

GULF COUNCIL

REEF FISH MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino & Virtual Biloxi, Mississippi

November 3-4, 2025

VOTING MEMBERS

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

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

STAFF

- 32 Assane Diagne.....Economist
- 33 Matt Freeman.....Economic Analyst
- 34 John Froeschke.....Deputy Director
- 35 Sarah Gardiner.....Fishery Biologist
- 36 Lisa Hollensead.....Fishery Biologist
- 37 Jessica Matos.....Administrative Document Editor & IT Coordinator
- 38 Emily Muehlstein.....Public Information Officer
- 39 Ryan Rindone.....Lead Fishery Biologist & SEDAR Liaison
- 40 Bernadine Roy.....Office Manager
- 41 Carrie Simmons.....Executive Director
- 42 Anabelle Suitor.....Social Scientist
- 43 Verena Wang.....Ecosystem Analyst

OTHER PARTICIPANTS

- 46 Tom Roller.....SAFMC
- 47 Jessica Stephen.....NOAA

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PAGE 9: Motion to approve the Abbreviated Framework Action: Continuation of Management Measures to Reduce Reef Fish Release Mortality and that it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary changes to the document. The council chair is given the authority to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and appropriate. [The motion carried on page 10.](#)

PAGE 21: Motion to approve Draft Amendment 62: Modifications to the Gulf Red Grouper Management Measures for virtual public hearings. [The motion carried on page 21.](#)

PAGE 51: Motion to direct staff to begin developing a document that considers the following purpose and need statement: Purpose: The purpose of this action is to establish a program structure through which a Gulf state may establish a management program that would provide flexibility in the management of the federally-permitted vessel's harvest of red snapper for their anglers. Need: The need is to reconsider the management of the federal charter-for-hire harvest of red snapper within the context of the states of the Gulf: to prevent overfishing while achieving, on a continuing basis, the optimum yield from the harvest of red snapper by the federal for-hire sector; take into account and allow for variations among, and contingencies in the fisheries, fishery resources, and catches; and provide fair and equitable access for the sustained participation of the fishing communities of the Gulf and, to the extent practicable, minimize adverse economic impacts on such communities. [The motion carried on page 65.](#)

PAGE 110: Motion to move Action 1.2 to Considered but Rejected. [The motion carried on page 111.](#)

PAGE 112: Motion in Action 1.1 to make Alternative 2 the preferred. [The motion carried on page 112.](#)

PAGE 114: Motion in Action 3 to make Alternative 2 the preferred. [The motion carried on page 114.](#)

PAGE 118: Motion to make Alternative 2 in Action 7.2 the preferred. [The motion was withdrawn on page 119.](#)

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1 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf Council convened at
2 the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi on Monday
3 afternoon, November 3, 2025, and was called to order by Chairman
4 C.J. Sweetman.

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

10 **CHAIRMAN C.J. SWEETMAN:** I will bring the Reef Fish Committee to
11 order here. I don't need to introduce everyone, because it's a
12 committee of the whole of the council. Looking at the timeline
13 here, we're at 2:15.

14
15 I think we'll probably have a little room maybe to bring something
16 today and, Mr. Chair, I might recommend bringing in maybe mutton
17 snapper and yellowtail into -- Switching that up on the agenda, if
18 we have the time today, but I'll defer to you, based on when we
19 are at that point in the agenda, and so I'm recommending that
20 change to the agenda. Besides that, I'm looking around the table
21 to see if there are any other changes. Mr. Strelcheck.

22
23 **MR. ANDY STRELCHECK:** During Other Business, I would like to have
24 a discussion of Mississippi and Alabama Creel use for 2026.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Anything
27 else? Any changes to the agenda? Mr. Chair.

28
29 **MR. J.D. DUGAS:** We didn't hear what Andy said. Can you repeat
30 that, Mr. Strelcheck?

31
32 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I want to add, to Other Business,
33 consideration, or discussion, of Mississippi and Alabama Creel use
34 for 2026.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We've got that one. I saw no other
37 changes. Can I get a motion to approve the agenda as modified?

38
39 **DR. MIKE ALLEN:** So moved.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Allen, and can I get a second? A lot of
42 people. We'll call it Johnny. That's who I saw first. Okay.
43 The next order of action here is to adopt the meeting minutes from
44 our August Council meeting. Are there any modifications needed,
45 and, if not, can I get a motion to approve? Mr. Anson is first,
46 and can I get a second? Dr. Banks. Okay. The meeting minutes
47 are approved. With that, we will move into the action items here,
48 and it looks like I want to pass it off to Ms. Gardiner.

1
2 **FINAL ACTION: ABBREVIATED FRAMEWORK ACTION: MANAGEMENT MEASURES**
3 **TO REDUCE REEF FISH RELEASE MORTALITY**
4

5 **MS. SARAH GARDINER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To get us started with
6 Reef Fish today, we're going to be taking final action on the
7 Abbreviated Framework Action for Management Measures to Reduce
8 Reef Fish Release Mortality.
9

10 The Direct Enhancement of Snapper Conservation and the Economy
11 through Novel Devices, or DESCEND, Act implemented a temporary
12 regulatory requirement for commercial and recreational fishermen
13 to possess a venting tool or descending device that is rigged and
14 ready for use when fishing for reef fish in the Gulf Exclusive
15 Economic Zone, the EEZ.
16

17 The DESCEND Act is set to expire January 2026. At that point, all
18 requirements for venting tools and descending devices in the
19 federal reef fish fishery would cease to exist. Council staff
20 will review the proposed action and public comments received.
21

22 SERO staff will review how the proposed regulations will be
23 presented in the codified text, which we don't really have right
24 now. The committee should review the proposed action and make
25 recommendations to the council, as appropriate.
26

27 If the committee finds the proposed regulations to be necessary
28 and appropriate, the committee can recommend that the council
29 consider taking final action to transmit the proposed regulations
30 to the Secretary of Commerce for implementation, and, with that,
31 I will pass it over to Ms. Muehlstein for the public comment
32 portion.
33

34 **MS. EMILY MUEHLSTEIN:** Thank you, and so we did solicit comments
35 on this, although it was a very truncated timeline. We pushed out
36 a notice through Fishbrain and Fish Rules earlier last week. We
37 only received two comments as a result of that effort.
38

39 We heard support for requiring the use of venting tools and
40 descending devices, with the rationale provided that it takes
41 little time to do it right, that it should be encouraged and
42 practiced by everyone, and that it has proven benefit to reef fish
43 conservation.
44

45 We also heard that abbreviated frameworks like this one should not
46 become standard practice, because we want to allow the public as
47 much opportunity to review and provide input on future council
48 actions as possible. I'll take any questions.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Ms. Muehlstein. Any comments for
3 Emily, or questions? Seeing none, thank you, Emily. Sarah.
4

5 **MS. GARDINER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. While Bernie and Jess are
6 pulling up the document, I'll just give a quick timeline refresher,
7 and so the council requested that staff pull forward this document
8 in April of 2025, but then also reemphasized that point in August
9 of 2025, and so, as Dr. Simmons mentioned earlier, this document
10 is a categorical exclusion. It's also an abbreviated framework,
11 and so, with the CE, we don't have the requirement to conduct an
12 EA, and so the environmental assessment, or biological components
13 of this document, don't need to be in there, under a CE.
14

15 Bernie, if you could please go to Section 1.2, we'll review the
16 purpose and need. When looking at compiling this document, I was
17 looking at the National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery
18 and Conservation Act, stating that conservation and management
19 measures shall, to the extent practical, A, minimize bycatch, and
20 B, to the extent bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize the mortality
21 of such bycatch.
22

23 So, in implementing the DESCEND Act back in 2022, looking at
24 reducing release mortality with the requirements under A, to use
25 a venting tool or descending device, it looked at minimizing that
26 release mortality.
27

28 Looking at Section 1.2, with the purpose and need, the purpose of
29 this action is to implement the regulatory requirements for
30 commercial and recreational fishermen to possess a venting tool or
31 descending device that is rigged and ready for use when fishing
32 for reef fish in the Gulf EEZ.
33

34 The need for this action is to continue regulatory requirements
35 established under the DESCEND Act and implementing regulations,
36 given the act is set to expire in January 2026. Research studies
37 have shown the use of descending devices or venting tools reduce
38 discard mortality of many reef fish, resulting in increased
39 conservation and sustainability of reef fish stocks, and so it
40 really meets the needs expressed in the National Standard 9 of the
41 MSA.
42

43 Bernie, can you go to Section 1.4, when I was talking to General
44 Counsel about this, before the government shutdown, as I
45 understand, under a CE, and, specifically for this action, we
46 didn't need to bring forward actions or alternatives. It was
47 either a you do it or you don't type of document, and so we don't
48 have any actions or alternatives, but you can either opt to make

1 a motion to do it or not.

2

3 To do it would be implementing a regulatory requirement for
4 commercial and recreational fishermen to possess the venting tool
5 or descending device that is rigged and ready for use when fishing
6 for reef fish in the Gulf EEZ, as previously required under the
7 DESCEND Act and regulations implementing the act with no
8 expiration.

9

10 The regulations, under 50 CFR 622.30(c), define what a descending
11 device is and a venting tool is that is acceptable under the
12 current regulations. I'm imagining those would remain the same
13 when implementing this new reduction in release mortality
14 regulation, but, to further emphasize that point, we reached out
15 to Return 'Em Right to look at the participation as of October
16 2025.

17

18 Table 1.4.1, if Bernie could scroll down to that, shows the
19 participation in that program. For those of you who are not
20 familiar with that program, it's kind of an outreach and education
21 module that looks at educating the general public and stakeholders
22 on the use of venting tools, or specifically descending devices,
23 and how they can be beneficial in reducing release mortality.

24

25 As of October 2025, there have been 47,232 participants in the
26 education module, and those individuals also received a free
27 descending device as part of taking the educational course on how
28 to use descending devices, and they self-identified in states in
29 which they fish in and which sector they participate in. The
30 majority of those were from the recreational sector.

31

32 I think, largely, there's been pretty broad support and engagement
33 in using descending devices and/or venting tools, and so I think
34 implementation of this regulation would not be very burdensome on
35 many of our stakeholder groups, because there's already broad
36 acceptance in the community, and this also is something that has
37 been identified with the Recreational Initiative Working Group as
38 a priority to implement, or continue, and a lot of other comment
39 letters of support, and so I'm happy to walk through other portions
40 of the document, but that is a broad summary of what's in the
41 document, and kind of the rationale for moving forward with this,
42 and I'll take any questions.

43

44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Ms. Gardiner, and I appreciate
45 council staff's very, very quick work on this here to move this
46 forward in a timely manner. I think this is excellent, and so,
47 first, thank you.

48

1 Okay. Any questions or comments for Sarah regarding the
2 abbreviated framework final action that we have before us here?
3 Okay. Well, we certainly have heard a lot on this topic in the
4 last couple meetings, I think, and, I mean, I think we heard, at
5 the last meeting, not only from the public, but amongst council
6 members about support for trying to move some of this forward here.

7
8 This deals with a lot of issues that the council constantly tries
9 to navigate here with regards to discard mortality, and, overall,
10 I think this is a positive action, that most people are supporting,
11 and so, Sarah, I'm not seeing any direct questions or comments
12 from you here. I'm assuming -- J.D.

13
14 **MR. DUGAS:** I have a question for Sarah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
15 was looking at Table 1.4.2, and the paragraph above it says the
16 Southeast Regional Headboat Survey number of discards by species
17 for January 2024 through October 2025, and my question is I thought
18 that the headboat survey had stopped prior to October.

19
20 **MR. STRELCHECK:** The headboat survey is continuing to operate in
21 the full. What we have stopped is port sampling, and there's also
22 still some observer coverage that's occurring on headboats.

23
24 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, J.D. Good question. Any other
27 questions or comments for Sarah? Andy.

28
29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Not a question for Sarah. I had the opportunity
30 to review the document, and I thought she did an excellent job on
31 preparing the document, and so I thank her for that.

32
33 I had brought this up at the previous council meeting, and I think
34 we've had plenty of rational discussion, but, given that this is
35 a mandate that essentially is ending, the DESCEND Act, and this is
36 a discretionary provision under the Magnuson Act to implement,
37 this would be viewed potentially as a regulatory action, and we
38 would have to offset it with whatever the economic impacts would
39 be related to this, if it's deemed to be regulatory by the
40 administration.

41
42 I just wanted to kind of be upfront on that, if it goes forward
43 and is implemented. It may be considered a routine action, and we
44 don't have to offset the cost of it, but I wanted to note that.

45
46 My view is that it can be viewed as deregulatory, simply from the
47 standpoint of we are reducing fishing mortality, or discard
48 mortality, which has a net benefit to anglers, in terms of future

1 harvest and production, and I know we built that rationale into
2 this document, in the purpose and need, but, because there's costs
3 to going out and purchasing these items, there is, obviously, a
4 regulatory component to this. The Return 'Em Right Program,
5 obviously, helps to offset that for those for that haven't
6 participated in the Return 'Em Right Program.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and thank you for that, Mr. Strelcheck.
9 That's helpful, and we certainly included this within our seafood
10 competitiveness EO comment letter relative to how this would
11 support ultimately commercial fisheries too, and so, yes, overall,
12 I agree with the comments, and I think the council does overall,
13 that returning more fish provides more to be available to benefit
14 not just the economics, but the sustainability of a lot of these
15 fisheries here, and so I understand that, and hopefully, this would
16 be considered just a routine management measure.

17
18 While I understand the cost that can be associated with some of
19 these, even just having a venting tool on there is not a
20 significant cost, I would think, to an individual angler, and you
21 just need to have one on the vessel, and so okay. I will say that
22 this is -- Any other questions, or comments, before we kind of
23 get into maybe moving on here?

24
25 This is a final action, and so, if the committee would like to
26 perhaps make a motion to move this forward for Full Council, I
27 think -- Unless there's further discussion on this topic, I think
28 we would entertain one at this time, if anyone would be so willing.
29 Dr. Banks.

30
31 **DR. KESLEY BANKS:** I'll make that motion to move it forward to
32 Full Council.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Banks, and it looks like
35 we have a second from Captain Walker.

36
37 **DR. BANKS:** Would you like me to read it in?

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That would be lovely, Dr. Banks.

40
41 **DR. BANKS:** Motion to approve Abbreviated Framework Action:
42 Management Measures to Reduce Reef Fish Release Mortality and that
43 it be forwarded to the Secretary of Commerce for review and
44 implementation and deem the codified text as necessary and
45 appropriate, giving staff editorial license to make the necessary
46 changes in the document. The council chair is given the authority
47 to deem any changes to the codified text as necessary and
48 appropriate.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Banks. We have a second from
3 Captain Walker. Is there any discussion on the motion on the
4 table? **Seeing none, are there any objections? Seeing none, the**
5 **motion carries.**

6
7 Thank you, Ms. Gardiner, and we really appreciate, once again, the
8 quick work on this abbreviated framework. It's nice when something
9 moves forward so quickly like that.

10
11 Okay. I think, with the change of schedule, Mr. Chair, are you
12 okay with -- Okay, and I think we might do a little break first.
13 Okay. We'll take a little break, and I'll pass it over to you,
14 Mr. Chair.

15
16 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Yes, and we're ahead of
17 schedule. Let's take a fifteen-minute break, and then we'll come
18 back to mutton snapper.

19
20 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

21
22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so we have a change in the order of
23 the agenda here, and I think we're going to move into the Draft
24 Options: Reef Fish Amendment 55/Snapper Grouper Amendment 44:
25 Modifications to Mutton Snapper and Yellowtail Snapper Management
26 Measures, and, before we dive into that, Mr. Rindone with the
27 action guide.

28
29 **DRAFT OPTIONS: REEF FISH AMENDMENT 55/SNAPPER GROUPE AMENDMENT**
30 **44: MODIFICATIONS TO MUTTON SNAPPER AND YELLOWTAIL SNAPPER**
31 **MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

32
33 **MR. RYAN RINDONE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so Reef Fish Amendment
34 55/Snapper Grouper Amendment 44 is a joint amendment to consider
35 modifications to Southeastern U.S. mutton and yellowtail snapper
36 management between the Gulf and South Atlantic Councils.

37
38 New stock assessments for these species estimated them to be
39 healthy, as in not overfished or undergoing overfishing, as of the
40 terminal data year for those assessments, which was 2023, and those
41 assessments also observed some northward range expansion evident
42 in both stocks, but especially in yellowtail in the Gulf.

43
44 This amendment is going to consider modifications to the respective
45 stock catch limits, jurisdictional apportionment of the respective
46 stock, acceptable biological catch, and setting of the regional
47 annual catch limits, and South Atlantic sector allocations for
48 both species within the South Atlantic Council's jurisdiction.

1
2 The South Atlantic Council is going to further develop the
3 alternatives in Actions 3 and 4, which directly deal with the
4 mutton and yellowtail snapper South Atlantic sector allocations,
5 respectively, and it's going to work on that further at its
6 December 2025 meeting. We do not, in the Gulf, use sector
7 allocations for mutton or yellowtail, and so Actions 3 and 4 in
8 the document are going to be specific to the South Atlantic.
9
10 Bernie, if you can bring the document up, and so we are waiting on
11 a data update for the landings data that are in the document, and
12 so some of the landings data are going to be modified to reflect
13 that, and I'm going to talk a little bit about what that's going
14 to look like in the background, and so, Bernie, if we could start
15 there, and scroll on down a little bit. Keep going, keep going.
16 I don't remember exactly which figure it is, but -- That one.
17
18 All right, and so the landings data herein are going to be updated
19 before the South Atlantic's meeting in December. Scroll up just
20 a little bit, so I can read that highlighted bit that I left in
21 there.
22
23 To reflect the appropriate fleet-specific recreational data
24 stratification, and this will have some effect on the values that
25 are presented in Chapter 2 for the jurisdictional apportionments
26 and resulting regional ACLs.
27
28 What you guys are looking at there in Figure 1.1.3 is a mapped
29 survey area used by Florida's SRFS program for surveying offshore
30 private recreational fishing efforts and approximate landings for
31 mutton snapper and yellowtail snapper. The Gulf zones there are
32 Areas A through D, and then the South Atlantic are E through F,
33 and scroll down a little bit more, Bernie.
34
35 This table here shows how the different recreational fleets are
36 going to be apportioned on the updated landings information, and
37 this is specific to how Zones D and E are handled, and so, for the
38 offshore private vessels, D is going to be assigned to the Gulf,
39 and, for federal charter-for-hire, D will be assigned to the South
40 Atlantic, commensurate with the way the MRIP works. MRIP combines
41 D and E, where SRFS breaks them apart, and so that's where some of
42 this comes from.
43
44 For headboat, the Southeast Region Headboat Survey will be able to
45 take that Area D and apply that to the Gulf, and then, for shore
46 mode, Area D is going to be applied to the South Atlantic, since
47 the majority of the effort in the Keys, as shore goes, is
48 attributed to the South Atlantic anyway, and we do have a shore

1 mode component for both yellowtail and mutton.
2
3 We'll scroll down a little bit and talk about the purpose and need,
4 really quick. The purpose of these fishery management plan
5 amendments is to revise the Southeastern U.S. mutton snapper and
6 yellowtail snapper stock overfishing limit and stock acceptable
7 biological catch, based on the results of the SEDAR 79 and 96 stock
8 assessments, respectively, and the amendments would also revise
9 the jurisdictional apportionment between the councils, the
10 regional annual catch limits, and South Atlantic sector
11 allocations.
12
13 The need for these FMP amendments is to update existing catch
14 limits and jurisdictional apportionments of the stock ABCs in the
15 South Atlantic sector allocations for mutton and yellowtail
16 snapper, to be consistent with the best scientific information
17 available, and achieve optimum yield, while minimizing, to the
18 extent practical, adverse social and economic effects, and so we'll
19 skip on down to Chapter 2, Bernie. Unless somebody raises their
20 hand, I'm going to keep talking.
21
22 Action 1 is going to modify mutton snapper's OFL, ABC, and the
23 jurisdictional apportionment and regional ACLs, and the no action
24 alternative is listed there. Scroll down a little bit, Bernie,
25 and this used, colloquially, the old Bowtie Method, which is using
26 50 percent of the average catch history from a longer historical
27 time series plus 50 percent of the catch history from the last
28 three years of that time series.
29
30 For mutton, it was 1990 to 2008, and, for yellowtail, like you'll
31 see in the next section, it's 1993 to 2008, and so you can see the
32 current OFL and ABC for mutton listed there, and remember, for the
33 mutton snapper assessment, this, as Dr. Allen and Mr. Moncrief can
34 attest, this assessment came back beautiful. The stock is in
35 fantastic shape. There's a lot of -- There's a larger number of
36 older fish in the population than there have been in the past,
37 which is a great sign for reproduction and the stock's ability to
38 sustain harvest and environmental perturbations.
39
40 Alternative 1 here though, is inclusive of the old federal legacy
41 MRFSS survey, the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey,
42 and, because this isn't consistent with best scientific
43 information available anymore, Alternative 1 is not a viable
44 alternative, and so we'll scroll on down.
45
46 Alternative 2 would modify the OFL and ABC, but retain the current
47 jurisdictional apportionment for mutton, which right now is
48 putting 82 percent of the stock ABC to the South Atlantic and 18

1 percent to the Gulf, and, based on the SSC's OFL and ABC
2 recommendations per year for 2026 to 2028, you can see how that
3 would shake out if we were to maintain the current percentages for
4 that jurisdictional apportionment and just use the SRFS-informed
5 catch limits, and so we'll scroll on down.

