER:** Great. Thank you.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Are you good?
48

1 **MS. GARDINER:** Yes, and I think that wraps it up. I think Emily
2 and I will work to get some more background information for Full
3 Council, and we can work on prioritizing that. Thank you.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Excellent. Any other discussion on
6 this agenda item, before we move on? All right, and so next on
7 our agenda is Draft Options for Reef Fish Amendment 55/Snapper
8 Grouper Amendment 44: Modifications to Mutton Snapper and
9 Yellowtail Snapper Management Measures, and Mr. Rindone will be
10 back in the driver's seat with the presentation, which will be Tab
11 B, Number 9(a). Do you want to go through the action guide item
12 for this?
13

14 **DRAFT OPTIONS: REEF FISH AMENDMENT 55/SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT**
15 **44: MODIFICATIONS TO MUTTON SNAPPER AND YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER**
16 **MANAGEMENT MEASURES**
17

18 **MR. RINDONE:** Sure. Tab Number 9 in the briefing book, Tab Number
19 1 in your hearts, Reef Fish Amendment 55/Snapper Grouper Amendment
20 44, is going to be a joint document between the Gulf and South
21 Atlantic Councils to look at modifications to the mutton snapper
22 and yellowtail snapper management measures.
23

24 This document is being prepared in response to the recent stock
25 assessments for both of these species, which found both stocks to
26 be quite healthy, as of 2023, with northward range expansion
27 evident for both stocks in the Gulf. As such, the councils are
28 now considering both of these species, and working together on
29 this document to modify their respective ACLs.
30

31 It will have a single action that will consider modification of
32 those catch limits and jurisdictional apportionment of the stock
33 between the councils.
34

35 You guys are seeing this document, and its proposed options, first,
36 at this meeting, and the South Atlantic will see the same thing
37 that you guys see in September, at their meeting. The councils
38 will pass this back and forth, to make sure that, you know, the
39 document is developed with agreement between the councils before
40 taking mutual final action, and so you guys should review the
41 information that's presented and propose modifications, as
42 appropriate. If Bernie can bring up the presentation, we'll get
43 rolling.
44

45 For a little background, we jointly manage yellowtail and mutton
46 snapper with the South Atlantic Council. Each stock is considered
47 a single unit on both sides of Florida, and we have a management
48 split at the council jurisdictional boundary for both species.

1 The majority of each stock is allocated to the South Atlantic right
2 now, based on historical landings. The recent stock assessments
3 don't change that. In the Gulf, landings for both species are
4 primarily from the commercial sector, but recreational landings
5 are increasing, and the majority of the discards come from the rec
6 sector.

7
8 This is just a characterization of the fishing seasons in the Gulf
9 for mutton and yellowtail, and the possession limits and minimum
10 size limits, and then, for mutton snapper, we have the rest of the
11 jurisdictional regulations shown here.

12
13 The Gulf doesn't have sector allocations for mutton or yellowtail
14 snapper, and the jurisdictional apportionment dates back to the
15 Generic ACL/AM Amendment and used what is commonly called a bowtie
16 approach, where 50 percent of the landings history is informed by
17 a long portion of the time series and 50 percent from the last
18 three years of that same time series.

19
20 Right now, the Gulf has 18 percent of the mutton snapper ABC, and
21 the South Atlantic has 82 percent. The Gulf doesn't use a buffer
22 between its portion of the ABC and the ACL, and the accountability
23 measure for the Gulf is that, if the ACL is exceeded, then, in the
24 following year, the season will be closed when the ACL is projected
25 to be met.

26
27 The South Atlantic has a little bit more to their management scheme
28 for mutton snapper, and frankly also for yellowtail snapper, but,
29 since we are not proposing changing any of their stuff, we'll just
30 move right along.

31
32 For yellowtail snapper, the Gulf gets 25 percent of that stock
33 ABC, again using that bowtie method for determining that
34 apportionment. Like I said, we don't have any sector allocations
35 for yellowtail snapper, but we do have a buffer right now between
36 the Gulf ABC and the Gulf ACL, and the postseason accountability
37 measure for yellowtail snapper is the same as mutton. If it's
38 exceeded -- If the ACL is exceeded, then in the following year the
39 season will be closed when the ACL is projected to be met.

40
41 We have new stock assessments for both species. Both are healthy
42 as of 2023, and both assessments use the State of Florida State
43 Reef Fish Survey to inform landings from private recreational
44 vessels, and this replaced the legacy data from the Marine
45 Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey for mutton and MRIP-FES
46 for yellowtail. MRIP-FES is still used to inform shore mode
47 landings though, which both of these species do have something of
48 a shore component.

1
2 The stock ABC for mutton is just under 800,000 pounds whole weight
3 at present, and this was based on a stock assessment back from
4 2015. 82 percent of that goes to the South Atlantic, and 18
5 percent to the Gulf, and that table down there shows the result of
6 Gulf and South Atlantic SSC deliberation in February of this year,
7 which revised the mutton snapper OFL and ABC using SRFS, and so
8 about 3.3 million pounds for the OFL, and about 2.7 million pounds
9 for the ABC, and that's using an MSY proxy at 30 percent SPR.

10
11 The same thing for yellowtail. A stock ABC of about four million
12 pounds, dating back to an assessment from 2012, and the South
13 Atlantic gets 75 percent of that, the Gulf gets 25 percent, and,
14 again, in February of this year, the council's SSCs both met and
15 revised the OFL and ABC recommendations for yellowtail, and those
16 are shown there in the table.

17
18 Generally speaking, mutton were observed to be healthy and growing,
19 and yellowtail were observed to be healthy and pretty stable, and
20 a slight increase maybe.

21
22 Both species are demonstrating northward range expansion in the
23 Gulf, and the MSY proxy was maintained at 30 percent SPR by the
24 SSCs. No other status of termination criteria changes were
25 recommended by the SSCs, and recruitment was informed using 2019
26 to 2023 for the catch projections, and, just to reiterate again,
27 the Gulf does not currently use sector allocations, but the South
28 Atlantic does, which is part of the reason why what we're trying
29 to work with here in this document is just changing the
30 jurisdictional apportionment, and the chunk of each stock ABC that
31 goes to each council, and then each council, from there, can decide
32 if or what it wants to do next on its own.

33
34 The purpose of this plan is going to be to revise the southeastern
35 U.S. mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper overfishing limits,
36 acceptable biological catch, and the regional annual catch limits,
37 based on the jurisdictional allocation between the South Atlantic
38 and Gulf Councils, using the results from the SEDAR 79 and SEDAR
39 96 stock assessments, and the need for this plan is going to be to
40 update the existing catch limits and jurisdictional allocations
41 for mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper, to be consistent with
42 the best scientific information available, and achieve optimum
43 yield, while minimizing, to the extent practical, adverse social
44 and economic effects.

45
46 Just to show you guys what the mutton snapper landings look like,
47 the blue line there is the Gulf mutton snapper landings, the red
48 line is the South Atlantic landings, and the black line is the

1 total landings, and this is in pounds whole weight.

2
3 The same thing for yellowtail. Blue is the Gulf, red is the South
4 Atlantic, and black is the total, and so our expected action here
5 would be the modification of the OFL, ABC, and jurisdictional
6 apportionment of the stock ABC.

7
8 The current approach uses that bowtie approach, which right now is
9 using the legacy MRFSS units, and the bowtie approach does
10 overweight recent years compared to the rest of the time series,
11 and it may be appropriate to consider, given evolving fishery
12 dynamics in the Gulf, you know, with the northward range expansion,
13 and, as these stocks start to become more prevalent off of places
14 like west central Florida, we would expect to see some subsequent
15 increases in recreational landings from that as well.

16
17 This approach does rely on identifying a reference period to use,
18 and the total stock ACL is currently set equal to the respective
19 stock ABC, and the regional ACL is equal to the council
20 apportionment of that stock ABC, and so you guys could consider
21 whether you want to use the same formula for both species or a
22 different formula, and you'll see what the options for that look
23 like here in a minute.

24
25 Alternative 1 would leave everything like it is, and we talked
26 about the details of that already. We can't do this particular
27 alternative, because it's not consistent with the best scientific
28 information available, because of the units that it uses and the
29 numbers that result. The same details, but for yellowtail snapper,
30 for the no action alternative.

31
32 Some considerations here, and, you know, like I said, Alternative
33 1 uses MRFSS units, which aren't consistent with BSIA anymore,
34 which makes Alternative 1 not viable, and it also uses a really
35 outdated reference period, and the more current reference period
36 would better represent current fishery dynamics.

37
38 Alternative 2 two would retain the jurisdictional apportionments
39 and establish catch limits based off the formulas established in
40 the Generic ACL/AM Amendment, and each region's ACL would equal
41 its apportionment of the stock ABC, and so, essentially, we would
42 use new catch limits and the old apportionment values.

43
44 For mutton, that would mean 82 percent of the mutton ABC would go
45 to the South Atlantic, and 18 percent to the Gulf, and everything
46 would be monitored in the combination of SRFS and MRIP, as was
47 done in the stock assessment, and the same thing for yellowtail
48 snapper, essentially.

1
2 75 percent of the stock ABC would go to the South Atlantic, and 25
3 percent to the Gulf, and landings and quota monitoring would use
4 SRFS units for private vessels, MRIP for shore and for-hire, and
5 headboat survey for headboat.

6
7 Like I said, essentially, it just uses the old jurisdictional
8 allocation with the new catch limits.

9
10 In the following tables, the cells that you see in green will
11 indicate a catch limit above the recent five-year average for that
12 region, which, you know, green means good. Green means that you
13 wouldn't have an ACL overage. Regardless of the years for the
14 projections, if we were to keep the current jurisdictional
15 apportionment, nobody would be going over, based on the most recent
16 five years' worth of landing data for both councils for each
17 species.

18
19 Alternative 3 would modify the jurisdictional apportionment and
20 catch limits using the bowtie approach and an updated reference
21 period, and so, for option 3a and 3c, we're using the average
22 landings -- We're using 50 percent of the average landings from
23 2004 to 2023 and 50 percent from 2021 to 2023, and so this is a
24 twenty-year -- 50 percent of it would be informed by a twenty-year
25 time series and then 50 percent from the last three years of that
26 same time series. Option 3a would be for mutton, and Option 3c
27 would be for yellowtail.

28
29 For Options 3b and 3d, for mutton and yellowtail respectively, it
30 would be based on the last ten years of landings data, and so 2014
31 to 2023 and then 2021 to 2023, and so the results of what that
32 looks like are shown here.

33
34 Again, no expected overages for anybody, based on the last five
35 years of landings data, and so this is for mutton, and then shown
36 in the next slide for yellowtail. Again, no expected overages.

37
38 Alternative 4 would modify the jurisdictional apportionment and
39 catch limits using fixed time series, and so no bowtie. Options
40 4a through 4c focus on mutton and use a twenty-year, ten-year, and
41 five-year time series, respectively, and then, likewise for
42 yellowtail, Options 4d through 4f use a twenty, ten, and five-year
43 time series for that species, and so you can see the percentages
44 there.

45
46 This table is a little bit bigger, and so my apologies for that,
47 but, for mutton, it does result in, you know, what looks to be
48 small percentages going to the Gulf, but, again, no overages would

1 be expected under any of these alternatives either, and then
2 likewise for yellowtail.

3
4 Again, it's a reduction in the amount that goes to the Gulf, as it
5 is for Alternative 3 also, but it's a reduction in the percentage
6 going to the Gulf, but, again, no overages are expected, based on
7 the most recent five years.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I have a quick question here from Mr.
10 Strelcheck.