6
7 You guys had thinned the herd a little bit on the options last
8 time. Alternative 3 and Actions 1 and 2 reflect that reduction in
9 alternatives, and so Alternative 3 here would modify the OFL and
10 ABC for the jurisdictional apportionment for mutton and the
11 regional ACLs, using the average of the historical and recent
12 landings, and from one of these following reference periods.

13
14 Option 3a would use 2004 to 2023 as the reference period, and so
15 half of that jurisdictional apportionment would be determined
16 based on the landings from 2004 to 2023 and half from the landings
17 from 2021 to 2023.

18
19 The recent part of that time series is effectively counted twice
20 in the math, and so it more heavily weights recent fishery
21 dynamics, which is important, especially when we're talking about
22 range expansion for both of these species.

23
24 You guys can see how that shakes out for that twenty-year time
25 series there in Option 3a, and then, if we scroll down a little
26 bit more, Option 3b does the same thing, but for a ten-year time
27 series, using 2014 to 2023, and so, in Option 3a, about 9 percent
28 of the stock ABC for mutton goes to the Gulf, and 91 percent to
29 the South Atlantic, and then, in Option 3b, and not that much
30 different, 8 percent to the Gulf and 92 percent to the South
31 Atlantic.

32
33 All right. Seeing no questions, scrolling down, we'll go to Action
34 2. Action 2 is essentially the same thing, but for yellowtail,
35 and so, under Alternative 1, which uses MRIP -- Excuse me.
36 Alternative 1 is actually the Coastal Household Telephone Survey,
37 and not MRFSS, and so I'll update that note there. No, and it is
38 MRFSS, isn't it? It is MRFSS. I'm sorry.

39
40 Like mutton, Alternative 1 here is inclusive of MRFSS units, and
41 so it's not consistent with the best scientific information
42 available. Another note for Alternative 1 here for the Gulf is
43 that there's an 11 percent buffer between the Gulf's apportionment
44 of the ABC and the ACL that the Gulf is using, and so the Gulf ACL
45 is 89 percent of the Gulf ABC, and that was determined from the
46 Generic ACL-AM Amendment that went into place in 2012, using the
47 council's ACL-ACT control.

1 Because the stock is healthy, and you guys don't typically put a
2 buffer between the ABC and the ACL when the stock is healthy, we
3 are not proposing continuation of using the ACT, and so we'll
4 scroll them down.

5
6 Again, here, Alternative 1 is not consistent with the best science,
7 because of being inclusive of the MRFSS units for the recreational
8 landings, and so, like in Action 1 for mutton, Alternative 2 would
9 modify the OFL and ABC, but retain the current jurisdictional
10 apportionment between the councils for the stock ABC for
11 yellowtail, which currently gives 75 percent of the stock ABC to
12 the South Atlantic and 25 percent to the Gulf.

13
14 Option 2a would retain that reduction, if you guys still want to
15 use that, but, again, the IPT recommendation would be to consider
16 what you've done in the past for other stocks, which is to not use
17 it.

18
19 That would make the Gulf regional ACL reduced by 11 percent from
20 the Gulf jurisdictional apportionment of the stock ABC, consistent
21 with the way that the buffer was established back in 2012, or, as
22 you typically do in these situations, you could set the regional
23 ACL equal to the stock ABC, and so that -- Those results are shown
24 in the table below.

25
26 This is assuming that the Gulf is getting 25 percent of the ABC,
27 based on the current jurisdictional apportionment, and the South
28 Atlantic would get the balance, at 75 percent, over there on the
29 far right.

30
31 Unlike Alternative 3 in Action 1, Alternative 3 in Action 2 for
32 yellowtail proposes using a combination of historic and recent
33 landings for determining what the jurisdictional apportionment
34 should be between the councils for yellowtail, and so, we'll scroll
35 on down, and so, in this case, if you were to select Alternative
36 3, you would need to select one of Options 3a or 3b, which would
37 -- You know, either we're going to reduce the Gulf ACL from the
38 ABC, like we currently do, or not, and then you would need to also
39 select the time series that is going to be used, either that
40 twenty-year time series of 2004 to 2023, which is Option 3c, or
41 2014 to 2023, which is Option 3d.

42
43 Scroll on down, Bernie, and you can see the differences in what
44 the landings look like for those tables. If you use the longer
45 time series, the Gulf gets 16 percent of the yellowtail snapper
46 stock ABC, and, if you use a ten-year time series, the Gulf gets
47 15 percent, and so they're also pretty close.

48

1 All right, and so, if we scroll on down to Actions 3 and 4, and,
2 like I mentioned with these, these need to be populated by the
3 South Atlantic Council. The Gulf doesn't currently use sector
4 allocations for either of these species.

5
6 The South Atlantic Council is going to work on applying its
7 allocation decision tool to determine the allocation options that
8 it wants to consider, and it will work on that at its December
9 2025 meeting, and so the rest of these actions are currently blank,
10 for that reason, and that's essentially what I have.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Rindone. Any questions or
13 comments for Ryan? I don't think we really need to -- We don't
14 have any specific direction here for -- We don't need to select
15 preferreds or anything. The South Atlantic Council is going to
16 review this, and they need to populate part of this, since this is
17 a joint amendment here.

18
19 I guess I could offer to the to the committee here -- Is there any
20 options that we have, that kind of Ryan went through, that you
21 think should be removed, or anything added? My recommendation
22 right now would just be to -- We already removed one at our last
23 council meeting, and so maybe we just keep it as-is, punt it back
24 to the South Atlantic, see where they land on it, and then we go
25 from there, but that would just be my suggestion, and I'll see
26 what the committee thinks. Any comments, or discussions? Dr.
27 Froeschke.

28
29 **DR. JOHN FROESCHKE:** Just a question. We had some discussion here
30 that mutton and yellowtail seem to be working their way up the
31 Gulf coast northward, from climate or other reasons, and is that
32 also being observed on the Atlantic side?

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and yellowtail -- Where's our South
35 Atlantic -- He's not here. Yes, and, I mean, they are seeing an
36 expansion of the range there for sure, too. I mean, I think this
37 is a good problem to have for both stocks, I would say. I mean,
38 they're both going gangbusters, and mutton in particular, and so
39 I think this is a kind of a win-win, and it's just kind of threading
40 the needle for how we want to navigate this with the jurisdictional
41 apportionment with the South Atlantic states there. Mr.
42 Strelcheck.

43
44 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I agree that I don't think we really need
45 to do anything more. I'm not going to recommend any changes to
46 the actions. One thing I think, as this progresses, and we get to
47 a point where we want to select preferred, because both of these
48 stocks are in healthy shape, what I think we need to look at is

1 avoiding one region potentially having a much higher chance of a
2 closure than another, and looking at kind of at least recent
3 landings histories and bumping them up against these allocations,
4 or jurisdictional allocations, and determining what the
5 probability or risk would be of having a closure, recognizing that
6 we may still have closures, but I don't want it to be
7 disproportionate, where the Gulf is closing more often than the
8 South Atlantic, since it's the same stock, or vice versa.

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I agree. I think, when we first
11 started this amendment overall, I think that was kind of the common
12 understanding between both councils, would be not having closures,
13 is kind of what we would be aiming towards there. I think -- I
14 don't want to speak to what the data is going to show, but, with
15 mutton, I think we're not looking at any closures.

16
17 The only thing I've heard -- Again, I wish Mr. Roller was here,
18 but I know the South Atlantic, relative to at least the commercial
19 ACL for yellowtail, they've kind of bumped up against it, and even
20 exceeded it in a couple of years, and so that's part of why I think
21 it's probably smart to see what the South Atlantic thinks relative
22 to that. Now, yellowtail might be their bigger concern, more so
23 than mutton, but just kind of throwing that out there for the
24 council's perspective. Mr. Rindone.

25
26 **MR. RINDONE:** Yes, and, just because we have some newer council
27 members, the Reef Fish AP, the last time that they had talked about
28 this, as it pertains to the Gulf for both of these species, it
29 basically said, if it's not broken, don't fix it, and so, as long
30 as the season stays open, that's really all that they were worried
31 about.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I know the South Atlantic has heard
34 the same from their AP, and so it seems to be pretty consistent
35 across the board. Okay. Any questions, comments, discussion on
36 yellowtail and mutton? It's not that often that we get two
37 positive stock assessments, and so this is actually nice. All
38 right. I am seeing none.

39
40 I'm hesitant to go into more stuff, Mr. Chair, because I think
41 some of these will be a little bit more expansive discussions, and
42 I know we've got closed session, but I'll defer to you, to how you
43 want to approach this for the rest of the day.

44
45 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Yes, and we're going to move
46 into our closed session that I added this morning. Let's give the
47 public a few minutes to leave the room, and we'll start the closed
48 session.

1
2 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed on November 3, 2025.)
3

4 - - -

5
6 November 4, 2025

7
8 TUESDAY MORNING SESSION
9

10 - - -

11
12 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf Council reconvened
13 at the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi on
14 Tuesday morning, November 4, 2025, and was called to order by
15 Chairman C.J. Sweetman.
16

17 **MR. DUGAS:** We're going to get started. Today, we're going to
18 work down the agenda in order. I'm going to start off by saying
19 there will not be a litigation update by Ms. Levy, and General
20 Spraggins asked that we finish early today. For some reason, he's
21 in a hurry, and, also, he's hosting a social tonight at 6:00, just
22 a reminder, and we'll remind everyone again this afternoon, and,
23 with that, I'll turn it over to Dr. Sweetman to take us through
24 Reef Fish.
25

26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have a
27 busy day today in Reef Fish, but I think the very first thing that
28 we've got on the docket is Reef Fish Amendment 62: Modification to
29 Gulf Red Grouper Management Measures, and I'll turn it over to Dr.
30 Freeman for the action guide here for this topic.
31

32 **PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT: REEF FISH AMENDMENT 62: MODIFICATIONS TO**
33 **GULF RED GROUPEr MANAGEMENT MEASURES**
34

35 **DR. MATT FREEMAN:** Great. Thank you, and so, for this agenda item,
36 council staff will present a public hearing draft of Reef Fish
37 Amendment 62, which considers management modifications for red
38 grouper, based on the results of the most recent stock assessment,
39 SEDAR 88.
40

41 This stock assessment found red grouper to be healthy, and, as a
42 result, the SSC recommended modifications to catch limits and
43 stocks as determination criteria. The document proposes actions
44 that consider modifying status determination criteria, catch
45 limits and sector allocations. It also considers removing the
46 twenty-fathom recreational season seasonal closure for shallow-
47 water grouper.
48

1 The committee should review the information presented, ask
2 questions, and review the current preferred alternatives. Council
3 staff will plan to host a virtual public hearing via webinar.
4 Consideration of final action on this document will be planned for
5 the January 2026 council, and so I'll give admin just a moment to
6 pull up the document, and we'll start with the purpose and need
7 statements.

8
9 If you recall from the last meeting, when we reviewed the purpose
10 and need statements, there was not a motion, but there was a
11 request by the committee to incorporate additional language
12 referencing the data from the State Reef Fish Survey, and so both
13 the purpose and need statements have been updated, and I'll read
14 through both of those.

15
16 The purpose of this action is to modify the catch limits and sector
17 allocations of Gulf red grouper based on the SEDAR 88 stock
18 assessment and through use of private recreational landings data
19 from Florida's State Reef Fish Survey and to consider eliminating
20 the recreational closed season for shallow-water grouper in
21 federal waters seaward of the twenty-fathom boundary.

22
23 The need for this action is to consider new stock assessment advice
24 and Florida State Reef Fish Survey landings data that allow
25 increases in catch limits and fair and equitable modifications in
26 allocations, thereby providing economic benefits to the commercial
27 Gulf red grouper sector and additional fishing opportunities to
28 the recreational Gulf red grouper sector.

29
30 Due to the healthy state of the red grouper stock and other ongoing
31 management changes to shallow-water grouper species, the seasonal
32 closure for the recreational sector has limited conservation value
33 and can be eliminated to alleviate overly burdensome restrictions
34 on recreational anglers, and so I'll pause, to see if there's any
35 questions, and, if not, I'll move into the actions.

36
37 So we can we go to Action 1, and so, as a reminder, there's three
38 actions in this document, and the council has selected preferreds,
39 and so, Bernie, can you scroll down to Preferred Alternative 3?

40
41 As a reminder, what the council has selected for its current
42 preferred is to revise MSY proxy and catch limits for red grouper
43 based on the results of SEDAR 88 and recommendations of the Gulf
44 Council's SSC, using a three-year constant catch scenario. The
45 OFL and ABC for red grouper will be set based on MSY proxy of the
46 yield when fishing at F 40 percent SPR and the yield when fishing
47 75 percent of the MSY proxy, respectively.

1 The OFL and ABC are derived in part using SRFS data for private
2 recreational vessels. The total ACL is set at 80 percent of the
3 ABC in 2026, 90 percent of the ABC in 2027, and 100 percent of the
4 ABC in 2028 and subsequent years, and those values are listed
5 below, and so I will stop, to see if there's any questions or
6 conversation about the current preferred alternative.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any questions or comments for Dr. Freeman about
9 this preferred alternative? I think we kind of discussed this in
10 pretty good detail at our last council meeting. We're not expected
11 to have any fishing closures there, but I do think it kind of sets
12 up some guardrails relative to a very large quota increase for red
13 grouper, and so this seemed a prudent measure at the last council
14 meeting. Any discussion? Dr. Freeman, back to you. There's no
15 discussion, it seems.

16
17 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay. Sounds good, and so we'll proceed to Action
18 2, and so, with Action 2, the current preferred alternative is
19 using the same time series that is currently being used, the
20 difference being that this would be based off of the inclusion of
21 SRFS data instead of MRIP-FES data, and so here we are revising
22 the sector allocations of the total ACL between the recreational
23 and commercial sectors as the average landings using SRFS data
24 during the years 1986 through 2005.

25
26 The allocations for red grouper are 68.2 percent commercial and
27 31.8 percent recreational. The commercial buffer between the ACL
28 and ACT is 5 percent, and the recreational buffer is 9 percent,
29 and, as a reminder, those buffers would be the same as what is
30 currently in place, and so I'll see if there's any questions on
31 the current preferred, and, if not, we'll proceed to Action 3.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** J.D.

34
35 **MR. DUGAS:** Dr. Freeman, can you remind us why the years 1986
36 through 2005 were chosen?

37
38 **DR. FREEMAN:** Sure, and give me one moment.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Freeman, I believe that aligns up with the
41 previous amendment for red grouper and the historical time series
42 that we had there, and trying to maintain consistency.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Correct. I was looking, because that one, as
45 well with Reef Fish Amendment 53, was also using the same time
46 series that was established in Reef Fish Amendment 30B, and I
47 believe, at the time, those were the most recent landings history,
48 and so it has been a continuation from 30B into 53, and then for

1 consideration in this document, using that same time series, and,
2 in this case, simply updating to use SRFS data, which is the MRIP-
3 FES.

4
5 **MR. DUGAS:** So we don't have any landings history past 2005?
6

7 **DR. FREEMAN:** We do, and those are considered in Alternatives 3
8 and 4, and so Alternative 3 continues that through 2009, which is
9 just prior to implementation of the commercial grouper-tilefish
10 IFQ program, and Alternative 4 extends it through 2024. Then,
11 just as a reminder, across Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, we're seeing
12 very small differences, just above 1 percent, across these sectors.
13

14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks for that explanation, Dr. Freeman. It's
15 nice to have sector allocation discussions where it's just minor
16 changes. Mr. Strelcheck.
17

18 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just so that everyone is clear with regard to the
19 recreational buffer, my understanding is that, if you apply data,
20 the buffer would actually be greater with more recent data, because
21 of the recent overages, but we're not using that buffer, because
22 of the large increase in the red grouper catch limit and the fact
23 that we wouldn't expect those overages to continue, based on that
24 increase, and so I just wanted to confirm that's the rationale,
25 and if there's any other rationale that was built into the
26 amendment.
27

28 **DR. FREEMAN:** That's correct. Thank you for that summary.
29

30 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any further discussion on Action 2 here?
31 Seeing none, Dr. Freeman.
32

33 **DR. FREEMAN:** So, Bernie, we can go ahead to Action 3, and Action
34 3 looks at modifying the February and March recreational shallow-
35 water grouper closure, and so Alternative 1 would be no action,
36 retaining that closure for shallow-water grouper in federal waters
37 seaward of the twenty-fathom boundary from February 1 through March
38 31.
39

40 The council's current preferred alternative is to eliminate that
41 February 1 through March 31 recreational closed season for shallow-
42 water grouper in federal waters seaward of the twenty-fathom
43 boundary. As a reminder, given other regulations on the books,
44 this would solely affect red grouper at this time, and so I will
45 see if there's any questions here.
46

47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that, Dr. Freeman. I feel like
48 this has been discussed at length too, and, yes, as Dr. Freeman

1 stated, looking at the species here, and kind of some of the
2 subsequent actions that we're working on with the other shallow-
3 water grouper species, red grouper, which, obviously, is in
4 fantastic shape, based on that last stock assessment, would be the
5 only one that would be impacted by this closure, and so any
6 discussion points on the preferred alternative for elimination of
7 the recreational twenty-Fathom closure? Dr. Simmons.

8
9 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CARRIES SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so
10 that assumes that we'll be able to get the other shallow-water
11 grouper framework action in place, and that is not yet effective,
12 and so fingers crossed. I just want to say that.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and fair point. Captain Walker.

15
16 **MR. ED WALKER:** I put a lot of thought and analysis into this,
17 and, for me, I'm convinced this is the right move at this time.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Walker. Any further
20 discussion on Action 3, which is the last action in this amendment?
21 Okay. Mr. Sanchez.

22
23 **MR. JOHN SANCHEZ:** If it's appropriate now, and we've got a lot to
24 do today, and I think we've discussed this, and we've landed where
25 we've landed, and, if it's appropriate, I would like to make a
26 motion to approve this for a public -- For virtual public hearings.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We have a motion on the table, and that
29 actually was probably where we needed to get to, at the end of the
30 day, and so it looks like we have a second from Captain Walker.

31
32 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I can read it.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, sir.

35
36 **MR. SANCHEZ:** To approve draft Amendment 62: Modifications to Gulf
37 Red Grouper Management Measures for virtual public hearings.

38
39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We have a motion on the board from Mr.
40 Sanchez, and seconded by Captain Walker. Do we have any discussion
41 for the motion that's on the board? **Seeing none, is there any**
42 **opposition to the motion that's on the board? Seeing none, the**
43 **motion carries.** Dr. Freeman.

44
45 **DR. FREEMAN:** Okay, and so I think we're set. We'll schedule the
46 public hearing webinars as soon as we're able to, with the
47 intention of bringing this for final action in January, and so I
48 think we're good on this document. Thank you.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Freeman. Mr. Dugas.
3

4 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. A question for Andy. If we
5 take final action in January, and, Andy, you probably can't answer
6 this, but how does that look to implement this for next year?
7

8 **MR. STRELCHECK:** My expectations is that the council is able to
9 provide the amendment to us very quickly after we take final
10 action, and we would move this into rulemaking, and it would be
11 similar to what we did this year with the emergency rule, where
12 the commercial quota would get an increase mid-year, and the
13 recreational catch limit would go up mid-year, once the rulemaking
14 is completed.
15

16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Osborne.
17

18 **MR. JASON OSBORNE:** Andy, I'm curious if, God forbid, the shutdown
19 continues, how is that going to impact you all's ability to have
20 the public comment and be able to even start the rulemaking?
21

22 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'm going to ask a question of Matt, and so I
23 know my team was working on the economic analyses prior to the
24 shutdown. How complete is the amendment for the economic portion
25 at this point?
26

27 **DR. FREEMAN:** The Chapter 4 economic analyses are completed. If
28 there are any modifications to any of the data that's currently in
29 the document, it would simply be a matter of re-running that, and
30 I wouldn't anticipate that taking very long at all, and so the
31 next sort of push through would be the completion of the RIR and
32 RFAA following final action, and then getting it transmitted, and
33 so I don't see that being a barrier.
34

35 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So a direct response then to Jason. The big
36 challenge we have with the shutdown is priorities are starting to
37 stack up, right, and so there was things that my team was going to
38 be working on that were going to go through rulemaking, and so,
39 once we get out of the shutdown, we're going to have to re-
40 evaluate, obviously, what's in the priority queue, but certainly
41 a goal of ours, given this is a good news story, is to be able to
42 prioritize red grouper get the quota out as quickly as possible.
43

44 **MR. OSBORNE:** I would just to say, I mean, I think we need to be,
45 as a council, be prepared that we may not be able to do this in
46 January, and we may have to push it to the next one, if the delay
47 continues.
48

1 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So Carrie just noted that, with public
2 hearings, that would be the challenge, is we can't notice the
3 public hearings, but, in terms of the amendment being ready for
4 final action, I think we're in good enough shape to take final
5 action in January.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I have some discussion behind the table
8 here. All right, and so it seems like there could be some impacts,
9 and we just need to be prepared relative to noticing of the virtual
10 public hearing, and move on that, and, obviously, this is one of
11 those fisheries where it is -- Timeliness is, obviously, of the
12 utmost importance here, and so I appreciate you for bringing that
13 up, Mr. Osborne, and it's something we'll just have to navigate.

14
15 Okay. Mr. Chair, we are ahead of schedule. We are scheduled for
16 a break. You want to move into the next agenda item or -- Yes?
17 Okay. That's what I thought. All right, and so we will move on,
18 and it looks like we're going to rotate some council staff here.
19 It looks like we're going to bring up Assane for Reef Fish
20 Amendment 63: Modifications to the Gulf Red Grouper IFQ Program.
21 We might need five.

22
23 **MR. DUGAS:** We might need five minutes to get Assane ready. We'll
24 take five minutes.

25
26 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

27
28 **MR. DUGAS:** Okay. Five-minute break is over. Dr. Sweetman, take
29 it away.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we're going to
32 move to the next item here, which is Reef Fish Amendment 63:
33 Modifications to Gulf Red Grouper IFQ Program. I'm going to turn
34 it over to Dr. Diagne for moving through the action guide.

35
36 **PRESENTATION: REEF FISH AMENDMENT 63: MODIFICATIONS TO GULF RED**
37 **GROUPE R IFQ PROGRAM**

38
39 **DR. ASSANE DIAGNE:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. For the action guide
40 for Reef Fish Amendment 63: Modification to Gulf Red Grouper IFQ
41 Program, staff will give a presentation on the Reef Fish Amendment
42 63.

43 This action addresses management measures necessary to develop a
44 pilot program to set aside a portion of the red grouper commercial
45 quota to be distributed to eligible participants in the grouper
46 and tilefish IFQ program.

47
48 Our presentation will include options considering alternative set-

1 aside amounts, criteria for qualifying for set-aside or IFQ pool
2 allocation, restriction on transferability, and financing methods
3 for distributing the quota. The committee should review the
4 information and options presented, suggest revisions, and, as
5 needed, recommend next steps. Thank you.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Diagne. It looks like
8 we have a presentation that we're going to go through here.

9
10 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Back to you, sir.

13
14 **DR. DIAGNE:** All right. Thank you, Bernie. So, essentially, we
15 started developing this document as a result of a motion the
16 council approved in August 2025, during your San Antonio meeting,
17 and the text of the motion is here. I mean, in effect, it directed
18 us to develop a reef fish amendment that would establish a pilot
19 program for setting aside a portion of the red grouper commercial
20 quota.

21
22 Amongst the issues the amendment should address, or consider, would
23 be the amounts to be set aside, criteria for qualifying for that
24 allocation, restriction on transferability, and methods for
25 distributing set-aside allocation, and the motion went further and
26 indicated that, essentially, the target for the start of the pilot
27 program would be in 2027, and so that's the motion.

28
29 So, essentially, all of the elements mentioned here in the motions
30 would be addressed in this presentation, to get your feedback and,
31 essentially, recommendations, and so, based on the motion that you
32 approved, we are bringing today for your consideration a draft
33 purpose and need.

34
35 The purpose of this action is to establish a three-year pilot
36 commercial red grouper IFQ quota pool and distribute the resulting
37 annual allocation to eligible participants in the grouper and
38 tilefish IFQ program.

39
40 The need for action is to enhance economic profitability and reduce
41 discards by improving access to red grouper annual allocation by
42 fishermen engaged in the commercial harvest of red grouper and
43 provide new opportunity for obtaining annual allocation, and so
44 this is the draft purpose and need statement that we have for your
45 consideration. Mr. Chair, I will pause.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I'm going to look around the table for
48 any questions, comments, suggested edits to the purpose and need

1 statement. Mr. Sanchez.

2
3 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I'm curious. I mean, I know we're going to
4 look at some actions here, proposed actions, in a minute, but,
5 with share prices hovering around seven, seven-and-a-half, or
6 eight bucks right now, do we really even need to do this? I mean,
7 it seems, to me, they're really low, and, if somebody wanted to
8 get into red grouper fishing, now would be the time. I don't think
9 it's cost-prohibitive, and now would be the time to make your move,
10 and so do we really need to get into all this, and possibly import
11 some unintended consequences?

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for those comments, Mr. Sanchez.
14 Mr. Strelcheck, and then Dr. Banks.

15
16 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and so thanks, John, for the comment, and
17 I've spent a lot of time talking to fishermen, and others, since
18 the last council meeting, and I floated this idea. We've long
19 talked, around this table, about using opportunities of large quote
20 increases to evaluate, you know, different ways to operate the
21 program.

22
23 Although you're correct in terms of share prices are dropping,
24 allocation prices for leasing that allocation are dropping, but we
25 sat here, a couple of years ago, and updated the goals and
26 objectives of this program, and two of those goals clearly focused
27 on how do we improve access to quota, especially to newer entrants,
28 smaller shareholders, and how do we reduce discards in our IFQ
29 programs, right, and so I feel like this is not a permanent
30 solution.

31
32 This is a pilot test. This is something that allows us to evaluate
33 the efficacy of a program, without necessarily those long-term
34 unintended consequences, and what we learn from it can then benefit
35 not only red grouper, but other species we manage in programs.

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Banks.

38
39 **DR. BANKS:** I was going to say very similar comments to Andy, and
40 so, ditto.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker.

43
44 **MR. WALKER:** So Mr. Sanchez is kind of right here. If we're
45 looking at saying if we exceed -- If the quota is 4.3 million,
46 then we're going to kick in this skim-off, and free giveaway.
47 However, if the quota on red grouper comes out at 4.3 million,
48 it's going to be dirt cheap anyway.

1
2 It's going to be thirty or forty-cents a pound to lease, if that
3 much quota comes in, and they'll probably not even going to catch
4 that much, which really plummets the lease price. If it comes to
5 that, and you're only saving a fisherman forty cents, is this whole
6 program worth doing?

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so we've got some responses here.
9 Dr. Banks.

10
11 **DR. BANKS:** I think it's less about red grouper, the species, and
12 just that red grouper currently affords us the opportunity to test
13 this. I don't think we were talking about red grouper and trying
14 to save someone forty cents. I'm saying this is a minimal risk in
15 testing something for a more expensive species, so to say.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

18
19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Ed and I have talked about this issue of, you
20 know, the lease price being forty cents, and, yes, that sounds
21 like a small amount, but let's say at least 10,000 pounds of quota.
22 That's \$4,000 a year, right?

23
24 For a lot of people, that's a good chunk of change, that could
25 have gone into their business, their fishing operations, the
26 profitability, paying out their crew, and so I recognize that maybe
27 there's not a lot of fishermen that are, you know, small that are
28 going to lease huge amounts of quota, but, if you start doing the
29 math on forty cents, and how much you lease, then it can add up
30 pretty quickly.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Sanchez, do you have your hand up?

33
34 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you. Yes, but if we look at like, historically,
35 lease prices, I mean, this purpose and need says to allow new
36 opportunities for, you know, obtaining red grouper annual
37 allocation.

38
39 I'm thinking the market forces have created that opportunity right
40 now, without doing anything, and it's kind of by virtue of we had,
41 as I've mentioned before, in my mind, a very optimistic stock
42 assessment, which created this surplus quota, and shares that are
43 probably never going to be caught, and this being used as a
44 template for potentially other fisheries, as you were alluding to,
45 Kesley, and I don't know that the fact pattern is the same in those
46 other fisheries.

47
48 Those shares are fully utilized. The market prices are what they

1 are. There's some stability there, and you don't have this what
2 we're experiencing now in red grouper there, and so I don't know
3 that testing this on red grouper, because you have surplus quota
4 to be able to do this experiment, is going to be representative of
5 what might happen in red snapper and gag. I think that approach
6 will be far more difficult with that industry, and those fishermen,
7 with the shareholders.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'm going to go to Dr. Diagne and then Captain
10 Walker.

11
12 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, the price of red
13 grouper annual allocation is very low, but that's not really, I
14 guess, the more important thing. The fact that this is a pilot
15 program, as said, I think, by Dr. Banks, would allow you, I guess,
16 the council and staff, to test how it is that people utilize quota
17 that has been distributed to them and that is non-transferable.

18
19 This is not really to replace, you know, the market forces at play
20 within the IFQ program. This is in addition to, essentially, to
21 show how would people behave, quote, unquote, if they lease some
22 quota, and they own some, and, on top of that, they were
23 distributed a portion of it that is non-transferable.

24
25 We can learn many things within the span of the three years, and,
26 after that three years, of course, this is a pilot program, lessons
27 learned, and then we move on, and, should you want to replicate
28 this elsewhere, it's a brand-new discussion.

29
30 If you recall, in Amendment 60, we spent time talking about set-
31 aside in a broader context, with baseline amounts, number of years,
32 and so on and so forth. It didn't get much traction, because it
33 was very complicated, and each species had its own challenges, but
34 here, at the end of the day, I mean, it's kind of a very rare
35 opportunity to have so much quota that even commercial fishermen
36 come to the podium and say it is too much, and so either you use
37 some of it to test this or you think that the effort is not worth
38 the time, and then, essentially, we stop this effort.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker.

41
42 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne. For the record, I like the
43 idea, and I'm a big proponent of trying to help out guys that can't
44 get quota. I get a lot of those calls from those guys, and I like
45 the innovative concept.

46
47 One thing that some people might not notice in this, and at least
48 I didn't at first, is, originally, I thought this was we were going

1 to skim off of the above the quota, the increase, and we were going
2 to take 10 to 20 percent of that, but, if you read it, if we hit
3 that trigger, as written now, we're going to take 10 or 20 percent
4 of the entire quota and distribute that out. That's a big number.
5 It could be 800,000 pounds of red grouper.

6
7 I think I would be more supportive if we went back to maybe, and
8 I don't know if it's back or not, but, if we tried the program, I
9 would like to see how it pans out, see if it works, a pilot, if
10 you will, but I would be more supportive if it was just over the
11 ACL.

12
13 That way, it's not a takeaway from anybody on one side. It's a
14 quota that nobody had to begin with, and then we can divide that
15 up, and play around with that, but taking it off the entire quota
16 is a big step to me, and I've talked to at least one other person
17 here that didn't realize that we were talking about taking 10 to
18 20 percent of the entire red grouper quota and putting it into
19 this plan.

20
21 To reiterate, I think I would support doing this program, but doing
22 it only on the increase. If it exceeds a certain number, then we
23 try this plan, and then maybe we could do a higher percentage at
24 that point. It wouldn't be hitting anybody, or be a takeaway from
25 anybody.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Might I recommend that maybe we work
28 our way through the document, so we can kind of see the details
29 there? Mr. Sanchez, did you want to speak before we do that?

30
31 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I guess maybe, if it's more appropriate, we go
32 through it, and it will reveal itself, but, yes, it begs the
33 question of is it a percentage of the increase or a percentage of
34 the overall? That has a bearing. It's a good point, Ed.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Diagne, do you want to work your way
37 through the document here?

38
39 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. We'll continue, and we'll discuss that when we
40 get to that point. Next slide please, Bernie. Let's start with
41 Action 1, and this would get right to the point that Captain Walker
42 is trying to make.

43
44 The no action alternative, Alternative 1, essentially under that,
45 we would not establish a commercial quota pool for red grouper.
46 For Alternative 2, we would establish a commercial quota pool for
47 Gulf red grouper beginning in 2027, and if the commercial quota,
48 which is the ACT, is below 2.79 million pounds in gutted weight,

1 the quota pool is set at 0 percent of the commercial quota, and so
2 meaning the quota pool is not going to distribute anything, but,
3 if the commercial quota is equal to or above 2.79 million pounds,
4 the quota pool would hold, depending on the options, between 10
5 and 20 percent of the red grouper commercial quota.

6
7 Why on this alternative we have 2.79 million pounds as a baseline
8 is because that was the quota before the 2025 emergency rule. 2.79
9 million pounds was the quota there for the emergency rule.

10
11 Alternative 3 is structured along the same lines, but it has a
12 different baseline, and so it would establish a quota pool,
13 commercial, for red grouper beginning in 2027, but, if the
14 commercial quota is below 4.29 million pounds, the quota pool would
15 be set to zero.

16
17 If the quota is equal to or above 4.29 million, then the quota
18 pool would hold between 10 and 20 percent of the commercial quota.
19 The baseline here, 4.29, comes from the preferred alternative in
20 Amendment 62 at the time. Should that preferred alternative
21 change, then we would come back here and change the number,
22 essentially. Next slide, please, Bernie, before I stop.

23
24 Just to illustrate, essentially, the quotas here, and it was
25 mentioned that this is for a three-year pool, and so, if the quota,
26 red grouper commercial quota -- The first column here, those are
27 based on the preferred alternative in 62, and so 4.83, 5.36, 4.3,
28 5.36, and so that's a repeat of the year there, and, if you were
29 to take, you know, 10 percent, the numbers are going to be given
30 there.

31
32 We have to note that 10 percent of the amount in the quota pool
33 would have to be set aside to address potential appeals, and so,
34 at the end of the appeals process, whatever amount is left there
35 would be distributed to the eligible participants, based on the
36 methods that were selected, and so then what we see on the smaller
37 table, the second one, would be the end result to be distributed
38 should you select 10, 15, or 20 percent, and for the three years
39 that this pilot program is going to be in effect.

40
41 I'm going to stop here and maybe make a comment first. Here, what
42 we present to you is, yes, 10 percent of the entire quota, which
43 amounts to, let's say, 483,000, but, if you went back to the quota
44 before the emergency rule, which I cannot even remember, and it
45 was, what, 2.79, and then looked at the increase, meaning 4.83
46 minus 2.79, and then took a certain percentage of that, it may be
47 that you are going to take even more quota than what it is that we
48 have here, and so it all depends on how you want to compute.

1
2 You can compute as a smaller percentage of the entire quota, or
3 you can take the difference, and then take a different percentage,
4 and it will come -- It can come to the same thing, depending on
5 what target you're trying to hit.

6
7 The important thing here is that you have a baseline or a threshold
8 below which you don't want to go. If you hit that, then you stop
9 the whole thing, and you do not distribute any quota.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I've got a couple of hands here. First,
12 Captain Walker, and then Mr. Osborne.

13
14 **MR. WALKER:** So, this top chart here, is that the numbers? The
15 2028 is 5.3, and the next two years -- Is that -- Did we set that
16 number?

17
18 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes. Your preferred alternatives in Amendment 62
19 would set the quota for 2026, 2027, and 2028, but, because we start
20 in 2027 here, we don't really have, you know, a quota that is
21 prescribed for 2029, and so we simply repeat the one in 2028, which
22 is how the council functions, until we change the quota in the
23 books.

24
25 **MR. WALKER:** So we can pretty much -- Not quite guarantee, but
26 we're pretty certain that we're going to have this overage. It's
27 not if we go over this number, and we are going over this number,
28 depending on what we select, but this is what you did there. In
29 the next two years, this shows us a million pounds over the 4.3
30 number, and that's the threshold that we're setting, correct?

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck. I don't think that's correct.

33
34 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, yes, you're correct, Ed, right, and we would
35 be over either the 2.79 or the 4.3 million-pound kind threshold
36 for the pilot to proceed. Keep in mind though that we're going to
37 get another red grouper assessment sometime in the future.

38
39 If that all of a sudden tells us that the population has declined,
40 and we need to take action to reduce the catch limit, then we may
41 drop below the threshold, right, and so that provision is in there
42 so that, if there's changes to the red grouper quota going forward
43 during this pilot program, that we would make adjustments
44 accordingly.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Osborne.