11
12 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Apologies, Ryan, if you said this, and so,
13 obviously, no overages are expected, but can you talk to us how
14 close the landings would be coming to some of these alternatives,
15 like recent landings?

16
17 **MR. RINDONE:** So the closest, from a percentage standpoint, is for
18 Option 4f for yellowtail. There are a couple of years where it
19 gets kind of close. If you go back a little bit further in time,
20 and I think it was 2017, there were some peculiarly high landings
21 in the Gulf that weren't seen prior to or after, and so it may
22 have just been something in the landings data that, for the Gulf
23 anyway, was, you know, a little bit outlier-ish, if you will.

24
25 Generally speaking, I mean, there's a couple of things to consider,
26 right? You don't have any projected overages, based on the most
27 recent five years, but we are seeing more and more yellowtail
28 snapper and mutton snapper landed up the western coast of Florida,
29 and that's coming in on both the recreational and commercial
30 landings.

31
32 The fishermen are seeing these fish further north than they've
33 seen them, you know, in the past, and, with that, we would expect
34 there to be increased landings that would be identified in future
35 years, and so it reasonably would behoove the council, you know,
36 to try to keep an eye on what's going on with the landings here,
37 and -- Because if it's indicative of range expansion, and growth
38 in the spawning stock biomass, then that's something that the
39 councils would need to try to account for in the future.

40
41 It's a little bit more evident on the west coast of Florida than
42 it is on the east coast of Florida, but, you know, again, both of
43 these stocks came back healthy, and mutton came back really
44 healthy, and actually had -- Dr. Allen commented on this during
45 one of the SSC meetings, that the age composition for mutton shows
46 a good number comparatively to past assessments, a good number of
47 larger, older fish in the population, and so that was a nice thing
48 to see, from a biology perspective.

1
2 Obviously, we have a lot of alternatives and options here, and
3 I'll talk about the timeline next, and then I'll talk about what
4 kind of herd thinning I'm hoping you guys will suggest.

5
6 This is our current timeline, and this is the ideal timeline. You
7 guys are reviewing the options now, and South Atlantic at the next
8 meeting, and then we'll have a formal draft document for you guys
9 to look at in November and December, respectively. Hopefully we'll
10 have a public hearing draft to show you in January and March, and
11 then whatever public hearings are going to be held will be held in
12 April and May, and then, in June, both councils could take -- Or
13 at least consider final action, and then we could try to transmit
14 thereafter, and so, under ideal circumstances, that would be the
15 timeline.

16
17 As I was getting to, we have four alternatives, and several
18 bucketfuls of options, and so, if there is a general scheme that
19 you guys don't think you want to consider anymore, like whether
20 it's using the direct averages, or using the updated bowtie, or
21 using the old jurisdictional apportionment, or if there are options
22 therein you don't feel like considering, like the long versus the
23 shorter time series, you know, any discussion on that will be
24 helpful.

25
26 The South Atlantic Council staff will be asking the South Atlantic
27 Council the same question, and like we have a lot of -- We have
28 several alternatives, and a lot of options here, but we tried to
29 lay everything out in front of you guys, so you could see
30 everything all at once, and then weed-whack it down from here,
31 before we get into actual document writing and working towards a
32 public hearing draft, and so any input you want to offer on that
33 is most welcome.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Do we
36 have some discussion of the presentation, as far as the schedule
37 timeline? Ms. Levy.

38
39 **MS. LEVY:** I mean I would just suggest, and not related to the
40 alternatives, that we have two separate actions, one for yellowtail
41 and one for mutton. I can see this as one action in the document,
42 with all of these various things and some options, just being very
43 confusing to write, and so I think it would be much better to have
44 a yellowtail action and a mutton snapper action. Thank you.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Ms. Levy. Any other comments
47 on the presentation? Dr. Sweetman.
48

1 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I appreciate it, Mr. Chair. I guess, from my
2 perspective here, I'm more in favor of the bowtie approaches,
3 rather than the set reference period, to accommodate for, you know,
4 some of these changes that we're seeing. I think that does provide
5 a nice weighting scheme there.

6
7 I also would be considerate of, you know, retaining the current
8 jurisdictional apportionments, and I would be very interested to
9 see where the South Atlantic Council goes. I know there's no
10 projected overages, which I think is what both of the councils
11 were going for here with the ultimate goals, but I do know that
12 there has been some -- There may be some concerns on the South
13 Atlantic side relative to increasing commercial effort. They have
14 hit their catch limits in the past, and so I'm just putting that
15 out there for folks, and I don't know if our South Atlantic
16 liaison, Mr. Hull, would like to comment on that, but, obviously,
17 they haven't seen the document yet, and so I'm not going to try
18 and put you on the spot, Jimmy.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Any other comments
21 on the presentation? Then going forward, right, I think we're
22 very close to a scheduled break, coming up at 3:15 in the agenda.
23 Mr. Chair, do we want to take a break before we address some Other
24 Business items that we had on the agenda?

25
26 **MR. DUGAS:** Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Let's take a
27 fifteen-minute break and come back at 3:25.

28
29 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

30
31 **MR. DUGAS:** All right. We're going to get started. I would like
32 to stay on schedule, or ahead of schedule, if possible. Mr.
33 Schieble.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we're at the Other
36 Business part of the agenda, and, as a reminder, once we complete
37 that, we have an external presentation right at the end, after
38 Reef Fish is over today. You can stay and listen, if you so
39 choose. I think it would be informative, and so that would be the
40 last thing for today, and so first up, under Other Business, we
41 could talk about the FES pilot study. It was one of the requested
42 discussion points. Mr. Chair.

43
44 **OTHER BUSINESS**
45 **UPDATE ON MRIP-FES PILOT STUDY**
46

47 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. I requested this, and spoke
48 with Dr. Walter briefly. I was simply looking for a short brief

1 update, as John and I spoke about.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Walter, you're up.

4

5 **DR. JOHN WALTER:** Good afternoon, everyone, and so I'll just give
6 everybody an update on where the agency is with the FES pilot
7 study. I reached out to Richard Cody, and the study has been
8 completed on schedule.