47
48 **MR. OSBORNE:** I apologize if this is known by everybody else,

1 although it's not, because I asked him first, and, when we're
2 talking about this pilot project, this is new entries, new
3 entrants, into the program, right?
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So that is partially covered in the next
6 action, when we get to that, and so there's alternatives that we
7 can choose between there.
8

9 **MR. OSBORNE:** Okay, and so would you -- If you get into the pilot
10 project, and assume you're a new entrant into it, then you have
11 three years in the program, or one, and every year you have to
12 reapply for it?
13

14 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and we'll discuss the distribution method, if
15 you allow us to --
16

17 **MR. OSBORNE:** I'll wait for that.
18

19 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Geeslin.
20

21 **MR. DAKUS GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In that same theme, and
22 I can certainly appreciate the spirit of the pilot, and what we're
23 trying to do here, allow new entrants, or potentially new entrants,
24 and provide additional access, but I guess I'm curious as to --
25 Kind of getting back to Captain Walker's point, is it really
26 depends on what these pounds mean for what we define as the
27 universe of qualifying participants.
28

29 In my mind, that will help inform a decision whether this juice is
30 really worth the squeeze. If these fishermen, and we've been down
31 this road before, and if these fishermen, and let's say they're
32 new to the program, and they get 100 pounds, is that really worth,
33 you know, them participating in this fishery?
34

35 If they've got different portfolios and different fish they're
36 able to capitalize on, then maybe so, and maybe we'll get there,
37 where we define and really get a clear picture of what that
38 universe of qualifying participants looks like.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think that's a perfect segue to move into
41 the next action, so we can see kind of what that looks like.
42

43 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you. Next slide, please, Bernie. Thank you.
44 Now let's look at the distribution of the annual allocation amongst
45 eligible participants, and so, in Action 1, we wouldn't distribute
46 anything. Action 2 would distribute 60 percent of the allocation
47 in the quota pool amongst fishermen that have a valid or renewable
48 commercial permit that have red grouper landings in the IFQ system

1 within the reference period, and we are going to define the
2 reference period there, but do not own red grouper shares, and so,
3 in effect, the 60 percent would be distributed to those people who
4 lease red grouper shares to be able to land anything.

5
6 Then we take the 40 percent remaining and distribute it to
7 commercial fishermen who have a permit, of course, valid or
8 renewable, who have red grouper landings, but these folks own
9 shares, and so, essentially, this pilot program is going to
10 distribute share, or I mean -- Excuse me. Annual allocation to
11 all participants that have red grouper landings, and then we'll
12 see how differently they would behave, you know, based on their
13 status of with shares or without shares.

14
15 As a reminder here, as mentioned early on, 10 percent of the quota
16 pool would be initially set aside to address potential appeals,
17 and so now, for the 60 percent reserved for those who do not own
18 red grouper shares, we have, I guess, two options here, either
19 distribute it equally or proportionally based on red grouper
20 landings, and we would do the same thing for the 40 percent
21 allocated to those who lease red grouper shares, equal distribution
22 or proportionally based on red grouper landings.

23
24 To finish this, we could just talk about the reference period,
25 which is mentioned there, and close the loop, before we take
26 questions, and this is written along the same lines, but, rather
27 than a 60-40 split, it is going to be a 50-50, and the key note at
28 the bottom is reminding us that the annual allocation distributed
29 in this, I guess, pilot program is going to be non-transferable,
30 meaning, if you receive it, you will land it or you would lose it.

31
32 For the reference periods, for the first year, meaning 2027, the
33 reference period is going to be from January 1 of this year, 2025,
34 to December 31 of 2026, essentially a two-year interval, and then
35 you, you know, you slide down to January 1 of 2026 to December 31
36 of 2027, so that everyone has sufficient time to show landings,
37 red grouper landings. For the last year of the pilot, January 1
38 of 2027 to December 31 of 2028.

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

41
42 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So, going back to the last slide --

43
44 **DR. DIAGNE:** Go back, Bernie, one slide, please.

45
46 **DR. FROESCHKE:** So, if you get annual allocation is non-
47 transferable, and I can see a situation where a participant might
48 have both this, but they may also lease their own shares, to make

1 up their fishing IFQ portfolio, and would they have the opportunity
2 to say -- If I were in it, I would want to use this allocation
3 first, before I use any of the other, or the shares, because this
4 isn't transferable, and it's sort of a different class, and would
5 that be part of the program? Would they have to use this first,
6 or would they have to use a second, or would they have the option?
7

8 **DR. DIAGNE:** Absolutely. I mean, this is non-transferable, right,
9 and so, essentially, you would have to land it, or you would lose
10 it, and, like you said, your portfolio can include annual
11 allocation from your own shares, allocation that you leased, and
12 some that has been distributed to you, and so how you balance that,
13 you know, that's your business decision, but, at the very least,
14 the very first thing you would have to do is land the non-
15 transferable, and just one last point, akin to, you know, some of
16 the multi-use shares, which you cannot use unless you finish what
17 you had, and maybe Mr. Strelcheck wants to add to that.
18

19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I agree with John, in terms of a business
20 standpoint, that, because this provides less flexibility, you
21 would likely want to land this before you land the other quota.
22 Keep in mind though, because the qualifying period runs right up
23 to the end of the year, my team would not be able to distribute
24 this immediately on January 1, right?
25

26 There's calculations that are involved. We talked about, you know,
27 sometime within either the month of January, or early February,
28 being able to distribute this, and so that would prevent,
29 obviously, us from having people only use this first, but if they
30 have other quota to actually harvest.
31

32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and we've got some hands going up here.
33 I had Mr. Osborne first, and then we'll go to Ms. Ballard.
34

35 **MR. OSBORNE:** Again, I apologize. They didn't have math at
36 Alabama, and so I'm just trying to understand. From a data
37 perspective, if you have a mixture of folks that already have
38 quota, that are getting additional quota under this, versus folks
39 that don't have quota, and this is their first time, isn't that
40 going to dilute, if you don't do like what you guys were talking
41 about, which is you say you use this percentage, or this quota,
42 first, and count it towards your overall. I don't know if I'm
43 making sense, but, in my mind, I'm trying to sort it out.
44

45 **DR. DIAGNE:** I'm not sure I followed the question. If you don't
46 mind --
47

48 **MR. OSBORNE:** I'm trying to understand if you have -- If you're

1 giving additional quota to folks that already have quota, and then
2 you also add in the pilot program, and then you also add in folks
3 that don't have quota right now, like is -- If they're fishing on
4 their initial quota, and then doing a little bit on this in this
5 pilot program, doesn't it dilute the overall dataset, as opposed
6 to, if you just set aside all of this, which is, I guess, one of
7 the options, and you give all this in the pilot program, and you
8 give everybody new red grouper shares, they don't have any other
9 shares that they can use.

10
11 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think I'm tracking what you're saying, Jason.
12 Mr. Strelcheck.

13
14 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I think I'm tracking as well, but there
15 aren't purely just new entrants that would qualify for this pilot
16 program, and so you have to have skin in the game, so to speak, in
17 terms of having already operated within the program, and either
18 have shareholdings with a permit and landed red grouper, or don't
19 have shareholdings with a permit and landed red grouper, right?

20
21 For those that are leasing red grouper now, that don't have quota
22 share, they would qualify for allocation that they otherwise would
23 have previously had to have bought in the program.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I'm going to go in order here. Ms.
26 Ballard.

27
28 **MS. BALLARD:** All right. I feel like we kind of need a flow chart
29 to understand this, as a fisherman, because it's if you're this,
30 if you're that, if you're this, and so can you give me an example
31 of somebody with just a random amount, and let me know what -- How
32 this would happen, so we could see how much, in the end, they ended
33 up getting, and then what is the timeline?

34
35 If we set aside 10 percent for appeals, if there's any leftover
36 from that 10 percent, are we issuing that as well, or -- Okay, and
37 so then what's the timeline on that? How long do we wait for
38 appeals, and then when are they going to get that amount, and so
39 I'm just trying to figure this out.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and there's certainly some details to
42 work out here, and this is -- Again, like this would be a pilot
43 program, and so there's kind of some unanswerable things, but
44 certainly it seems like, if this program moves forward, it would
45 start in 2027.

46
47 There certainly would be a timeline, and I don't even know if Andy
48 would even know how long it would take for this appeals process to

1 work out there, but certainly, as Andy was saying, we couldn't
2 redistribute the shares right away on January 1, and so there's
3 kind of -- There would have to be some flexibility kind of built
4 into this, in order to kind of deal with some of these things here.
5 Mr. Strelcheck.

6
7 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I can't speak to the timeframe for the
8 appeals process at this point. I would want to, obviously, better
9 understand kind of how long that would take. I think it would
10 depend on the number of appeals, and the complexity of the appeals
11 process, et cetera.

12
13 What I will say is, obviously, if the council recommends this move
14 forward, and develops it into an amendment, that my team -- We
15 would continue to develop all the analyses and supporting
16 information, so you could see the scenarios that would play out
17 based on the actions and alternatives that we're developing here.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I'm going to go back to my list here.
20 Mr. Sanchez, and then Captain Walker.

21
22 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you. Andy, realistically, to calculate
23 landings through 12/31, and then be able to engage in distribution,
24 what timeframe do you think you typically need for that, to have
25 those ready to do something like this?

26
27 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So if council staff could unmute Jessica Stephen,
28 and so Jessica Stephen is the IFQ Program Manager. She's been
29 working some during the shutdown, because she is paid on non-
30 appropriated funds, and so Jessica could better answer that, in
31 terms of general timing she thinks it would take.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Stephen, if you're available.

34
35 **DR. JESSICA STEPHEN:** Can you guys hear me?

36
37 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, we can.

38
39 **DR. STEPHEN:** So we had some discussions with the appeals office,
40 and then, you know, typically, we've looked at our turnaround for
41 any data corrections at the end of the year into the next year,
42 and so, based on my team's discussion about it, we think we could
43 potentially release this quota bank allocation by mid-February.

44
45 That would be still withholding the amount for appeals, but the
46 initial amount could be released either by mid or end February.
47 Typically, we do a lot of contact with fishermen in advance of the
48 end of the year, and remind them what the rules are, where the

1 quota counts, and there is a two-week requirement, that all
2 corrections have to be submitted and done within two weeks, and so
3 we have extended that in times where we're working with someone,
4 and so I wanted to give us a little bit of a buffer.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker, I had you next.

7
8 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to clarify for Mr. Osborne,
9 there won't be any new entrants involved in this, because you have
10 to -- If they distributed this, all the quota for shareholders,
11 people in areas with no red grouper would get an equal
12 distribution, and so it wouldn't make sense to give people in Texas
13 and Louisiana red grouper shares, and so there has to be some kind
14 of -- As Andy was saying, some kind of a skin in the game.

15
16 There's all these different scenarios, but none of them involve
17 new entrants. Like we're not looking to, I think, encourage new
18 entrants. We're trying to help the fishermen out that are stuck
19 leasing, and don't own any, and stuff like that, and so that would
20 eliminate a fair amount of people that don't participate in the
21 red grouper.

22
23 Dr. Diagne, I'm looking at the dates here. Those are just the
24 years that it would be done if we went through this, but these are
25 not the qualifying, and you would have to qualify when? Was it
26 last year, or some timeframe prior to today?

27
28 **DR. DIAGNE:** Please go forward two slides for the reference period.
29 Thank you, and so these would be the three years of the pilot, as
30 you mentioned, Captain Walker, but, for each one of the years, we
31 would have a two-year period to qualify, if you call it that.
32 That's what we call the reference period, one year prior, yes,
33 prior to the beginning of it, and so the January 1.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Geeslin.

36
37 **MR. GEESLIN:** Yes, and just a point to Captain Walker. While we
38 don't catch a lot of red grouper off the coast of Texas, many of
39 our shareholders have quite a significant share within red grouper,
40 and so I would say we do have a vested interest in it.

41
42 **MR. WALKER:** Thanks for the clarification. Right. They have some
43 skin in the game, correct. Non-red grouper fishermen, non-
44 shareholders, don't qualify. I think that's the point that I was
45 trying to -- People who have never had anything to do with red
46 grouper would not get red grouper allocation under this scenario,
47 but you're talking about a guy who does have some shares in red
48 grouper, and so that's fine.

1
2 **MR. GEESLIN:** I had another point. I mean, to get back to the
3 process, and where we can go from here, I'm certainly supportive
4 of moving this forward, just so we can get to the point where we
5 have some of those scenarios laid out to where we can get back to
6 what I mentioned earlier, and is this effort worth the lift and
7 what that actually means for existing and potentially new
8 shareholders, and I would also like to hear from some of those
9 prospective benefactors through this program in our public comment
10 tomorrow.

11
12 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. I certainly heard
13 some good discussion around the table here, and we definitely want
14 to hear from the public on this. Mr. Anson.

15
16 **MR. ANSON:** Just to follow-up on the discussion that Captain Walker
17 was having relative to who would be eligible or participating in
18 this, you know, it would be leaseholders, you know, and so, if
19 people leased it, whether they're in Texas or Louisiana or
20 wherever, and they're still leasing that, and landing those, they
21 would still be eligible, and they may be new participants, but
22 they at least have to have landed some fish within the reference
23 period, right?

24
25 Then I was thinking, and I'm just going to throw this out here,
26 and I'm not in support of it, but just throwing it out for other
27 folks.

28
29 Relative to the amount of pounds that would be in this IFQ pool,
30 I thought of maybe a more of a static number of pounds, but that
31 would provide some benefits to both groups, potentially, depending
32 on where you would settle in on the pounds, but it takes away a
33 little bit of the notion of, if it is an increasing situation,
34 like it's laid out currently, if 62 goes forward, then it wouldn't
35 take into a full, I guess, impacts, or benefits, of that scenario,
36 if you had a static number of pounds in there from which you
37 establish the pool, and so I was going to suggest that earlier,
38 and adding that as a possible option in the action, but, anyway,
39 just mentioning that.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Anson. Dr. Diagne.

42
43 **DR. DIAGNE:** Just a clarification, or a question, and so, Mr.
44 Anson, for example, you would say take the 483,000 pounds and
45 distribute that for all three years, the same amount, and so, if
46 we are going forward with this, and if that's your recommendation,
47 we can add options to that effect.

48

1 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Anson.

2
3 **MR. ANSON:** Again, I'm not necessarily recommending it, if it's
4 too much of a burden on staff. I mean, if the other folks want to
5 see it, that's fine, but, again, under the scenario that's
6 currently laid out, you know, albeit any changes that might come
7 around with a new update on an assessment, you know, we're still
8 anticipating an increase.

9
10 Again, that would be more true to a fishery, to see, in a pilot
11 phase, benefits of that increase, you know, relative to the overall
12 quota. You would be able to more accurately track any trends, or
13 changes, in how people would utilize that, or access it, and how
14 it would change their business, and so, again, if other people
15 want to see it, that's fine, but that's all, and I was just
16 mentioning it.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Anson, and certainly I don't
19 think we need to make a decision today, right? There certainly
20 seems to be some details that we want to kind of think about a
21 little more, but, maybe by Full Council, we can have a little
22 something something here. General Spraggins.

23
24 **GENERAL JOE SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and I would just like to caution the
25 group one more time on something. You know, whenever you take an
26 asset that is owned by America, and not owned by any one person,
27 or any one group, and you restrict the people that are allowed to
28 be able to be part of it, I don't think it's right.

29
30 That's what's got us where we were at with the red snapper. That's
31 what's got us to some things that we're at already, and those are
32 Gulf of America fish. They don't belong to any one state. They
33 don't belong to any one group, and I think everybody ought to have
34 a fair shot at it.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and that's certainly the first decision
37 point here, and, like I said, we don't need to make a decision
38 today, but certainly, at Full Council, I think it would be prudent
39 to have more discussion on this, and that's the first decision
40 point, is do we want to do this right, and so I saw another hand
41 here. Mr. Sanchez.

42
43 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I just want to respond to the General's comments
44 that -- One thing that's being overlooked in that comment is that
45 the folks prosecuting this fishery, to bring them to the market
46 for the non-fishing public, who consumes these fish, and decides
47 to do that, is the commercial fishery, and they do that by this
48 means, making them available to non-fishing fishermen all across

1 this nation that also own that fish.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Dugas.

4
5 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe my question is for Dr.
6 Diagne. Assane, how did we get the distribution to 60-40 or 50-
7 50? How did those numbers come out?

8
9 **DR. DIAGNE:** These are options, and the 60-40, if I recall
10 correctly, and I'll ask Mr. Strelcheck, is about the percentage of
11 the red grouper quota that is landed by folks that have no shares,
12 and so we inspired the option from it, and the 50-50 just split it
13 down the middle, and Mr. Strelcheck may --

14
15 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and Assane is correct, with one clarification
16 that the 60 percent represents accounts that do not have shares
17 assigned to them that are landing red grouper landings, and it
18 doesn't necessarily mean that there's a shareholder that has
19 provided the allocation to those accounts. That is separate from
20 that account.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Very good discussion. I think we have
23 one more brief slide here just about the appeals, if we wanted to
24 go to that last slide, Dr. Diagne.

25
26 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, Bernie, next slide, please.
27 his has been talked about, and Dr. Stephen spoke about the appeals
28 a little bit. I mean, there's a national appeals office, and just
29 one thing to stress here is that hardships would not be appealable
30 under this, you know, permit issues and other things, you know,
31 perhaps, you know, mistakes, yes, but hardship conditions would
32 not be appealable, and, just for those that are interested, we
33 also provided essentially the link to go see -- To essentially
34 connect to the appeals office and so forth. Thanks, Bernie.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne, for walking through
37 that, and so just one question I had relative to timing. Mr.
38 Strelcheck, I know, when we kind of put this into a separate
39 document, the concern was relative to the timing of the red grouper
40 amendment. Is there still concern to move this along those same
41 lines, try to move this forward as quickly as possible, relative
42 to the other -- If we go final for the red grouper management
43 actions?

44
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and there's a natural sequencing with
46 Amendment 62 happening in January. If we were to implement the
47 pilot for 2027, just for some time to implement the rule and
48 programming of the system, we would really need to take final

1 action in April of next year, and so the next couple of meetings
2 would be heavy to get this ready.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So just kind of putting that out there for
5 context, for maybe having some further discussion at Full Council.
6 It certainly seems like there's some things we need to think about,
7 and maybe talk behind the scenes here, but I would recommend be
8 thinking about this, whether this is something we want to do. I
9 want to hear from the public on this during public comment. Mr.
10 Strelcheck, you got something else?

11
12 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I know we can come back to this in Full
13 Council, and a couple of, I think, additional things for the
14 council to think about, beyond just whether should we move forward
15 or not, and is the proportions that we just talked about between
16 shareholder and non-shareholder accounts right? Would you
17 recommend something different, and why?

18
19 Kevin suggested potentially an alternative means for how you --
20 You know, what quota is available for the quota pool. The other
21 one that we've thought about, which was not in here, is how do you
22 qualify? Does one red grouper pound, or three red grouper pounds,
23 qualify you for the program, because that's not someone who is
24 going to benefit greatly from this if we're distributing quota
25 based on your proportional landings.

26
27 They may greatly benefit if we do an equal proportion, or equal
28 distribution, but they may not be someone that then is able to
29 even land that amount of quota that's available, and so is there
30 some minimum threshold, based on a poundage or other participation,
31 in terms of number of trips reported, something like that, that
32 you would want us to consider, and so just think about that, and
33 I agree that I think it would be beneficial to hear from the
34 industry about other reactions, ideas, input.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker.

37
38 **MR. WALKER:** So, Dr. Diagne, do you think it would be possible if
39 you could work up some estimates of what the poundage would be if
40 we did this pilot program, but we did it above the overage, over
41 4.7, or 4.3, whatever the number is? I would be more favorable if
42 we were to do this splitting up in distribution if it were just on
43 the overage, and not over the entire quota percentage.

44
45 **DR. DIAGNE:** If I understood you, what you are suggesting is that
46 the amounts in the pool be expressed as percentages of the
47 increase. Is that what you are asking?

1 **MR. WALKER:** Just for discussion. I don't think it would be that
2 much work.
3
4 **DR. DIAGNE:** We can do that, and, I mean, the baseline here would
5 be the quota of 2.79 million pounds before the emergency rule.
6 That was our quota, and now the increase is from there to your
7 preferred alternatives in Amendment 62.
8
9 **MR. WALKER:** Well, we have a choice of both, currently, and so
10 maybe we can do a choice of both the overage on either the 2.7 or
11 the 4.3, and leave those as options.
12
13 **DR. DIAGNE:** No, and the four-point-something -- That is the
14 preferred alternative in 62, right, and so, if we are looking at
15 the increase, the increase comes from before the emergency rule to
16 the preferred alternative in 62, and so from 2.79 to 4.83 and so
17 forth, and so you see that the daylight over there is already two-
18 million pounds, right? If you were to take 20 percent of that,
19 that's 400,000 pounds right there, and so it's going to be the
20 same thing, depending on, you know, how you want to do it, and
21 what percentages you use.
22
23 **MR. WALKER:** I did some rough math before, and it seemed like we
24 might still be able to come to a reasonable number to make the
25 pilot program worthwhile, if we did it off of the increase, rather
26 than the entire quota, but I'm not sure.
27
28 **DR. DIAGNE:** Okay. Yes, but we can compute that, certainly, and
29 Mr. Strelcheck I think has a --
30
31 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Just for clarification, in terms of what we'll be
32 bringing back, the quota in 2027 is 4.83 million pounds, and so we
33 would subtract 4.29 from that. That would be the difference, and
34 then we would apply some percentage that would be distributed as
35 part of the quota pool.
36
37 The question then becomes what's that percentage, because, if it's
38 10 or 15 or 20 percent, you're talking about a much smaller amount
39 of quota pool available, and maybe that's your intent, but I just
40 want to be clear, in terms of what you want us to bring back.
41
42 **MR. WALKER:** Yes, and that's kind of my intent, kind of, but, also,
43 I think we could do a higher percentage. If it's a smaller number,
44 and it's just an overage, I think the industry would be more
45 supportive of a higher percentage, to make it a worthwhile program.
46 We wouldn't have to do 10 percent if it's only 200,000 pounds, or
47 something like that.
48

1 Also, I'm still not clear why we would have to go from the 2.7
2 number to the 4.8. There's an increase after the 4.7 number in
3 the next two years, in the document that we have here, of like a
4 million pounds, right, and so that's more like what I was thinking,
5 increases going forward to the next year. Does that make sense?
6

7 **DR. DIAGNE:** So, I mean, Bernie, please go back to, I guess, slide
8 4, or thereabouts, wherever we have the table with -- Yes, and
9 move forward, please. Right there, and so, if the baseline is
10 2.79 million pounds, and the preferred alternative in Amendment 62
11 is showing the quotas there from 4.83 to 5.36 million pounds, and
12 so, if you were to subtract 2.79 from these three quotas, you have,
13 let's say, you know, two-million, 2.5, and 2.5 million.
14

15 If you take 10 percent, let's say of the 2.5 million, that's
16 250,000 pounds. If you apply a 20 percent, that's 500,000 pounds,
17 which would be equivalent, more or less, to the 10 percent here.
18 As you said before, a larger percentage on a smaller number can be
19 about the same, when it comes to a smaller percentage of a larger
20 number, and so it's just -- Like you said, you want to see it in
21 terms of the increase, and we are going to provide that, but it's
22 going to be 4.83 minus 2.79, and then you apply 10, 20, 30 percent,
23 and that's easily doable.
24

25 **MR. WALKER:** In our action alternatives here, we have Alternative
26 2 is establish it based off of 2.79 million, and Alternative 3 is
27 establish it off of 4.29 million.
28

29 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes.
30

31 **MR. WALKER:** Are those not alternatives for a baseline?
32

33 **DR. DIAGNE:** They are alternatives for baselines, to the extent
34 that you are taking a percentage out of the entire quota, but, if
35 you want to take the percentage from the increase, then you need
36 to have, you know, what's in the books today, and that's 2.79
37 million pounds. Of course, the emergency action is going to
38 subside.
39

40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Sanchez.
41

42 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I guess I'm going to encourage the public to testify
43 on this, and give us some insight, because, while the numbers may
44 bring you to the same place, you know, taking the difference
45 between 4.8 and 2.79, and then multiplying it by ten, fifteen, or
46 twenty, there may be some philosophical component that the industry
47 feels strongly about, about let's not take something that's already
48 there, and they have, and let's use it from the increase, and I

1 kind of want to hear more on that, their feelings on it.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and, no, I get it. That was my thought
4 too, is that it was more of a philosophical discussion about kind
5 of the extra, basically, but Mr. Strelcheck.

6
7 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I'm certainly good with that. I guess
8 the comment I would make is, if it's the council's desire, or the
9 industry's desire, that it would be just off the increase above
10 4.29 million, rather than us doing a bunch of calculations, right,
11 let's just set that as the requirement, and we'll do the math based
12 on that accordingly, right?

13
14 10 percent falls within that, and that's no problem. 15 and 20
15 percent would under certain years, and not under others, and so
16 that might get wiped off the table if we just want to set it at
17 the maximum between the 4.29 and whatever the increase is.

18
19 The other thing I'll mention, and that's why I was asking Captain
20 Walker, is, depending on the percentage you apply to that, you
21 could ultimately calculate such a small amount of quota pool that
22 it isn't useful for what we're trying to accomplish, right, and so
23 we have to maintain a large enough portable to actually make a
24 meaningful difference for the fishermen that participate in it.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. That was very good discussion. Any
27 other comments on this topic? Mr. Dugas.

28
29 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. A question for, I think,
30 Andy. Andy, do you know how many accounts have red grouper shares,
31 and how many of those accounts actually land red grouper shares?

32
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Jessica will know specifically. I want to say
34 there was a little over 300 accounts that landed red grouper in
35 recent years, but, Jessica, are you able to talk?

36
37 **DR. STEPHEN:** Yes, I can, and so, in 2024, which is the last full
38 year data I have, we had 283 accounts that landed red grouper.
39 That was out of 646 accounts that had red grouper allocation,
40 either from shares or through transfers in, and then, those 283
41 accounts, 64 percent of the landings, in pounds, came from those
42 accounts without shares.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Dugas.

45
46 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Jessica. Just so I understood, or heard
47 you correctly, you said 283 accounts landed shares, and there are
48 a total of 646 accounts with shares?

1
2 **DR. STEPHEN:** So there's 646 accounts with allocation. That
3 allocation either was derived from the shares they had or they
4 bought allocations, and so we look, in the annual report, at any
5 account that had any red grouper allocation in it all throughout
6 the year.

7
8 Then, of those 646 accounts in 2024, 283 of those accounts landed
9 red grouper, and so, even though we have a high number of accounts
10 that hold red grouper allocation, we have proportionally a smaller
11 number of accounts doing the actual landings, and then, in the
12 annual report, we look at the landings in total pounds for red
13 grouper.

14
15 We can determine which one of those came from an account that had
16 shares, or didn't, and, for the last couple of years, we've been
17 around that 60 percent. In 2024, it was 64 percent of all the
18 pounds of red grouper landing came from accounts that did not have
19 shares.

20
21 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes. Thank you. Captain Walker, more
24 comments?

25
26 **MR. WALKER:** I think, Dr. Stephen, if you're still there, there's
27 about 900 commercial reef permits in the Gulf. Is that correct,
28 and so that would mean 250 or 300 that had no participation in red
29 grouper at all?

30
31 **DR. STEPHEN:** I think the number of reef fish permits has
32 decreased. It's probably closer to around 800 these days.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen. Any further questions,
35 or discussion, on this topic? That was a healthy discussion, and
36 let's be prepared to discuss this in Full Council. Mr. Chair, I
37 think we might be scheduled for a break.

38
39 **MR. DUGAS:** Yes, and thank you, Dr. Sweetman. We'll take our
40 fifteen-minute break, and we'll come back at 10:10.

41
42 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)

43
44 **MR. DUGAS:** Okay, folks. Welcome back. We're going to get started
45 on Reef Fish. I'll turn it over to Dr. Sweetman.

46
47 **DR. SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so we are definitely ahead
48 of schedule. I've got a feeling we might play a little catch-up

1 here with this item.

2
3 The next item that we have on the agenda is Delegation of
4 Management of Federal For-Hire Vessels to the Gulf States for Red
5 Snapper. It's Tab B, Number 7 in your agenda. We're going to
6 receive a presentation from Dr. Diagne, but, before we do that,
7 Dr. Diagne, if you wanted to walk through the action guide on this
8 item.

9
10 **PRESENTATION: DELEGATION OF MANAGEMENT OF FEDERAL FOR-HIRE**
11 **VESSELS IN THE GULF STATES FOR RED SNAPPER**

12
13 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you, and so, for the action
14 guide of this item, Delegation of the Management of Federal For-
15 Hire Vessels to Gulf States for Red Snapper, we will give a
16 presentation on the delegation of management of the red snapper
17 federal for-hire component.

18
19 Staff will discuss the main decision points and options the
20 committee could consider while developing the delegation
21 procedures. Some of the decision points would be the
22 identification of the Gulf states intending to assume the
23 management of their portion of the red snapper federal for-hire
24 component, sector separation, and the allocation of the red snapper
25 resource, essentially, between the Gulf states.

26
27 The committee should discuss the information presented, suggest
28 revisions, and recommend the next steps, as needed, and so we'll
29 just wait for Bernie to put the presentation up, and we'll get
30 started. Thank you, Bernie.

31
32 Again, this effort is in response to a motion the council approved
33 during the April of this year, 2025, meeting, and the motion reads:
34 To direct staff to begin work on a presentation to the council to
35 modify recreational management of red snapper by delegating
36 management authority for the federal for-hire components of the
37 recreational sector to the respective Gulf states. Management
38 measures should include an option for individual states to opt-
39 out of delegation of federal for-hire management authority. The
40 federal for-hire component in those states that opt-out would
41 continue to be managed under the federal status quo. This is the
42 motion that you approved.

43
44 Before we start discussing this, we can just look at the status
45 quo management, and what is it that we have for the recreational
46 sector when it comes to red snapper management, and, as some of
47 you would recall, Reef Fish Amendments 50A-F delegated some
48 management authority for recreational fishing of red snapper by

1 private anglers in federal waters in Gulf states.

2
3 Each state was allocated a portion of the red snapper private
4 angling quota and has the authority to set a fishing season for
5 private anglers, bag limits, and the minimum size limits, you know,
6 between a lower and an upper bound. In addition, states have the
7 ability of requesting closure of federal waters adjacent to their
8 state waters.

9
10 Some of the conditions were that, if the landings of a state
11 exceeded the state's quota, the state quota would be reduced by
12 the amount of the overage in the following year, and, just as a
13 reminder, the allocations between the five states, in percentage
14 points, are as follows, you know, from Louisiana to Texas,
15 essentially, and the numbers are there.

16
17 The other side of this, the federal for-hire component for red
18 snapper, was allocated 42.3 percent of the recreational red snapper
19 ACL, and this was done in Amendment 40, and the federal for-hire
20 component continues to be managed federally Gulf-wide, and so
21 that's essentially status quo. That's what we have right now.

22
23 Just as a, I guess, reminder, and it's a little dated, but these
24 numbers will be updated, and the percentages and numbers of charter
25 vessels for each one of the five Gulf states, and, I mean, the
26 gist of it is Florida has upwards of 60 percent of the vessels.
27 Let's say, if I go from right on, Texas has 50 percent, Mississippi
28 around 2, or 2.5. percent, Louisiana at let's say around 9 percent,
29 and, finally, Alabama is somewhere around 11 percent. That's in
30 terms of the number of vessels available.

31
32 Also, we took a quick look at the various for-hire data collection
33 programs in the Gulf, either in existence or currently being tested
34 or in development, and so, for Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida,
35 essentially, that would be MRIP, and I will just say that for now,
36 and, for Louisiana, we have LA Creel. In Texas, we have, you know,
37 TPWD's creel survey, and a special mention here. For the
38 headboats, we have the Southeast Region Headboat Survey, and this
39 is, of course, a Gulf-wide program.

40
41 Alabama and Mississippi have Creel surveys that are undergoing
42 testing, and the expectation is that those would replace MRIP and
43 other state survey programs in the future, and our discussion here
44 is red-snapper-centric.

45
46 Also, as you recall, this council has, or is still developing, a
47 Gulf for-hire data collection program, right and that's SEFHIER
48 2.0, I think, or something like that.

1
2 What are some of the steps, or some of the issues, that we would
3 need to consider as you move towards delegating management
4 authority, if that is what you want to pursue? One of those things
5 would be a purpose and need. Another one would be allocation
6 considerations. Another one would be the management measures to
7 be delegated, and, also, regulatory actions and the structure, if
8 you would, of the recreational quotas, and so we'll try to address
9 each one of these.

10
11 To begin work on delegating the federal authority, some of the
12 federal authority, to manage the for hire components, the council
13 would need to specify a purpose and need for this action, and, I
14 mean, at the heart of it, we would have to answer the following
15 questions.

16
17 What are the issues and challenges these amendments are thinking
18 that, or maybe several amendments would need to be developed, would
19 address? Again, what is the problem really that we are trying to
20 solve, and, also, what is it that we expect that these amendments
21 would achieve, and so that's some of those questions that we would
22 have to answer, you know, if we were trying to move forward, and,
23 Mr. Chair, at any moment if I need to stop, if folks need to --
24 All right. Thank you, and so no questions. Next slide, please.

25
26 I guess one of the central issues here to delegating authority to
27 some states, if not all, would be to allocate the federal for-hire
28 red snapper ACL between the states, and, if one wanted to do that,
29 some of the criteria to consider could include for-hire red snapper
30 landings for a state, the red snapper abundance of each state, or
31 third here is a negotiated agreement between the states.

32
33 If you recall, I mean, those of you who participated in that effort
34 in Amendment 50, really the allocation between the states was a
35 result of negotiation between the five state directors, and this
36 list can also include the number of charter vessels, and, of
37 course, you can have any number of combinations between these
38 criteria.

39
40 Now, during the allocation discussion, some, I guess, clarity as
41 to the structure of the quotas envisioned by the states would need,
42 I guess, to take place. Is it that the states would want a separate
43 private angling component quota, which they already have, and a
44 separate for-hire component quota, and those things would be kept
45 separated, or is it that some of the states are envisioning
46 combining the two quotas to have a state red snapper allocation?
47 Depending on, you know, the direction in which you lean, I guess
48 that will have very different implications for the charter vessels,

1 the federal charter vessels.

2

3 In terms of the regulatory options, would we need to develop
4 several amendments, like we did for, you know, state management,
5 meaning an umbrella amendment, which included the key decisions
6 and allocation, and then an amendment for each one of the states,
7 meaning, you know, the 50A to F, and that's just a question for
8 your consideration.

9

10 Also, what part of the management authority would be delegated,
11 and, essentially, this follows what was done in state management,
12 in the sense that, you know, it includes the fishing season, the
13 bag limit, the minimum size limit, and the closure of federal
14 waters, but, in this case, of course, for the for-hire component,
15 and so those are decisions to be made.

16

17 To finish the presentation, we have a few questions, and probably
18 there are more questions than this, but these are some to start
19 the discussion. One would be given, I guess, the multitude, or
20 the diversity, in the data collection program that we have, are
21 there some calibration issues to address, or to discuss, while we
22 are going through this?

23

24 Another question has to do with the headboat survey. If you were
25 to essentially, you know, delegate federal authority to states,
26 would the headboard survey continue to collect data for headboats
27 throughout the Gulf, and, of course, the idea is that, you know,
28 the headboats do have federal for-hire permits, right, and, as
29 such, their landings are part of the federal for-hire component's
30 quota.

31

32 Now, what if a for-hire vessel fishes out of more than one state,
33 and let's say, for example, you know, at the boundary between two
34 states, right, and would the landings be assigned to the state
35 where they were landed in, or how would the determination be made?
36 That's another question.

37

38 Another one, we just have two more, and what are the implications
39 for federal for-hire permits of delegating red snapper for-hire
40 management to the state, because, right now, if I have a federal
41 permit, well, essentially, I can fish Gulf-wide, right, and it
42 doesn't matter where my home port is, but this is a federal permit,
43 and so, to the extent that we are delegating a portion of the
44 authority, and allocating quota between the states, how does that
45 change, you know, that equation here?

46

47 The final question here for your consideration is what are, or are
48 there, enforcement challenges due to delegating federal management

1 for a single reef fish, meaning red snapper, because, again, the
2 federal for-hire permit is a reef fish permit, and it's for
3 everything, but what we are talking about here is delegating the
4 authority for red snapper, and so one of the, I guess, concluding
5 remarks here is, if we look at state management, versus this, I
6 guess, discussion, one of the key issues is the fact that private
7 anglers don't have a permit.

8
9 Federal for-hire operators have a federal permit, and so it comes
10 with a series of, I guess, questions that would need to be
11 addressed during this effort, and that's all I have, Mr. Chair.
12 Thank you.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Certainly leading off
15 with some discussion points here for questions, and I'm going to
16 look around the committee, to see if there's any comments or
17 questions. Yes, General Spraggins.

18
19 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** You know, looking at it, obviously, I can see
20 pluses and minuses, and every way that you say it, but I don't
21 think it's broke. I don't think that the federal for-hire is broke
22 right now. I think they're able to do what they need to do, and
23 it seems, to me, that they're getting their allocation.

24
25 Maybe we need to help them get a better way of reporting, so they
26 don't shut down and leave a half-a-million pounds on the table,
27 and maybe that's something we ought to look at, rather than trying
28 to find something to be able to say let's let each state manage
29 it, because we've already showed you we can't do that worth a darn,
30 and so, you know, why are we going to turn around and do that? I
31 think it's great right the way it is. I mean, that's just my
32 personal opinion.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, General. Mr. Schieble.

35
36 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** I guess a few things here, and so I'm sort of having
37 déjà vu of 2018 all over again. You know, I'm looking at this
38 list of questions, and I can remember, as we went down the road of
39 state management, almost all the questions were the same. Like,
40 you know, how are we going to get through these obstacles to get
41 to state management, but we did.

42
43 We went down, question-by-question, and we went through these
44 different obstacles, and we figured out methods and mechanisms to
45 work through this, and I think we can do the same thing here.

46
47 You know, I'll, I guess, be willing to talk about other options
48 and things to do here, but, if we want to go back through this

1 document from the beginning, or at least the presentation, to talk
2 about specific points in here, I would like to do that, before we
3 move on to other things, if other people don't have other
4 questions.

5
6 Maybe going back to slide 4, which is the table with the
7 percentages, and just a curiosity. Why does the time series start
8 at 2016? Is that just the last five years for convenience, or is
9 there any significance to that?

10
11 **DR. DIAGNE:** No, and the short of it is, you know, that's what we
12 had on hand at the time, meaning, you know, not being able to reach
13 out to our colleagues, due to the current situation, and let me
14 put it that way, but, you know, if this effort is pursued, you'll
15 see a much longer time series here.