9

10 This was the pilot, the second pilot, for the FES benchmark, and
11 it's going to undergo an independent Center for Independent Experts
12 review coming up, which will review the FES changes and the
13 calibration model, and then those reviews are expected to be
14 completed by the end of this year, and then the reports and
15 recommendations will be made available soon after that.

16

17 Then, once we get a handle on what the extent of the review is,
18 and what recommendations might come out of that, we'll know how
19 much the survey would need to be changed to develop a new survey,
20 and then, the timeline for revising that, we'll know better, and
21 so I believe that the -- That would happen, and we would get that
22 report in early 2026, in terms of what the results of that are.
23 Any questions?

24

25 **MR. DUGAS:** Not any questions, Dr. Walter, but thank you for the
26 update. That's what I was after.

27

28 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Any questions around the room? Captain Walker.

29

30 **MR. WALTER:** Dr. Walter, do we get any hints on what they found,
31 or have we got to wait until the review?

32

33 **DR. WALTER:** I would rather not be the one to provide hints,
34 because it would be like a game probably of telephone, and I think
35 that Richard was going to -- Richard Cody, from Science and
36 Technology, was requested to give a presentation to this body, and
37 I think that might be coming up maybe I n November, or one of the
38 meetings is --

39

40 **MR. RINDONE:** He's giving one to the SSC in October.

41

42 **DR. WALTER:** Okay.

43

44 **MR. RINDONE:** Him, or someone from his staff, is scheduled for our
45 October SSC meeting, which is October 7 through 9.

46

47 **DR. WALTER:** I definitely did not want to steal their thunder by
48 spilling that, and it sounds like it will go to the SSC, and that's

1 pending. Thanks.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Walter. Next up on our
4 list of Other Business items, we had the DESCEND Act. Dr.
5 Sweetman.

6
7 **DESCEND ACT**

8
9 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thanks. This has been a -- We've talked about the
10 DESCEND Act at several points in this meeting here, and, like I
11 referenced before, we already had a motion to, you know, try to
12 put this forward here, and everything that we talked about with
13 the working group initiative, relative to the EO, we talked about
14 it there, and so I think now would be the opportune time to
15 potentially set forward a motion to try and get this in motion,
16 because I think that the DESCEND Act sunsets on January 1, and so
17 it would be important to move this forward quickly, and I think
18 that's been what we've heard from the public.

19
20 I know Texas, and Florida, we all have regulations associated with
21 -- Relative to use of descending devices, and, honestly, it's --
22 I understand that there's some folks that are not interested in
23 moving this forward in the general public, but this does provide
24 a service, obviously, and a benefit to our overall fisheries here,
25 and we talk so much about discard mortality, and this is one of
26 those issues, or this is one of those tools here, that the
27 regulations are already in place right now, and I think it's an
28 important conservation issue that we just need to set forward, and
29 so, Bernie, if you will. You've already got it ready. **To direct**
30 **staff to draft an abbreviated framework to extend the current**
31 **regulations associated with the DESCEND Act.**

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Simmons.

34
35 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so the
36 council directed staff, and I think it was back in April of this
37 year, to begin work on a document that replaces and enhances,
38 potentially, the DESCEND Act, and so that got moved lower, lower,
39 lower on the list, and we had an abbreviated June meeting.

40
41 Right now, on the action schedule we have proposed, if we can do
42 it by an abbreviated framework, that we would try to bring a draft
43 in November to the council, and so it sounds like it needs to be
44 moved up in priority from a C, and so maybe we could spend some
45 time talking about that.

46
47 The other thing probably we should be a little bit more clear
48 about, and I don't know if your motion gets at this, and so I

1 apologize if I interrupted you, but, when we say, "and enhances",
2 that could slow things down, potentially, and so maybe a little
3 bit more direction there.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Sweetman.

6

7 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I totally agree with you, Carrie, and,
8 just from a timing perspective, initially, just extend it, and not
9 enhancing. We can look at other alternatives, if we wanted to
10 change that in, but keeping the regulations as they are right now
11 I think is the important thing, and, from a priority perspective,
12 yes, I would say not only -- I mean, this checks off a lot of boxes
13 that we are hoping to check off relative to some of these things
14 here, and so, yes, I would say -- It seems like it's a pretty
15 straightforward, easy thing that we could push through, that the
16 council agrees on, and maybe I'm -- I see your hesitation there.
17 Fair enough. Fair enough. Nothing is ever easy, but relatively
18 speaking, I guess I'll say.

19

20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Banks.

21

22 **DR. BANKS:** So, with this, C.J., I'm in full support. What is the
23 timeline you're thinking, because I believe the DESCEND Act sunsets
24 in January, and so, with an abbreviated framework, and I might be
25 speaking above my head here, we could theoretically take action,
26 final action, in November, if it was done right, and so what is
27 your timeline you're looking at?

28

29 **DR. SWEETMAN:** As soon as possible, Dr. Banks.

30

31 **DR. BANKS:** So would you like to put a timeline on your motion, so
32 we don't get bogged down, or --

33

34 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I would like to look at Carrie and her thoughts
35 there.

36

37 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Well, I mean, I'll start, Mr. Chair,
38 and I apologize, but I don't think, in this regulatory environment
39 right now, that we can really get anything done before it expires.
40 What the council can do, I think, in the meantime, while we're
41 working on this, is really do a big push-out of education and
42 information with the Return 'Em Right folks, because, you know,
43 this is mandatory rigged and ready, and not mandatory use.

44

45 I do think this is an education and informational tool that we
46 could also try to help with in the interim, until we get this
47 followed up, would be my suggestion, but, I mean, I'll look to the
48 Regional Office, but I just don't see any way, even if we brought

1 a final action document in November, that this could be implemented
2 before the January 2026 expiration. Frank, or Andy, or Mara, do
3 we even know if it can be done by an abbreviated framework? We
4 thought it could, right, but there's no way we can get it done by
5 January of 2026 and implemented.