16
17 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's kind of what I was
18 trying to get at, is if we can develop a longer time series to
19 look at this over time. The change in where the permits have moved
20 would be important, I think, for this whole thing.

21
22 Going to the next slide, we're talking about the different data
23 collection programs. In LA Creel, we know, obviously, LA Creel,
24 or versions of it, are being benchmarked currently against MRIP in
25 Alabama and Mississippi, and so I think, you know, between that,
26 and the question about the headboat survey, I don't see the
27 conflict with the headboat survey, or a need to suspend the
28 headboat survey, if this were to go forward.

29
30 I think the two could work concurrently together with the state
31 surveys, because the state surveys can monitor the headboat
32 landings anyway. You would end up with essentially the same data
33 from -- I know LA Creel monitors the headboats just as much as it
34 monitors the private recreational boats, as effectively, and so I
35 don't really see that as a question.

36
37 The next slide is 6, and it talks about steps towards delegating
38 management authority. I think, you know, moving forward, we would
39 have to have this in a document for us to discuss as a council
40 going forward, and so I'm not sure what the process needs to be
41 here as we go through each of these slides right now.

42
43 Would it be easier if we had a motion for council staff to start
44 a draft amendment for this, and then we could start potentially
45 making motions for things to include in that, or is that premature
46 in this process?

47
48 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So my perspective, and I'll certainly defer to

1 Dr. Diagne here, and I think, at the very basis, we need to develop,
2 if this is the way that the council wants to go, or the committee
3 wants to go here, you know, giving staff some direction about what
4 the purpose and need would actually be there, rather than --
5 Because I think they were looking for explicit direction here on
6 that, but, Dr. Diagne.

7
8 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and that's exactly the point, and, Bernie, if
9 you could go to slide 2. If we read the motion that the council
10 approved, this here tells us essentially what are some of the
11 management measures to be considered, what it is that you try to
12 do, but what is not in this motion is why is it that you are trying
13 to do this, and that is what the purpose and need precisely does.
14 That's why we added that slide there.

15
16 If you read this, it doesn't tell us try to solve this problem by
17 delegating X, Y, Z. It is telling us start a document to delegate,
18 and so, for us to fill that gap, if you decide to move forward, as
19 Dr. Sweetman said, we would need to understand essentially your
20 intent, what it is that you are trying to solve as a problem, or
21 the challenge, to craft a purpose and need to move forward.

22
23 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Okay. Well, so, Mr. Chair, I can try to help with
24 that, but I think I'm going to need some help from around the table
25 here, and so I sent an email with a motion to Bernie, if she could
26 pull it up. It's purpose and need statements that we could
27 potentially consider.

28
29 To me, I don't really see this as much different than the purpose
30 and need statements that we had for Amendment 50, and I think we
31 could discuss small changes to those, but it would be a starting
32 place for you to develop a document based on that, if Bernie could
33 pull those up. I can read this while we're looking at it.

34
35 **The motion would be to develop the purpose and need statements.**
36 **The purpose would be, of this action, to establish a program**
37 **structure through which a Gulf state may establish a management**
38 **program that would provide flexibility in the management of**
39 **federally-permitted vessels' harvest of red snapper for their**
40 **anglers. The need is to reconsider the management of the federal**
41 **charter-for-hire harvest red snapper within the context of the**
42 **states of the Gulf to prevent overfishing, while achieving, on a**
43 **continuing basis, the optimum yield from the harvest of red snapper**
44 **by the federal for-hire sector; take into account and allow for**
45 **variations among and contingencies in fisheries, fishery**
46 **resources, and catches; and provide fair and equitable access for**
47 **the sustained participation of the fishing communities of the Gulf,**
48 **and, to the extent practicable, minimize adverse economic impacts**

1 on such communities.
2

3 A lot of this language you'll see is familiar from Amendment 50.
4 It's slightly modified, but I think they're very similar in nature
5 to Amendment 50, the purpose and need, as to why we started that
6 in the first place, and so I'm willing to discuss amendments to
7 this, changes, some language drafting.
8

9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We have a motion on the table from Mr.
10 Schieble directing staff to develop this purpose and need
11 statement. Do we have a second? Second from Mr. Anson. Okay. I
12 think we're definitely going to have some discussion here, but I
13 did have a list of hands that I wanted to go through as well, and
14 so, Captain Walker, you're up first.
15

16 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a lot to discuss. I
17 think this motion might be a little premature. We haven't really
18 had much discussion on it yet to make a motion, but, if we're going
19 to leave it up there, I speak against the motion, because I think
20 we need to find out what the council's appetite is here on this
21 topic.
22

23 We've all got the letters from the different charter boat
24 associations, quite a bit of opinion, and most of the opinion was
25 opposed to this concept, and so I think we should discuss it a
26 little more. I've got a lot more that I would like to say, after
27 we talk about this motion, but I think this is a -- I mean, maybe,
28 after we talk about it, if the group feels like this is the way to
29 proceed, then we should go that way, but I think we should -- It's
30 a little early for this yet, in my opinion.
31

32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I've got General Spraggins next.
33

34 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and, I mean, obviously, the motion here,
35 to me, makes a little bit more sense than the one before, because,
36 when you try to say that a state can opt out of it, that means
37 you're going to have to break it down by state automatically then.
38

39 You know, when you make that statement that a state can opt-out of
40 doing it, then, you know, where's the rest of the Gulf? Does that
41 mean I'm going to give one state an allocation, and no state --
42 The rest of them are all fishing for the Gulf? You know, to me,
43 it doesn't make that sense.
44

45 I mean, I like the way that Chris and them were talking about this,
46 that at least -- You know, obviously, I understand the fact of
47 overfishing. I understand the fact of being able to look at some
48 things, and I would be more amenable to look at this than I would

1 the last one.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, General. Mr. Sanchez.

4

5 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you. I will speak against this motion, and in
6 general just speak against moving forward with creating a document
7 to do this, to go ahead and delegate to the states. This was an
8 issue that was fought over many, many years right here, you know,
9 all over the Gulf, and it was needed to be done, because there was
10 an inequity with the federal for-hire, where, as the seasons were
11 shrinking and shrinking, then, you know, there was opportunities.

12

13 We went to the state, where they had longer days, and then, by
14 virtue of having a federal permit, they're required to pick the
15 more stringent regulation, in terms of opportunity, and then we
16 had this inequity, where these guys had nothing for days, no way
17 to prosecute a business model, and then their state counterparts
18 were fishing much longer days.

19

20 We addressed all that with sector separation, gave them a business
21 model where they could, you know, prosecute their businesses
22 successfully. They would know how many days they had at the onset
23 of the season. They could plan, advertise, and continue to be the
24 working water men and women that they are, and this would take us
25 all the way back to ground zero and start this all over again.

26

27 I just -- I'm very dead set against this. It's working. It has
28 worked, and, as far as data goes, they've even been trying to --
29 You know, let's get on with SEFHIER, and let's provide you with
30 some real data, real-time data and stuff, so we can compare that
31 to other data points and have some metric to measure and get some
32 checks and balances into this.

33

34 That hasn't gone anywhere, but, by all accounts, federal for-hire
35 fisheries management has worked very well for the industry, and,
36 to take a quantum leap backwards, I'm just absolutely opposed to
37 it.

38

39 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez. Mr. Anson.

40

41 **MR. ANSON:** I would just circle back on a couple of the comments
42 that have made so far. Yes, there have been some letters sent out
43 by charter boat associations within various states, including
44 Alabama's. I've read Alabama's, and I voted in favor of this
45 motion, I guess as a way to start the process, potentially,
46 although this motion doesn't say to start the process in the
47 document, and I think that's the path that needs to be taken.

48

1 I realize it is some strain and extra work for staff, but I attended
2 some meetings with the Alabama Charter Fishing Association, and,
3 granted, it doesn't represent all of the membership that attend
4 those meetings, but, you know, in those discussions, you know,
5 there were a lot of questions that were asked as to what this plan
6 would actually entail and how -- Would there be guarantees for the
7 charter boat owners to have that the allocation that they use
8 collectively, if it were to be associated to the state under state
9 delegation, and how would that be protected, and there were other
10 questions that I just couldn't answer, because there's no document.

11
12 There's nothing in the document that has options and preferreds,
13 and so, in the spirit of trying to move the ball, in order to have
14 something that people can actually look at and make, I think, a
15 better judgment of how that that management change could help them,
16 or hurt them, I think that's the direction we should take.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Anson. Mr. Schieble.

19
20 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I agree with Kevin's
21 statements here. I think at least moving forward to start a
22 document on this that we can work on. I mean, we've seen plenty
23 of documents we've started and end up tabling, or just getting rid
24 of altogether, and, if that's the end goal on what the council
25 decides at the end, well, so what? So be it.

26
27 At least we started a document, and we discussed different
28 alternatives and options within the document. I think that's the
29 next steps here for us to look at, but I also understand Mr.
30 Sanchez's concerns here with some of this, how this will go
31 forward, and I don't -- I don't want this to look like it's going
32 to come across as an allocation grab, or something crazy like that,
33 and, in fact, the slide that talks about allocation in here, I
34 think sector separation needs to be maintained within this, as we
35 go through, but it would be one of the actions within a document
36 to discuss that.

37
38 That's just my opinion, that it needs to be maintained in there,
39 and it may not be the same opinion of others around this table
40 when we get to that, but that should be one of the actions included
41 in the document as we go forward, is that discussion, so we can
42 have that on the table.

43
44 The opt-in or out, I've heard mentioned that, and the reason I
45 included in there is because we already have a precedent for opt-
46 in or out, and so, in state management, if a state overfishes, and
47 chooses not to pay back that overage within a given year, their
48 delegation authority could be removed, or revoked, and the Regional

1 Administrator can petition the Secretary of Commerce to put that
2 state back under federal management, while the rest of us fish
3 under delegated authority, and so one state would be back in the
4 federal management system.

5
6 The other four would still be fishing under state management, and
7 that's the exact same thing, and so I think we have a precedent to
8 go forward on our system. It's just like that, if we wanted to do
9 so.

10
11 We have to talk about, obviously, the details on how that would
12 work. It would be pretty, you know, complicated to figure out
13 allocation, but we've done it with Amendment 50 already. We had
14 different options, and some back then contained biomass, and some
15 had percent landings. We ended up using Amendment 40 calculations
16 among states to do it.

17
18 We would have to sit down, among the states, and figure that out
19 again, to get through this, but I don't see a difference if states
20 that opt-in are fishing to a predetermined allocation that's in
21 the document, and the remaining states that opt-out fish to the
22 difference of the Gulf-wide ACL.

23
24 That's no different than what we're doing right now, and so just
25 some thoughts, but I think we need to go through these things and
26 decide, in this presentation, what we want to include and not
27 include, once we get past the initial steps here, but, falling
28 back to what Mr. Anson said, I do think we need to move forward to
29 start a document, to at least be able to talk about concrete
30 alternatives that we want to select and not select.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble, and certainly putting
33 a purpose and need statement, the motion that we have on here, you
34 know, this will jumpstart that process for putting together a
35 document, and, obviously, this would be the first step, but I do
36 have some other hands up here. Captain Walker.

37
38 **MR. WALKER:** So, to your comments, Mr. Schieble, I don't think the
39 opt-in and opt-out thing is really going to work. If you look at
40 the numbers by percentage of number of charter boats in each state,
41 Mississippi has 2.2 percent. Alabama has 11 percent, and so, if
42 those guys were to opt-out, they would get killed on how much
43 allocation they would get. They would get 2 percent of what they
44 have now, essentially, or depending on how you're -- There would
45 be no reason for them to opt-in, that I can see.

46
47 The smaller states, the charter boat guys in those states are going
48 to get really smoked, if we're going by the number of charter

1 boats, and I don't know why anybody would opt-in for that. I don't
2 think that really applies.

3
4 Mississippi is going to opt in for 2 percent, instead of access to
5 100 percent of the quota? That would get them a huge loss in
6 potential revenues for charter boat guys in Mississippi and
7 Alabama, and I'll leave that at that. I have other issues here
8 myself, but --

9
10 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** To that point, Mr. Schieble?

11
12 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Captain Walker, I can understand what you're saying
13 there, but you're talking about the percentage of the number of
14 permits in a state. You're not talking about the percentage of
15 landings within a state, right, and so, right now, Mississippi
16 gets 3.55 percent of the Gulf-wide recreational ACL. They're a
17 small state, you know, and I think we have to go down the road to
18 determine allocation based on landings, and not based on the number
19 of permits a given state has.

20
21 **MR. WALKER:** To that, I think -- I can't imagine it's too much
22 different at the same two-fish bag limit for everybody across the
23 Gulf, based on their percentage.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** A couple hands up here, but, before I do that,
26 Chris, maybe a friendly amendment, since it's directing staff to
27 develop a purpose and need. I think it's more along the lines of
28 develop a document that considers the following purpose and need,
29 something along those lines.

30
31 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Sure. I'll take all the help I can get.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Then I need confirmation from the seconder,
34 which would be Mr. Anson.

35
36 **MR. ANSON:** I agree.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that. All right. First, I've
39 got Mr. Geeslin.

40
41 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I certainly appreciate the
42 thought that's, you know, evident before us in this motion.
43 Therefore, I do support it, and not necessarily because I believe
44 that the current system is broke, or needs to be fixed, but in the
45 spirit of, you know, looking back, and we've been in this mode
46 since 2018, but, as part of an adaptive management principle, and
47 trying to look back and hear from our charter-for-hire fleet, as
48 a way to enhance and improve some of the flexibility that we've

1 been able to realize in the private rec sector under state
2 management, and if that means, you know, a season fitting the need
3 of either state or regional charter-for-hire fishermen, to adjust
4 those, to adjust those seasons, those bags, those size limits, and
5 get away from a one-size-fits-all.

6
7 I understand we've received, you know, a whole host of letters,
8 but my colleagues on either side of me here from Texas will also
9 share with you that we're hearing from charter-for-hire fishermen
10 that aren't -- That don't come to the council meetings, that aren't
11 part of the organizations that are oftentimes represented here
12 that are fully supportive of at least exploring this idea of state
13 management, again to increase the flexibility, to really look at
14 some of the benefits of putting this under a state management.

15
16 You know, I think the devil is in the details of when we get to
17 this opt-in and opt-out, the allocations, and all of that is going
18 to have to be discussed, but at least getting this moving, and so
19 I do speak in support of the motion as it is.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** General Spraggins.

22
23 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I think that we've got a cart way before the
24 horse here. I think what we're looking at now is that we want the
25 staff to look at something, and, instead of trying to do the
26 details right now, and that's what we're all talking about, is
27 details, and let them come out. Then, when the details come out,
28 then we'll be able to vote on it, and do whatever. I'll support
29 what's going on right now, just to be able to make this move
30 forward.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, General. A few more hands coming up
33 here. Captain Frady.

34
35 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've tried to sit back and watch
36 this as long as I can, since last April, scratching my head and
37 trying to figure out why was this motion even made in the first
38 place.

39
40 As I think about this, most everyone I know in the charter fishing
41 industry already made this decision not to be a part of state
42 management some eight years ago. Even in Alabama, they sent out
43 a survey for all the federally-permitted boats, asking us do we
44 want this, and overwhelmingly, from what I can remember, we said
45 no, no thank you.

46
47 Now, I'm looking at this here, but nobody is addressing this, is
48 the reason this motion is even up there, is because, from what I

1 remember, and what I've seen, there was a disparity put in place
2 between the State of Louisiana and its federally-permitted charter
3 guys, because the state allowed their season, or set their season,
4 which they have all the right to, to set their bag limit at four
5 fish per person, and it rubbed it in the faces of all the federally-
6 permitted charter boats, and it basically pissed them off, saying,
7 if you come over here with us, we'll give you more fish, and more
8 days to fish, and not more allocation, but we'll give you more
9 access to fish.

10
11 Following the mantra that's been going around here in the past few
12 years of everybody promoting access, and "access" being the
13 buzzword, if I were a state guideboat in Louisiana, or a federally-
14 permitted guideboat in Louisiana, I would be pissed that the state
15 guideboats got to catch four fish, and I only got to keep two, and
16 I only got a short season, and everybody else gets a 170-day
17 season, or whatever it may be.

18
19 This is no disrespect to Louisiana, but what it has done is set up
20 a precedent that who wants to keep any other state from rubbing it
21 in the faces of two user groups who both get along real well, who
22 is going to create divisiveness, and we've already seen an example
23 of divisiveness.

24
25 Now, I personally have not made up my mind yet. I know where I'm
26 leaning. I'm listening to my fishing association, that we don't
27 want to be part of this, based on our history, and the success of
28 our own management, and not going over.

29
30 Our seasons keep getting longer, and that's good for some, but not
31 to all, but I think, if I look back at the need, the reason this
32 motion even was made was because somebody was upset that somebody
33 had a better deal than the other group did, and, at this point in
34 time, I'm not in support of this motion. Thank you.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** To that, Mr. Schieble?

37
38 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** To that point, thank you, Captain Frady, for
39 validating part of my argument as to why we need this, and so
40 that's a perfect example of a multitude of issues within the states
41 that they could solve, and so, yes, our state charter fleet gets
42 to fish at the same time our season opens for our private
43 recreational anglers, so they get earlier access to the fishery.

44
45 They're allowed a four-fish bag limit, because that's what our
46 private recreational anglers currently have. It wasn't always
47 that way. It's been the past three years now, but, before that,
48 we had two, and so that's what they had.

1
2 That could change, depending on, you know, the stock, but, also,
3 the access to the fishery during better times of the year. That's
4 exactly what you pointed out, which, in parts of the Gulf, is not
5 always the same.

6
7 It's not the same across the entire Gulf, and so we need to look
8 at options that allow fair and equitable access to the fishery
9 across the entire Gulf. That's what this entire purpose of this
10 is, really, and, in Louisiana for example, the state charter fleet,
11 they can only fish out to nine miles, and so they're getting better
12 access to more fish within a shorter period of time, right?

13
14 They're only able to fish out to nine miles. They can't go out to
15 200 miles, but, when the federal for-hire fleet starts to fish,
16 you can see the difference in the landings, and I kind of wish
17 that we, in the timing of things in this meeting, we would have
18 went over our landings presentations before having this
19 discussion, because you can see the difference in the graphs that
20 I'm going to present, and I guess tomorrow we're going to get to
21 this, and I'm not sure, but it shows you the disparity between the
22 federal for-hire fleet and the state charter fleet and the equity
23 there.

24
25 This could be solved within individual states, depending on how
26 they choose to manage these things, but that would be part of the
27 criteria that I think we need to choose as a council to whether
28 we're going to include that, size and bag limits, season structure,
29 all the same things that we have in Amendment 50 for the private
30 recreational anglers. Those are the things that should be in this
31 document, that we decide around this table what we're going to
32 allocate or not allocate.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Frady.

35
36 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Scheible. To your point, I totally
37 understand Louisiana, and any other state, may have a different
38 management style, or different times of the year that they want to
39 fish. I mean, we all wish we could have a little bit more
40 flexibility, but, when all of us got into the federal for-hire
41 charter fishing business, some people had to pay to get in.

42
43 A lot of people were grandfathered in, but, being a federal for-
44 hire fishery is a business decision, and there is a huge benefit
45 between federally-permitted charter boats having a direct line of
46 access to the manager of the fish, which would be NOAA Fisheries,
47 and having that access and without having another layer of
48 bureaucracy in between us, and there's a huge benefit to that.