6
7 **MS. LEVY:** We're going to look into whether it can be done by an
8 abbreviated framework, but, regardless of the council's document,
9 it still requires proposed and final rulemaking. We're not
10 extending the DESCEND Act. The DESCEND Act is a law, and so we
11 actually are implementing a new gear requirement for reef fish,
12 and so it's not as simple as saying we're just like -- Anyway,
13 we're implementing a new gear requirement, and so that may have
14 its own delays, in terms of the administration, depending on how
15 it's viewed in terms of regulatory requirements, but it does
16 require proposed and final rulemaking.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Sweetman.

19
20 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I understand what everyone is saying here. I think
21 I am in favor, actually, of adding the November final, and like
22 let's go final in November here, if at all possible, and I
23 understand the administrative, the regulatory, parts of this here,
24 that that may not be possible to implement in January, but, if we
25 don't add that on here, then there's no shot at it whatsoever.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Dr. Banks.

28
29 **DR. BANKS:** Obviously, I very much support that. I have a question,
30 I guess, for Mara, and so, despite the fact this was put in by
31 legislation, NMFS still had to put out regulations, and so could
32 we not just theoretically keep those and remove the sunset clause?
33 Is there not some -- Since we're not trying to change anything at
34 the moment, to help speed up this process, and I may not be
35 explaining that very well, but my understanding is, once it went
36 through legislation, NMFS still had to put out -- I'm seeing yes,
37 and I'm on the right track. At least NMFS had to put out
38 regulations.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Ms. Levy.

41
42 **MS. LEVY:** So the agency didn't have to put out regulations to
43 make it effective, or binding, and the agency put out regulations
44 to clarify what some of the terms meant in the DESCEND Act, and
45 like what is a descending device, and, you know, what do you need
46 to do to -- What is the definition of that, but it became
47 automatically effective through the law, and we just clarified it.

1 This is going to go away when the law goes away. It was
2 specifically put in here to clarify what was in the law. The
3 council can certainly propose new requirements, but they're new
4 requirements, and that's how we have to treat them.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Mr. Rindone, you had your hand up?

7
8 **MR. RINDONE:** Thank you, sir. Just, to that effect, C.J., it might
9 be good to change the language then to say to continue the measures
10 in the DESCEND Act, and then "in the Gulf, with the goal of taking
11 final action in November 2025, if possible".

12
13 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I agree, and I appreciate the discussion.
14 I don't think I have a second on the table yet, but --

15
16 **MR. RINDONE:** We have a second, yes. Bernie, it would be to direct
17 staff to draft an abbreviated framework to continue the measures
18 in the DESCEND Act, and so delete "extend". And then, "in the Gulf,
19 with the goal of taking final action in November 2025, if
20 possible".

21
22 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Ryan. That works. I'm not sure we need
23 the "if possible". I mean, the goal, and it's a goal. It's
24 already assumed, from my perspective there, and so can we just
25 delete "if possible", Bernie?

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay, and so we have a motion on the board.
28 Do we have a second for this motion? Dr. Banks. Any other further
29 discussion? I'm sorry. Mr. Strelcheck.

30
31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'm certainly supportive of, obviously, the
32 measures. Where I'm hung up is the last statement about the goal
33 of taking final action in November. I feel like we need to look
34 at our entire list of priorities, and decide is this going to take
35 priority over something else, before we put a statement like that
36 in a motion, and we do that at the end of each council meeting.

37
38 I would encourage us to take the time to decide, and is the DESCEND
39 Act going to be a priority over something else, and what is that
40 priority going to be, given the limited resources NMFS and council
41 staff have.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. One other discussion point, I guess,
44 and I don't want this to bog the process down in here, and I
45 understand the priority, but, also, what I would like to see, with
46 regards to this, is the Return 'Em Right folks potentially give us
47 a presentation, or an update, on the data that they have, and so,
48 you know, the number of discards that have gone back, I guess,

1 alive because of doing this, if they have that data available,
2 because I think there's a marketing, or messaging, disconnect
3 between anglers and this whole act, right?
4

5 Anglers don't get buy-in when they don't understand that, if I
6 descend this fish, instead of being in a big hurry and just
7 throwing it back, what does that do for my availability of fish in
8 my future, right, and what does that do for the stock assessment?
9

10 Reducing that F, fishing mortality, that is in the assessment,
11 what does the DESCEND Act, or using these tools, do for that, and
12 it increases the availability of fish that potentially go in the
13 stock assessment the next time around, and there's maybe
14 potentially higher allocation, but to make that connection, so
15 anglers understand that for the buy-in, but I don't know if that's
16 reasonable to do within this truncated timeline we're trying to
17 achieve here.

18
19 Maybe it would be worth approaching the Return 'Em Right folks,
20 and Nick, to see if that's possible, to come up with some
21 presentation, at the same time we're doing this for the next
22 meeting, and I don't know. Go ahead, Dr. Sweetman.

23
24 **DR. SWEETMAN:** I like where you're going with that. I do think
25 the intent here, within the abbreviated framework, is just to keep
26 it simple, right, and as straightforward as we possibly can, and
27 then focusing on kind of what the previous council motion was about
28 enhancing, and like we could take another look at it, but just
29 getting this so there's not -- It sounds like there might be a
30 little difference between when we're actually going to be able to
31 implement this versus the January 1 sunset, but trying to minimize
32 that as much as possible, and then we could look to enhance it
33 later on down the line, but, from my perspective, this is the
34 priority right now for them.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I agree. If it requires, you know,
37 the Return 'Em Right folks to show up later, after we pass this
38 through, and it goes, you know, final in November, I think it could
39 be done at a later meeting, just so we get that connection to the
40 angling public somehow, to say, okay, well, this passed through
41 the council, and here's why it's important, you know, and this is
42 why you should do this. Dr. Simmons.

43
44 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I guess,
45 to your point, and not directly to this motion regarding -- You're
46 talking about the efficacy of using the devices for different reef
47 fish and the research that's been done on that, and, if that's
48 correct, the SSC spent, I believe it was a full day receiving

1 presentations and information on the studies that were funded
2 through the Return 'Em Right program, I believe, and I think there
3 was one study that was not completed yet on gag grouper, and so
4 that was the one that was not available at the time the review was
5 done.

6
7 I can't recall if we had a motion on that or not, but we did spend
8 a lot of time on that. I think that was -- When was that, Ryan?
9 The spring? Anyways, I think we need to go take a look at that
10 again and figure out, you know, is that appropriate to go to the
11 council, or does it need to go back to the SSC, and are those
12 studies complete, and are there more research dollars being spent
13 towards looking at this, at the efficacy of these devices, and so
14 just some feedback there.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Geeslin.

17
18 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair If I've learned one thing
19 sitting around this council table, something so simple and, you
20 know, full of commonsense is never so easy to get across. In my
21 mind, this speaks to so much that we've heard through the rec
22 initiative, so much that we've heard through criticism of
23 accountability within the rec sector, dead discards, and, you know,
24 I mean, this is exactly why, in Texas, we implemented not only a
25 rigged and ready, but a must-use regulation in state waters.

26
27 We took this very seriously. In my mind, this should take priority
28 over the rec initiative and the table of actions and prioritization
29 that we just went through from the work that Emily and Sarah did,
30 which was a great job, but I think this should take priority, and
31 I'm certainly speaking in support of this motion, as drafted, as
32 it is now.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Any other
35 comments regarding this motion? All right. **Seeing none, do we**
36 **have anyone opposed to the motion as written on the board?** Dr.
37 Sweetman, are we leaving the date? Correct?

38
39 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Yes. All right. **Seeing none opposed, the**
42 **motion passes.** All right. Next on the Other Business items, I
43 believe Mr. Strelcheck has an IFT marketplace discussion item for
44 us to talk about.

45
46 **IFQ MARKETPLACE DISCUSSION**

47
48 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I wanted to just have Jessica Stephen

1 come forward and briefly update the council. I mentioned it
2 earlier this week, and this is a long time coming, in terms of
3 developing this marketplace, but we just rolled it out today, and
4 I want to commend Jessica Stephen and her team for all the work
5 that they put into this. She's going to describe what the
6 marketplace is, and how we hope it's used, and thank you, Jessica.

7
8 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** I think we had sent a link to a web story
9 about it. If we could get that displayed, it would be helpful.

10
11 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Did you send it to meetings? Jessica,
12 did you send it to meetings?

13
14 **DR. STEPHEN:** Do you have it, Andy? Okay. All right, and so,
15 while we're getting that set up, I want to remind people we've
16 been doing a lot of things to try and get information a little bit
17 more transparent in the IFQ program, and I'll start with two of
18 the things we released last year, until we get this web story up,
19 and those were a rolling allocation and rolling ex-vessel price
20 averages.

21
22 What those two features do in the IFQ system, and these two
23 features are available to the public, is that they take the last
24 three months of allocation prices for our share categories or ex-
25 vessel prices by species and show you what the average was for the
26 last three months. This is something we've heard a lot of asking
27 from the IFQ participants, because, previously, the only way you
28 got that information was in our annual reports.

29
30 They're typically released four to seven months after the year is
31 over, and so only once at a time, and then, more recently, we did
32 some in our catcher's newsletter, and so that was moving it to
33 every six months. This way, there's relevant information that's
34 available to them as they move forward.

35
36 What we've been working on launching, for the last couple weeks,
37 is a new way to advertise that you have shares or allocation for
38 sale, or that you wish to buy shares or allocation, and so we have
39 this web story here, and a Fishery Bulletin went out this morning.
40 The Fishery Bulletin does link to the web story, if people want to
41 read it there.

42
43 A lot of this came out of some of the discussions we had with the
44 small focus groups, as well as the fact that, as Andy mentioned,
45 we've been trying to do this for a long time, and so we finally
46 got through all the security hurdles, and everything else, and
47 we're able to present a way for people to advertise, free of
48 charge, that they have something to sell or to buy within the IFQ

1 program.
2
3 If you scroll down a little bit, what you'll see here is a
4 screenshot. This is fake data within it, but just a screenshot of
5 what the message board would look like. One of the critical things
6 that we heard in the focus groups is that, on some of the other
7 message boards, the information was outdated. It stays up too
8 long, and so we've instituted a thirty-day rule.
9
10 We'll evaluate, after a while, if we need to shorten that, and
11 we've also asked that anyone who posts something, once they make
12 the transaction, they can go in and delete their own posting, once
13 it's been taken care of.
14
15 Within this, you can see and sort by the share category or by a
16 species. You can sort by shares or allocation, and then kind of
17 filter it down to what you're looking for. If you wish to contact
18 someone, you would hit the contact button, and information would
19 pop up on how to contact them, and so, if we page down a little
20 bit more, this screenshot here is how the poster would post the
21 information.
22
23 We have it very limited, and so you can use drop-down boxes to
24 enter information into it, and then it does some automatic
25 calculations. For example, if you put in your share percentage,
26 we'll calculate out how many pounds that equals at this current
27 point in time, and then you tell them how you want to be contacted,
28 and so someone can choose to be contacted by email or by phone
29 number, and, under the phone number, either by text or by a phone
30 call.
31
32 If you page down a little bit more, this is an example of the
33 contact information that pops up when you hit the contact button,
34 and so it will give you an idea of how someone wants to be
35 contacted, and you would go forth and contact them.
36
37 Once you and the buyer or seller make an arrangement, you would
38 still transfer the allocation or shares in the normal process
39 through the IFQ system, and then, if you just scroll down a little
40 bit more, we also added in here the two rolling averages I was
41 talking about, and so there's screenshots to show how that
42 information is out there, and our hope behind that is that we just
43 get more transparent with the information, kind of what current
44 rates are for everything, so people can make good business
45 decisions. I would be happy to take any questions.
46
47 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Stephen. Captain Walker.
48

1 **MR. WALKER:** So this is just a free service put out, and no strings
2 attached, and it's just a marketplace for IFQ participants?