1
2 I would tell the people in Louisiana, or any other state who are
3 federally-permitted, who feel like they're being discriminated
4 against, or having to compete with someone who has a four-fish bag
5 limit, and a longer season, that is a business model decision.
6 They can choose to keep the access we've got right now, which is
7 working, and we're not going over our quota, and I would just urge
8 them to make that decision, to where they're --

9
10 You know, our economists say write the check. If you want to be
11 a federally -- If you want to play with the big boys, write the
12 check, and buy your federal permits, and come participate with us
13 in a hugely successful process.

14
15 You know, I'm not against the Louisiana group at all. My heritage
16 comes from Louisiana, but I want to make sure that the people
17 understand that there's consequences, and there's animosity with
18 those consequences, and, when you tie animosity and consequences,
19 and people becoming angry at another user group, they've got to
20 really withdraw and say do I really need to be a federal for-hire,
21 or do I just remain like I am, and, I mean, I'm not totally happy
22 with this motion, but I do understand why it came about. I respect
23 that. I'm just not in favor of it, from where we are.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Frady. I'm going to keep
26 going down my list here. I've got Dr. Allen next.

27
28 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm still getting my head
29 wrapped around this, and the problems that this would solve, but
30 one of the things I think that we need to keep in mind, regardless
31 of how we move forward, is what would be the implications of this
32 on the data streams of the charter boat fleet, and I know, in
33 Florida, the SRFS data doesn't deal with the charter fleet at all,
34 and, C.J., maybe you can comment on what the implications are for
35 the Florida charter fleet, and I'm not sure, but preserving the
36 data streams is going to be important.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and that is correct. The Florida State
39 Reef Fish Survey, as shown on one of those slides there, it does
40 not cover charter-for-hire there, and that's currently covered by
41 the MRIP program, and the for-hire survey there, and so there would
42 be certainly something that, if this moves forward -- I mean, it's
43 just something that Florida would need to consider, but we don't
44 have a program set up, like LA Creel does right now, to monitor
45 that for-hire.

46
47 **DR. ALLEN:** So, if that's the case, and if a document were to be
48 drafted to explore this, I think highlighting the impacts on the

1 data streams is going to be important. Thank you.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Allen. I've got Dr. Banks next.

4
5 **DR. BANKS:** So I'm one of the people thrown under the bus by my
6 state colleague. I have received many, many calls about this,
7 both for and against, and, the people that are speaking for it,
8 based on my call and text history, are woefully more than the
9 people speaking against it.

10
11 The people that are speaking for it are arguing that they can
12 change their seasons, and we just went around the room to change
13 the federal season for the for-hire guys last year, and it was a
14 very long discussion to move it three days, and the states can do
15 that much easier. They are also requesting a change in bag limit.
16 Texas currently has four fish in the state waters, and it
17 potentially could move out to federal waters, and so I'm interested
18 to move forward and look at this.

19
20 I think when a lot of the people, a lot of the charter for-hire,
21 spoke out against this, we are at three-day seasons, and now it's
22 been coming up on eight years since state management went into
23 place, or five years. 2020, and so five years, and so I think
24 times have changed, and it might be worth at least taking another
25 look, and so I would support moving forward with this document.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you. Captain Walker.

28
29 **MR. WALKER:** So, looking at the motion on the board, in the need
30 category, I think I have some questions about the need. The first
31 part is need to consider management of federal for-hire red snapper
32 within the context of the states of the Gulf. I'm not sure that
33 we need that, but to prevent overfishing, and we're not
34 overfishing, and so we don't have a need there.

35
36 While achieving, on a continuing basis, optimum yield, and we have
37 previously been pretty close to optimum yield. The stock, in some
38 parts of the Gulf, has dropped off a little bit, and so we might
39 not be hitting that, but we were, and so I don't know about the
40 need there either, and, fair and equitable access for the Gulf
41 fishing community, I believe the current program already has that,
42 and so I don't see that need there either, and so I'm not sure
43 this need is a true need.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Before we get to Mr. Sanchez, Mr. Strelcheck.

46
47 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I've been sitting quietly and just listening to
48 the conversation. My recommendation is I feel like we are way

1 ahead of ourselves right now, right, and this is getting into a
2 level of specificity that I'm certainly not comfortable with. I
3 will probably abstain from this vote at this point, until I really
4 kind of look through and understood the purpose and need.

5
6 I think it would be much better just to direct staff, based on
7 this conversation, and some of the input that's been provided, to
8 move forward with developing a purpose and need for the document,
9 and kind of leave it open-ended for them to then bring back to us
10 at the next meeting, or whatever the next discussion is, so that
11 this can be tweaked and refined, because I think there's a lot of
12 detail here that some of us may or may not be comfortable with,
13 and that could affect a decision, or a vote, today, relative to
14 just we're comfortable with developing a purpose and need, but
15 just not the exact specificity of it.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Strelcheck. Mr. Sanchez.

18
19 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Thank you. I kind of like what Troy was saying,
20 that, in the existing process right now, if you feel that there's
21 an advantage, be it season length or bag limit, within your state's
22 management process, then get out of your federal permit and become
23 a state charter captain.

24
25 I mean, that seems to be there's a way to address this, this
26 perceived inequity, but, on the backside of that, for the last
27 couple of years, we've been hearing from charter fishermen, from
28 throughout the Gulf, saying that fish are getting smaller, and
29 we're having to run further and further for them, and so, whether
30 it's not maybe showing up in an assessment, the anecdotal
31 information would indicate that this stock is going kind of in the
32 wrong direction.

33
34 It's not growing and expanding like it used to be. It's
35 diminishing, and I think that there's security in the federal
36 process for the federal for-hire that decide that's what I want to
37 have, and that's the license I want, that, when this thing goes
38 the way it looks like it's going, and it starts to get to where
39 we're maybe, you know, going to approach overfishing at some point
40 in the future, when we realize that, when we see these fish getting
41 smaller and smaller, there's going to be some security for them to
42 not go back to these very, very tiny seasons, and that they're
43 going to have what they have, and they need to prosecute their
44 business model.

45
46 I really don't want to go down this road. Now, if you all want to
47 look at it, and explore it, but it seems, to me, that there's a
48 way to address some of the perceivable inequity, as Troy suggested.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Sanchez, Mr. Schieble.
3

4 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so, to Andy's point about the purpose and
5 need, it seemed like Dr. Diagne was asking us to develop a purpose
6 and need to move forward with all this stuff, and so that's why I
7 posed these options here for us to deliberate over.
8

9 It seemed like that was the first step needed to the impetus of
10 generating a document, right, and I'm not necessarily sold that,
11 if we can develop a document that you all, as council staff, come
12 back with a purpose and need drafted different than this -- I'm
13 fine with that as well, but, to me, it seemed like we needed --
14 Because at least the ask was to develop this for you.
15

16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and let's see what Dr. Diagne thinks about
17 that.
18

19 **DR. DIAGNE:** I guess, during the presentation, one of the slides
20 essentially just asked for this, I guess, committee, and later on
21 the council, to have the discussion and to spell out what it is
22 that, you know, you're trying to address, and what are the
23 challenges, but, to the extent that, I mean, that discussion has
24 been ongoing, and, I mean, even there is a draft here, that's more
25 than sufficient, as Mr. Strelcheck mentioned.
26

27 If you direct us to move forward, then we have a starting point,
28 based on the arguments around this table, to bring something to
29 you, because now we begin to see the intent, if you would, and so
30 I guess this would not be needed, as mentioned by Mr. Strelcheck,
31 and the discussion around the table would be sufficient for us to
32 make some, I guess -- To bring some alternatives for you to
33 consider.
34

35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that, Dr. Diagne. I'm going to
36 go to Mr. Schieble, and then Dr. Banks.
37

38 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So I can pose a substitute motion to direct staff
39 to begin development of a document for the state management.
40

41 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I don't think you can make a substitute on
42 your own motion, but maybe you can withdraw and resubmit another
43 one, if that's how you want to do it.
44

45 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** If that's the proper procedure, sure.
46

47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think -- I'm looking at council staff here,
48 but I think the -- Chris, if that's how you wanted to proceed here,
49

1 my suggestion maybe would be to withdraw this motion, and then you
2 could put another motion in that kind of accommodates for the
3 discussion that we just had. It's your call though.

4
5 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Well, I would like to hear from Dr. Banks first.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Banks.

8
9 **DR. BANKS:** I don't -- I won't talk about the process, but I think
10 Chris's motion is fine to move forward the way it is. It does not
11 suggest that we have to use this purpose and need. It says to
12 consider. We can build off this, or we can modify this, but I
13 think this gives staff a place to start.

14
15 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so, to that point, part of what Captain
16 Walker was listing, as he went through the need, that he felt
17 certain things didn't need to be in there, such as to prevent
18 overfishing, I included those because they're sort of like
19 guardrails as we go forward with this.

20
21 Under that, the idea is that the states would prevent overfishing
22 if they manage this fishery, right, and that's part of what I think
23 is important, but it doesn't necessarily have to be in there. If
24 we all decide that language is not needed, then let's take it out.
25 We can edit some of this stuff, but I leave it up to you all.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Captain Walker.

28
29 **MR. WALKER:** I wonder -- If you took out all the things that we
30 don't need in the need, there's not going to be anything left.
31 That's my -- That's kind of my point. I don't know that we need
32 this, and so I haven't seen anything in there that tells me that
33 there is a legitimate need to go down this road.

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

36
37 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I'll just comment, and Chris alluded to it,
38 and I pulled up Amendment 50, and what he's put together, in terms
39 of purpose and need, is very similar, and there's some
40 modifications, obviously, relative to Amendment 50, and so I would
41 say call the question, and let's vote this up.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** There it is. Okay. Dr. Simmons, I'm probably
44 going to need your help with counting some of these votes here,
45 because I've got a feeling we're going to have to do some raised
46 hands. All right, and so we've got a motion on the table. I'll
47 bring it to you, J.D.

1 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. I would like to make a couple
2 points. I've been sitting back and listening to the conversation,
3 and I agree with some of the points Andy made. I'm okay with the
4 way this motion reads today. I like the flexibility for staff to
5 change some things, if needed, or if that's what we see we want to
6 do.

7
8 A couple points that I've noticed over time is there's a couple of
9 Gulf state governors that are already in talks with the federal
10 government to move more things to state management. There's a
11 lack of funding to NMFS right now, we know of, and we do have
12 challenges with season start dates across the Gulf. It's not a
13 one-size-fits-all.

14
15 In San Antonio, we had a long discussion about amberjack, and how
16 NMFS opened the season at the last minute, and it affected business
17 models, and so I look at this as a way around that, if you're
18 working with your state. I know, in Louisiana, the decision can
19 probably be made within ten days, and we're not waiting on waves
20 of data. It's ten days of data.

21
22 Also, touching on SEFHIER, there's no funding for SEFHIER. Under
23 the LA Creel program that Mississippi and Alabama is going to
24 tackle, it can be done. SEFHIER could be -- I'm not going to say
25 replaced, but data can be collected, and that's a path forward,
26 and so it's just a few points I wanted to just get out on the
27 record, and I'm okay with the way this reads, and I think we should
28 move forward.

29
30 I'm not saying this is the best scenario, but I prefer us to get
31 in front of this, before the state governors and the federal
32 government does it before us. Let's get involved. We might not
33 all agree upon everything, but I think this is a path forward, and
34 I'm supportive of this motion the way it is. Thank you.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Dugas. Okay. I think we're
37 going to vote here on this motion that's on the table. It certainly
38 seems like there's going to be some opposition here, and so why
39 don't we just do some hands raised. **All those that are opposed to**
40 **the motion that's on the table, please raise your hand; all those**
41 **in favor, please raise your hand.** Okay, and I'm going to abstain.
42 I think Andy is abstaining, and Johnny is abstaining, too. Okay.
43 **It looks like the motion carries.** What was that vote there?

44
45 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Nine to four with three abstentions.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** **Nine to four with three abstentions, or four**
48 **abstentions. Three abstentions and an absent.** Okay, and so we've

1 dispensed with this motion here. I do still think that there were
2 some specific questions that Dr. Diagne had, that he probably would
3 like some further guidance on from the committee about how to
4 proceed with developing this document here, and so perhaps, Bernie,
5 if we could go to those questions, that might help refresh some
6 folks' memory. Dr. Simmons.

7
8 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so I guess,
9 just while we're doing that, I was asking Mr. Rindone when we were
10 going to get the results of the red snapper assessment, when that
11 was slated, and I think it's planned for like I believe around
12 June of next year, but then there's the outstanding MRIP pilot
13 project going on, and how that's going to impact the various
14 assessments as they're coming out.

15
16 We don't know right now what the delay would be in that, but my
17 understanding right now is that assessment will be in the MRIP-
18 FES units when we get it. We have a lot of different currency
19 issues we're going to have to try to untangle here, and I thought
20 I would just bring that up, for everybody's food for thought as
21 we're working through these issues.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** So we're in for a good time ahead. Okay. All
24 right, and so we've got some questions on the table here that I do
25 think are probably important for Dr. Diagne and staff to kind of
26 get some perspective on, and so I'm going to kind of tee it off.

27
28 I know we've had some significant discussion just about the purpose
29 and need, and actually developing a document, but perhaps if we
30 could just kind of talk about some of these here before our lunch
31 break, and we've still got some time here. Mr. Sanchez.

32
33 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I have a question. In Louisiana, for reef fish, I
34 think it used to be three miles for federal waters, and then, for
35 reef fish, we passed something, somewhere along the way, to make
36 it three to nine, and so it seems, to me, if three to nine is
37 federal waters, then shouldn't these state folks have a federal
38 permit to be fishing three to nine miles offshore?

39
40 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** The government changed the reef-fish-only boundary
41 to nine nautical miles off the coast of Louisiana to match the
42 other states, so it was all the same, and so, technically, the
43 state charter boats can fish out to nine nautical miles under that
44 change, but just for reef fish though.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. General Spraggins.

47
48 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Now you've brought up the subject. We need to

1 make it nine miles for all states, and it ought to be not just for
2 reef fish, but for everything, because, if it's good for one state,
3 it ought to be good for the others. This was done a hundred years
4 ago, long before any of us have ever thought about it, but it's
5 something we need to look at, and I think that we're going to have
6 to do congressional to do that.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, General. Okay, and so we've got a
9 list of questions here. I mean, maybe we can just talk about the
10 first one relative to calibration issues and different for-hire
11 data collection programs. LA Creel, obviously, is monitoring their
12 state.

13
14 We've got some subsequent states that are using the LA Creel model
15 there, I know we're going to have a discussion about that in Other
16 Business, and we already highlighted about the State Reef fish
17 Survey does not do for-hire, and so that would be MRIP on that,
18 for the time being, and so potential calibration issues there, but
19 it doesn't seem too crazy, to me. Anything else? Does anyone
20 want to talk about that? I'm just kind of trying to check these
21 off here for Assane. Mr. Dugas.

22
23 **MR. DUGAS:** C.J, you touched on some of it. Louisiana,
24 Mississippi, and Alabama should be all the same, in my mind, and
25 so that would leave out Florida and Texas for calibration, and I
26 guess I would have to ask you, and maybe Mr. Geeslin, you know,
27 how that would shake out, or even maybe Mr. Strelcheck.

28
29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and, I mean, I actually had that question
30 for Texas, too. Like are you guys getting reporting from federal
31 for-hire folks? Obviously, state for-hire, I would imagine, but
32 federal for-hire?

33
34 **MR. GEESLIN:** No, we are not.

35
36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** The same for Florida.

37
38 **MR. GEESLIN:** Yes, and that would be a significant lift for us.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and so same with Florida, and so
41 potentially some issues there, but I saw some hands raised. Lt.
42 Morton.

43
44 **LT. JACKSON MORTON:** Just for some clarification, for the Reef
45 Fish FMP, all the states in the Gulf are out to nine nautical miles
46 for state and federal waters. For the other FMPs, Texas and
47 Florida reach out to nine nautical miles, and Mississippi, Alabama,
48 and Louisiana are only three, and so, for reef fish, every state

1 is out to nine miles. For the other FMPs, nine miles for Texas
2 and Florida, and Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama out to three
3 miles, just for clarification purposes.
4

5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Did I have any more hands raised here?
6 Captain Walker.
7

8 **MR. WALKER:** I mean, I'm not thinking super specific, but I think
9 it's safe to say that there's some real issues in all three
10 different counting systems that we're talking about blending
11 together here, and so, I mean, it's going to be complicated,
12 obviously, if each state counts fish with their own method.
13

14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and challenges associated with everything
15 we do basically here, but, yes. Mr. Strelcheck.
16

17 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So, with the private sector, it's tied to the
18 landing location, right, and so you have to have a permit for that
19 state to land in that state. For the charter-for-hire, it's
20 essentially authorizing harvest within federal waters. There's
21 not necessarily a landing requirement.
22

23 I guess I'm curious, and maybe Chris, and how would you track like
24 a charter boat that moved from another state to Louisiana? They
25 would then -- Would they have to have some sort of state permit at
26 that point to land in Louisiana, because, right now, they wouldn't
27 be required to, and so that would be, I think, one of the
28 complexities that we would have to figure out, in terms of how
29 we're going to then make sure they're captured in your landing
30 system, and you're contacting them for effort information, if
31 that's going to count against your portion of the catch, versus
32 another state's portion of the catch.
33

34 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so I think, to answer the question
35 directly, that's one of the items that I think we need to make
36 sure is an action item in the document going forward, is this, so
37 we can start talking about different alternatives of how this will
38 be done, but, to answer the question, yes, I think the landings
39 would have to be monitored in the state that they're landed, just
40 like they currently are now.
41

42 So, if a federal for-hire boat comes from Florida now, and decides
43 to dock off of Louisiana, they're monitored in the Louisiana LA
44 Creel system, and they land those fish currently, and that's part
45 of the landings I'm going to show you tomorrow. We can separate
46 out the federal for-hire landings from the state charter and the
47 private recreational already with the system in place, and they
48 would end up having to be part of the effort call.

1
2 The charter effort calls during snapper season are 100 percent.
3 We call the entire frame every week, where there's a percentage of
4 the private recreational anglers that are done over the course of
5 the rest of the year.

6
7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Diagne, and then we'll have General
8 Spraggins.

9
10 **DR. DIAGNE:** I guess a question along the lines of permits, maybe
11 for Mr. Strelcheck. I mean, as you mentioned before, I mean, right
12 now, when you have a federal for-hire permit, you are allowed to
13 fish Gulf-wide within federal waters, and so, as we move forward
14 here, is it that the permits would have to be relinquished, and a
15 new kind of permit, you know, with restricted, I guess, privileges
16 be issued, and so, essentially, what would be the implications on
17 the federal permit as it exists today?

18
19 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I think it's a great question. I don't
20 have the answer today, and I think we'll really want to think about
21 that going forward. Ideally, we would not want to create, you
22 know, additional permits, if we could avoid the duplicity, but it
23 kind of relates to the question I asked, obviously, Chris about
24 the planning requirement, and how we would then monitor catches,
25 and so it's something to think about as we go forward.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Chris, to that point?

28
29 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** To that point, this is about harvest monitoring.
30 This isn't about changing permits, and so I don't think that's
31 necessary in the action. We're talking about how we're going to
32 monitor harvest among the states. That would be the key.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** General.