3
4 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes.

5
6 **MR. WALKER:** So no data collection?

7
8 **DR. STEPHEN:** The data collection is covered under our general
9 permit privacy data of information, and so we might be using it to
10 analyze internally if the prices advertised here match up with
11 what we see, and so one of the things people were concerned about
12 is false advertisement of prices, or trying to like change the
13 price until they got to the metric, and so we're hoping to use
14 some of that information, but there's not a direct linkage between
15 what you post here and the transaction. We'll have to do some
16 kind of fuzzy logic to get to it, and I will say we have our first
17 posting already today.

18
19 **MR. WALKER:** I've already heard about it from some people, and I
20 didn't even know it was up yet. How long has it been live? This
21 morning?

22
23 **DR. STEPHEN:** This morning, yes.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Any questions regarding the IFQ
26 marketplace? Seeing none, thank you, Dr. Stephen. Appreciate the
27 concise, quick learning experience. Thank you. All right, and so
28 the last item we have under Other Business here is a greater
29 amberjack discussion. I'll turn it over to Dr. Sweetman, since
30 you added this to the agenda, and we can move on.

31
32 **GREATER AMBERJACK DISCUSSION**

33
34 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, obviously, there's
35 -- We're getting a lot of calls, and I'm sure other states are
36 getting a lot of calls. I'm sure NOAA is getting a lot of calls,
37 but we've got, theoretically, a September 1 start date, but we
38 know that there's some issues associated with potential overages
39 that occurred last year, and kind of just looking for some clarity
40 to see what's going to happen here.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Strelcheck.

43
44 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, right now, we're scheduled to start the season
45 September 1. The season, at this point, there's no closure
46 announcement. If it's not closed, we would run until October 31.
47 All I can say is that the decision for a closure is still under
48 review, and no final decision is made.

1
2 I recognize the frustration by anglers, and stakeholders, of not
3 getting timely notice. That's certainly our goal, and what we
4 aspire to. At this point, the decision is essentially hung up
5 under review.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Sweetman.

8
9 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I can understand that, Andy, and I can
10 understand that situation that the Regional Office is in there. I
11 guess my general -- Some of it is out of your hands, quite frankly.
12 I didn't get a single call notifying me about this issue, or
13 anything, and so I would just appreciate some better coordination
14 along those lines there, because I feel like we're unable to
15 address some of these issues here.

16
17 I'll only speak for my state, but, I mean, on average, 75 percent
18 of the harvest comes from Florida, and so what Florida does in
19 state waters is very important, and I have been a little
20 disappointed that there's been no coordination on this, or no
21 heads-up whatsoever, but I also get -- I understand that the rule
22 is under review, and that is what it is.

23
24 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and that's a fair point, and I just want to
25 acknowledge that this has been an extremely challenging situation
26 for me to also navigate, and I recognize that this is atypical of
27 my communication to you, and other state directors, and so we'll
28 openly apologize for that.

29
30 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Andy. I appreciate that. We, you
31 know, had similar concerns in Louisiana as well. I recall our
32 last discussion over this was back in April. We sort of bantered
33 back and forth regarding where we were going with amberjack,
34 discussing state management potentials and things like that, but
35 I think, you know, having information earlier, and more
36 information, obviously, is better in this current situation than
37 not, and we realize it's out of your control at this point as well,
38 and so probably an artifact of restructuring, but, anyway, good
39 discussion. Mr. Chairman.

40
41 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. A question for Mr.
42 Strelcheck. I guess I'm a little confused, or maybe looking for
43 some clarification. The way I understand it, Andy, is the season
44 runs September and October in 2024. It did so, and apparently
45 there was an overage of 117,000 pounds, and I guess I'm not clear
46 why are we here, five days prior to opening the 2025, season and
47 just having the discussion. Why wasn't anything done early in the
48 year of 2025, in the spring? Why is there such a lag to make a

1 decision?

2

3 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I will briefly share process with you, in that my
4 office ultimately prepares a notice that is sent for review and
5 clearance to our Headquarters office. It has to, obviously, get
6 published in the Federal Register. It goes through review. That
7 was provided some time ago, and, at this point, all I can tell you
8 is that it is still under review.

9

10 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Chairman.

11

12 **MR. DUGAS:** Well, another question, Andy, and so can you explain
13 to me, or us, and so what happens, going forward, when we overfish
14 again this year? What does that look like next year?

15

16 **MR. STRELCHECK:** My recommendation is, if the council has concerns
17 about the current situation, which I believe you do, that you send
18 a letter to NOAA Fisheries.

19

20 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Addressed to who?

21

22 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Send it to me, or you can send it to Sam Rauch.
23 You can send it to Genio Piñeiro, or send it to all three of us.

24

25 **MR. DUGAS:** That was my question. Thank you, Andy.

26

27 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Mr. Frady.

28

29 **MR. TROY FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am deeply concerned,
30 because we have worked for years to rebuild the amberjack fishery,
31 and now we've triggered an accountability measure, and we're
32 basically -- By not acting in time, it is basically saying that
33 anything that comes under an accountability measure -- It's just
34 another political step to avoid accountability. We've rebuilt
35 these amberjack to the point to where some amberjack -- It's not
36 rebuilt.

37

38 I'm out there 200 days a year, and we saw some amberjack show up
39 last year. Those amberjack ranged in size from twenty-four to
40 thirty-six inches.

41

42 They got blown in. We had two hurricanes in a row that hit Florida.
43 Those fish weren't there. Those fish got blown into our area,
44 and now everybody has these hopes, even myself, who I could use
45 the amberjack, and I really could, but, deep down, when I took
46 that oath that you gave me last year, I'm supposed to defend the
47 Magnuson Act.

48

1 By ignoring that accountability measure, it's going to set a
2 precedence to where, any other fish that we overfish, we just, oh,
3 never mind, and it's just an accountability measurement and it
4 doesn't matter. Then it becomes political, and it shouldn't be
5 political. It should be more fact-driven, and or let's don't ever
6 use an accountability measurement again, if we ignore this one.

7
8 Like I said, I need those amberjack, but I'm out there all the
9 time, and I know the amberjack are not where they need to be. In
10 my opinion, those amberjack need to be left alone for another year,
11 and let them spawn. All the fish we were catching last year,
12 because I know amberjack -- I've been told they spawn in April and
13 May, and guess what?

14
15 All those fish we were catching last September and October were
16 full of eggs, and so I'm not mad. I'm not upset, but I'm concerned,
17 because of the oath you all made me take, and I took it with good
18 faith, and, when an accountability measure says it's going to do
19 this, I expect it to do that, or let's don't do them anymore.

20
21 Anyway, I mean, I need those fish, but I don't need them at the
22 expense of not rebuilding the fishery, which this was done a few
23 years ago, when we changed the allocation to begin in August. Then
24 we realized, in August, it was a screw-up, and it wasn't going to
25 work, and then we changed it to September 1, and so I just want to
26 make sure that, going forward, we say what we mean, or mean what
27 we say. Thank you.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Captain Frady. Mr. Geeslin.

30
31 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and Captain Frady. I won't get
32 into, you know, the merits of the closure and the accountability
33 measures. What I will share some of the sentiments that, you know,
34 filtered up to me, as representing the State of Texas, from
35 charter-for-hire captains, and that -- I know many of my colleagues
36 have received those calls.

37
38 I certainly sympathize with them, and I think their biggest issue
39 is just the timing of this. Here we are on August 26, sitting in
40 a council meeting and having these discussions, and they've had
41 trips booked and prepared, and, you know, running their businesses
42 and counting on some of that season to support them during the
43 fall. I can completely understand that. I listen to these folks.

44
45 Here in Texas, our June, and we see it in our red snapper landings,
46 and this is not unusual. June is blown out. It's hard for folks
47 to get offshore. With kids going back to school in, you know,
48 mid-August, we have what I would say is a shorter, higher

1 concentration of effort within our red snapper fishery, and so a
2 lot of those charter-for-hire captains, and Troy is nodding his
3 head, and he gets it. You're one of these.

4
5 I mean, folks are looking and counting and depending on us to make
6 those decisions in a timely fashion, so they can execute their
7 business model, and I can certainly understand that, and so I'm
8 sharing some of that frustration that I'm hearing from some of our
9 Texas-based charter-for-hire captains, some of which are sitting
10 in the audience today, and I'm hopeful we hear some of that
11 tomorrow during public testimony, too.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** I guess I have a technical question for you,
14 Andy. In the accounting process for the landings for last year,
15 and so we had a May season, which was part of the 2023 fishing
16 year, and then we started the 2024 fishing year in August, and
17 then we had a September and October season. Is the overage
18 cumulative for May, September, and October, or does it just count
19 September and October? Just in those two months, we're saying we
20 went that far over Gulf-wide, not including May?

21
22 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and landings are tracked on August 1 through
23 July 31 fishing year.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Captain Walker.

26
27 **MR. WALKER:** A little bit of a different question. If amberjack
28 were not to open, would that also apply to commercial? I heard a
29 rumor that it might, if the rec went so far over, that maybe there
30 wouldn't be a commercial season either, but just for clarification.

31
32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** You're referring to next year, like January 1,
33 because commercial is open right now.

34
35 **MR. WALKER:** I'm not sure. I didn't think of that, the two
36 different start dates. You're right.

37
38 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I think, to respond to your question, there's
39 separate accountability measures for commercial and recreational.
40 I don't think there's a combined accountability measure for the
41 one sector paying the price for an overage or another.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** Dr. Simmons.

44
45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, but I think, to
46 Mr. Walker's point, and I think we've been getting some questions
47 about this as well, is the plan to close the commercial sector?
48 It looks like, on the website, you have about 92 percent of the

1 ACL has been landed for amberjack for this year, and so just trying
2 to get some clarity there, I guess.

3
4 **MR. STRELCHECK:** We have prepared an in-season closure notice for
5 commercial. Right now, it's still pending review, and we would
6 expect to give fishers five days' notice if the fishery does close.

7
8 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, and that's just a normal prediction. I get it.
9 I think maybe those two issues had overlapped some people, and
10 created a rumor that they were associated, but I get it now. It
11 doesn't make sense.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Any further discussion on this
14 topic, or do we want to sort of stew on this a little bit until
15 Full Council? Dr. Banks.

16
17 **DR. BANKS:** I think my question is for Frank, and so I'm looking
18 at the landings, and, in March and April, it says there were 1,200
19 pounds harvested. That's during the closure. Is that a -- Can
20 you help me out with figuring out why there's 1,200 pounds during
21 the closure in March and April?

22
23 I guess I'm asking like how many fish blew up to 1,200 pounds in
24 March and April? I would assume, obviously, it's an illegal fish,
25 if it's during the closure, but do you know about how many blew
26 that up to 1,200?

27
28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I recommend we take a look at the data, and we
29 can maybe get back to you at Full Council on that. I mean, there
30 could be out-of-season harvest, and there's estimated landings.
31 It could be landings reported through the headboat program, or
32 some of the state surveys, and so we just want to take a look at
33 it, and we'll get back to you.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SCHIEBLE:** All right. Anybody else? Any other comments
36 regarding this topic? Not seeing any, we'll wrap it up, and I
37 guess that concludes the Reef Fish Committee. Mr. Chair, back to
38 you.

39
40 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on August 26, 2025.)

41
42 - - -
43