35
36 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** I think, once again, the question is are these
37 five or six questions, five questions, here something we want the
38 staff to look at, and I think that's what it is. I think all but
39 the very last one, but the very last one still doesn't make sense
40 to me, because I know that they are not restricted by any other
41 type of species, and so maybe this is something that we're going
42 to look at that, just red snapper, but I think every one of these
43 are something that we need to know.

44
45 I think these are things that's going to make a difference as to
46 whether or not we decide to go one way or the other in this, and
47 so my suggestion is that we move forward and ask the staff to be
48 able to use these questions, and even the last one.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I totally agree with you, General. I think
3 all these questions are going to have to be answered in there, and
4 I was just trying to give staff a little hint as to what the
5 council might be thinking along those lines, and give them a little
6 direction there, but, Mr. Anson, I've got you next.

7
8 **MR. ANSON:** I had two comments. One was related to the General's
9 statement. Inasmuch as if a document were to be approved by the
10 Secretary, and there was an opt-in and opt-out option, certainly
11 a calibration issue, and data collection is going to be, I think,
12 high on each individual state's radar of things to look at,
13 relative to making sure that all the provisions within the document
14 would be met.

15
16 The second comment was just related to the permit issue. I mean,
17 we have mackerel folks that travel with the same permit throughout
18 the Gulf, and so I don't see a need for an additional permit to be
19 made either.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Anson. Obviously, this is --
22 There's a lot going into this, right and we haven't even talked
23 about allocation yet, but I think that's just going to have to go
24 as this document proceeds there. Mr. Marquez, did you have
25 something?

26
27 **MR. MARQUEZ:** That was going to be my comment. That's not listed
28 in the question here, but it was discussed earlier, and so how
29 would allocation be worked out here for each state? It's a pretty
30 important part.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Agreed. Mr. Geeslin.

33
34 **MR. GEESLIN:** C.J., you asked me a question, and I just wanted to
35 clarify that. Yes, we are intercepting those charter vessels
36 through our creel program. We don't separate those federally-
37 licensed boats, because we don't have that information at that
38 time, but, ever since SEFHIER was, whatever, shelved, yes, we are
39 reporting -- We're reporting those landings, those charter-for-
40 hire landings.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** For federally-permitted charters?

43
44 **MR. GEESLIN:** Correct.

45
46 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. I appreciate that.
47 Okay. Now there's a lot of discussion here. Dr. Diagne, I know
48 there's going to be a lot that goes into this document here, but

1 I'm wondering if there's any questions you want to ask the
2 committee here, to kind of help get you what you need here, and
3 then I'm going to go to J.D. after Dr. Diagne.
4

5 **DR. DIAGNE:** Yes, and thank you, Mr. Chair. Perhaps one question
6 would be that we can start based on the assumptions that the format
7 may be similar to what was done in Amendment 50, and, by that, I
8 mean that we started with an umbrella amendment, which dealt with
9 the big questions, quote, unquote, and then we had separate
10 amendments that were state-specific.
11

12 I guess, to the extent that this thing goes forward, then we would
13 concentrate on the umbrella amendment, and, in Amendment 50, the
14 first one dealt with, you know, the components to be delegated.
15 That's not a question here, because we already have sector
16 separation.
17

18 The number two was a mechanism to implement optional state
19 management, and so that's something akin to that. The next action
20 had to do with the allocation, if you will, apportioning the
21 resource, and the next one, and final one, you know, had to do
22 with allowing the state to request closure and so forth, and so
23 the gist of it is the first document then would deal with the big
24 questions, and that's it, however many number of those, meaning,
25 you know, background, discussion, purpose and need, and options
26 for the preliminary stuff. Once we get past that, then we look at
27 other things.
28

29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think -- From my perspective, I think that
30 makes sense, to kind of get the big-picture questions out of the
31 way here before we dive into the details, but I've got a couple of
32 hands raised on there. Mr. Schieble, and then Captain Frady.
33

34 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So, to that point, I agree. I think we start with
35 an umbrella document to begin with here. My understanding of the
36 main reason why we ended up with the 50B through F documents is
37 because some of the states chose to be able to have the ability to
38 request the closure of federal waters off of their states, and
39 others did not, and that's the main driving difference on that,
40 and I think, if we get to that point in the discussion with this,
41 then we would need necessarily those B through F documents, of
42 whatever this would be, but maybe not.
43

44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Frady.
45

46 **MR. FRADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. One of the things I'm looking
47 at right here is I don't see any talk about an economic impact
48 statement, as to what economic impact this will have on the charter

1 fishing industry, especially the federally-permitted.

2
3 Would it be appropriate to add that to the questions, or does it
4 come later in time, but the economic impact statement means
5 something to me, just to figure out whether we should have it or
6 not.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Captain Frady. I think any
9 amendment that we would put forward would have to have some sort
10 of economic analysis, and so it would be incorporated in there,
11 even though we're not explicitly asking about it there. It's going
12 to be in there, correct? Okay.

13
14 **MR. DUGAS:** My question was going to be for staff, and Dr. Diagne,
15 and if we've answered enough questions, or if you had more, if you
16 needed more information out of the committee, and that was going
17 to be my question.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Diagne.

20
21 **DR. DIAGNE:** Certainly the discussion you had around the table is
22 sufficient for us to get started. I mean, these were just things
23 to keep in mind, or to start thinking about, as this process moves
24 forward.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Diagne. Okay. This was a very
27 healthy discussion. I'm sure more questions will come up between
28 now and Full Council, and we'll have another discussion about this
29 then, but I think we might be okay here, Dr. Diagne, for the time
30 being, and it's 11:34.

31
32 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. Let's move to Mr.
33 Strelcheck's Other Business item before lunch.

34
35 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Sounds good. Mr. Strelcheck.

36
37 **OTHER BUSINESS**
38 **DISCUSSION OF MISSISSIPPI AND ALABAMA CREEL**
39

40 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, and so I had asked for a discussion of
41 the Mississippi and Alabama Creel programs for 2026. My
42 understanding is that, in 2025, testing sampling has been underway,
43 that there's been the kind of side-by-side work that's being done
44 between MRIP, your Snapper Check, the Tails 'n Scales surveys, and
45 the new creel surveys, and so I really wanted to hear from both
46 Kevin and General Spraggins about plans for 2026.

47
48 My main, I think, question really is related to if Tails 'n Scales

1 or Snapper Check would be ending in 2026, and the need then for
2 calibration, so that we can continue to monitor the red snapper
3 catch limits for each year in respective states, based on the new
4 survey methodology, and so I've talked about them, but I thought
5 it would be good to have that discussion on the record.
6

7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. I'm going to look at our state Alabama
8 and Mississippi counterparts there, General and Kevin.
9

10 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Well, I can -- We are definitely moving forward
11 with the MS Creel, and we feel like that we have got a lot of data
12 that's moved forward with it. We've even sent surveys up, and so
13 we're being able to move forward with that.
14

15 Our goal is to end at the end of this year, and start next year
16 that we will follow MS Creel. As it stands right now, we're not
17 planning to do Tails 'n Scales, because we see no need to double-
18 dip on something that we're already working on, unless we find
19 something that is going to be able to set us back, if for some
20 reason we're going to be set back and not be able to do this, but,
21 you know, we as far as we know, we have given all the data that
22 we're supposed to, and we have run it side-by-side, and it's
23 running pretty good, and, from my understanding, it's doing very
24 good.
25

26 As a matter of fact, I've got Trevor here. If we would like him
27 -- If it's okay, and the council will allow this, I would ask
28 Trevor to come up and speak for the State of Mississippi, because
29 he knows it more than I do.
30

31 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Come on down Trevor.
32

33 **MR. TREVOR MONCRIEF:** So I guess, like Andy, I'm putting on a
34 different hat here, and so, yes, the creel program has been going
35 pretty well. The plan is to have it operational and be the sole
36 survey in 2026.
37

38 Obviously, we want to relieve the burden of our anglers from having
39 to report to both, and deal with both, and we -- Just to catch you
40 all up on the timeline, we, obviously, sent preliminary
41 documentation to all partners. We've been in discussions with the
42 other states, as far as Alabama and Louisiana goes, and it's been
43 a pretty collaborative effort.
44

45 We've even matched documentation as close as we could to all those
46 states, to make sure it's going to be as similar as it can be, and
47 only small deviations were made on the program, and so I don't
48 think there will be too many questions there.

1
2 We have been producing estimates for the last little while. We
3 still need to do an update form, to get the full year, and I think
4 our last sweep was through July, and then we worked on
5 documentation from that and submitted for certification on
6 September 30.

7
8 Now, obviously, we've got some other things going on, and so
9 communication between the two have been limited, but I have to
10 credit at least, you know, my staff, DMR staff, and then being
11 able to work with the other states, that this program has gotten
12 operational, and off its feet, faster than anything that I've seen.

13
14 A lot of that is due to the help that Louisiana has been able to
15 provide, and the collaborative nature that we've been able to work
16 through, and so I would say that we're on a positive track.

17
18 We've submitted everything on time, and, as far as the calibration
19 stuff goes, that's the next item up to go through, but our focus,
20 for the last little while, has been getting that program off the
21 ground and getting estimates produced, getting every state in line,
22 to make sure we're all on the same page, matching documentation,
23 so that we can make the certification process as clean and as
24 efficient as possible.

25
26 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks for that, Trevor. Mr. Anson. Andy.
27 Sorry.

28
29 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks for that, Trevor. That's really helpful,
30 and, obviously, the shutdown has not helped matters, and so, before
31 the shutdown, what was the sense of timing, in terms of kind of
32 certification review and that calibration taking place?

33
34 **MR. MONCRIEF:** So I have no idea on the certification review
35 timeline, when it comes to that side. I know we were waiting for
36 an initial response, once we did it. Like I said, we submitted
37 preliminary documentation probably I think in April or so, to just
38 try to get a feel, and get some of those bigger items out of the
39 way, just in case we were missing things.

40
41 We went through all those comments, made all the changes, and
42 actually adjusted our documentation to match more of Alabama, which
43 corresponded to match more of LA Creel, and I don't have an idea
44 on the OST timeline, on what they have, but our push has been for
45 this to be as expedient as possible.

46
47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Simmons.

48

1 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you,
2 Trevor. If I missed this, I apologize. Did you say you would
3 include the federal for-hire operators in the dockside intercepts
4 with this new program, like Louisiana?
5

6 **MR. MONCRIEF:** They are currently included. They're not specific
7 to a federal charter site. They're just overall charter sites,
8 and they're included in the call-out frame, and so if I could just
9 touch on that. I mean, most of the for-hire surveys, as they
10 function, whether it be Creel or anything else, are license-based
11 questionnaires that are expanded to a known universe of license
12 holders. Their fundamental differences should not be the same as
13 what we've dealt with on the private recreational side, and so
14 that's something to think about moving forward.
15

16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you for that, Mississippi.
17 General, do you have anything to add?
18

19 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Thank you, Trevor, and I think that was to get
20 a little bit more enlightened of what Mississippi is, and thank
21 you, Trevor, for being here. I appreciate it.
22

23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I'm going to look at Alabama now.
24

25 **MR. ANSON:** As far as Alabama Creel, AL Creel is moving along.
26 What Trevor said about where Mississippi is, relative to document
27 transfer and coordination, is the same, and certainly I want to
28 echo his kudos to Louisiana, and their willingness to provide
29 staff. They've been very helpful to us in this process.
30

31 We're a little bit behind they are, in as much as creating
32 estimates, but, as I recall, we were shooting for -- We have a
33 transition team that's specifically looking at the state surveys,
34 and I recall the timeline being in spring that we would have to
35 sit down and formally go review the state estimates and such, and
36 the side-by-side comparisons with other alternative surveys, and
37 that that would then --
38

39 Of course, meeting that timeline or deadline, and completion of
40 that, in order for it to be certified as a method, would then allow
41 us to move into the calibration phase of the data, and so it's
42 anyone's guess, but, you know, we're looking to try to close it up
43 by December of next year, the calibration exercise, seeing that we
44 have some experience with Snapper Check and other state surveys
45 previously for the private rec, and so that's pretty much where AL
46 Creel is.
47

48 We still plan to continue moving forward in 2026 with AL Creel,

1 obviously, and we still intend to keep Snapper Check going and
2 continue to use it to monitor red snapper landings on the private
3 rec side.

4

5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** General.

6

7 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** Yes, and two things. Obviously, Alabama had
8 the luxury of having a little bit more longer season, and so it's
9 taking longer to get all the data that they need, and I understand
10 that, because you have -- You're still open, I guess, for snapper
11 right, and I was closed in July, and so that -- You know, that
12 probably makes a lot of difference, when you look at what the
13 difference is in the two.

14

15 I would ask, anyway, if it's possible that, you know, if
16 Mississippi's data is there, that we be able to go forward and
17 move forward with Mississippi's data against LA Creel, and not
18 keep us all in one lump sum.

19

20 I think we're working independently anyway, but, if there was a
21 way to keep moving Mississippi forward, and I'm not so in a hatchet
22 as Alabama, because they still have the luxury of being able to
23 fish, and so, you know, it's hard to get that data without having
24 the fishery closed, but Mississippi is six months fishery closed,
25 almost, and so, if we can move forward with that, Mr. Strelcheck,
26 that would be very nice for us, if we could continue to move
27 forward with Mississippi now and Alabama separately.

28

29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, General. Mr. Anson.

30

31 **MR. ANSON:** Since the General brought it up, Alabama certainly
32 doesn't want to be a hindrance to Mississippi, and the review of
33 their program for certification, but I think both of the states
34 were trying to key in on the spring, to have that meeting, because
35 we would have the full year.

36

37 They would look at, you know, several different species, and not
38 just red snapper, and so that was why we are going to give ourselves
39 a couple of months to generate the estimates through December of
40 this year.

41

42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Andy.

43

44 **MR. STRELCHECK:** So thanks to you both, and Trevor, for the
45 additional detail, and so I guess just general comments, and
46 thoughts, and, you know, the fact that we have all these surveys
47 has, obviously, complicated matters, and we've recognize that.

48

1 Every time we go through a transition to a new survey, it results
2 in then having to consider that new survey, and I certainly
3 understand, obviously, the need for, you know, working with NMFS,
4 and the calibration and all of that, and so I wanted to raise this
5 for two reasons.

6
7 One is we absolutely have to do something by 2027 it sounds like
8 for both surveys, in order to calibrate that for their new quota
9 levels. On top of that, we have a new assessment, which could
10 change things regardless, right, and so that's another factor.

11
12 I think the more urgent matter, and I recognize -- I'm going to
13 caveat this with Mississippi represents a small portion of the
14 quota, and we're not necessarily landing the entire quota right
15 now, but it's to your benefit, or detriment, depending on where
16 Mississippi Creel estimates landings relative to Tails 'n Scales,
17 right, and, if you harvest at a higher rate under the creel survey,
18 that means you're going to bump up against your existing quota
19 faster, and, if you harvest at a lower rate, you're going to
20 ultimately have more days of fishing under the same quota, without
21 it being calibrated.

22
23 Timing-wise, I don't know what we can do for 2026 to address that,
24 but that's something I think we need to think about between now
25 and Full Council for discussion, because of this transition and
26 the fact that they're no longer going to be using Tails 'n Scales.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Another good discussion. Mr. Chair, I
29 think I'm not seeing any other hands. We might be at a nice
30 breaking point here. I take it back. Mr. Anson.

31
32 **MR. ANSON:** One minor thing I want to clarify, or say, that I
33 didn't mention previously relative to the surveys, is that, you
34 know, AL Creel currently does not collect information from
35 federally-permitted charter boats for effort.

36
37 We do collect it on the dockside surveys, because they're included
38 as part of the interview vessels, but we don't interview or survey
39 them for effort through the phone survey that we use for the state-
40 licensed charter boats.

41
42 We use a contractor to contact private anglers through our license
43 database information, but we do intend, if funding is available,
44 to continue using the APAIS funds to conduct the dockside portion
45 of the sampling, as well as the phone calls for the effort on the
46 federally-permitted charter boats, in Alabama for 2026.

47
48 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that, Mr. Anson. Mr. Chair.

1
2 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. We'll go ahead and break for
3 lunch and reconvene at 1:30.

4
5 (Whereupon, the meeting recessed for lunch on November 4, 2025.)
6

7 - - -

8
9 November 4, 2025

10
11 TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION
12

13 - - -

14
15 The Reef Fish Management Committee of the Gulf Council reconvened
16 at the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi on
17 Tuesday afternoon, November 4, 2025, and was called to order by
18

19 **MR. DUGAS:** Okay, folks. Welcome back from lunch. We're going to
20 go ahead and get started. We're a few minutes behind where I
21 wanted to be. We'll turn it over to Dr. Sweetman to continue Reef
22 Fish.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, our
25 next item on the agenda, we have a Public Hearing Draft of Reef
26 Fish Amendment 58A: Shallow-Water Grouper Management Complex
27 Considerations.

28
29 Dr. Hollensead will be leading that presentation, along with
30 assistance and another presentation from Dr. Jessica Stephen, but,
31 Dr. Hollensead, if we could go through the action guide first,
32 please.

33
34 **PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT: AMENDMENT 58A: SHALLOW-WATER GROUPE**
35 **COMPLEX MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS**
36

37 **DR. LISA HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so, again, we're
38 going to go through Amendment 58A, and so, if you'll recall, this
39 is the shallow-water grouper complex, looking at management
40 considerations here.

41
42 At the last meeting, a couple of motions were made. Specifically,
43 there was a couple of motions that affected creation of a new
44 action, Action 1.2, as well as some motions to Action 3, which is
45 the black grouper complex recreational accountability measures,
46 and so that is what the presentation is largely going to focus on,
47 and then, as Dr. Sweetman had mentioned, we're going to have Dr.
48 Jessica Stephen, from the Regional Office, help with that, with

1 some IQ data.

2

3 The goal is to go through that presentation, and we also have the
4 document available, so that we can run through that, Mr. Chair, so
5 we can do that action-by-action, so people can remember what was
6 selected as preferred, and what still needs to be selected, and
7 those sorts of things.

8

9 Okay, and so, Bernie, if you wouldn't mind pulling up the
10 presentation, please, and so, as I mentioned, this presentation is
11 going to focus on Action 1.2 and Action 3.

12

13 Just to give a quick little bit of background, before we kind of
14 dive into the actions, and so looking at the purpose and need of
15 this document, and so the other shallow-water grouper complex
16 comprises four species, the scamp, yellowmouth grouper, black
17 grouper, and yellowfin grouper.

18

19 SEDAR 68 assessed scamp and yellowmouth grouper together, and that
20 was finalized in March of 2023. From that, we generated updated
21 catch advice, which resulted in approximately a 50 percent
22 reduction in harvest, in catch limits, but the assessment also
23 updated the recreational data stream to MRIP-FES.

24

25 This complex, or scamp and yellowmouth rather, are managed within
26 the Gulf jurisdictional boundaries. The other two species, black
27 grouper and yellowfin grouper, have not been assessed, and so they
28 were not part of that SEDAR 68 assessment, but we do have catch
29 limits that have been provided from the Generic ACL and AM
30 Amendment, that had been previously published, and so we do have
31 some information on potential catch levels for those two species,
32 and those catch limits would be informed by MRFSS, and so that
33 older set of recreational data.

34

35 There is a need to break up this existing complex into two new
36 complexes, and, seeing as scamp and yellowmouth grouper were
37 assessed together, this would create the new scamp complex, scamp
38 plus yellowmouth grouper, and there would also be the creation of
39 the black grouper complex, which is going to be black grouper and
40 yellowfin grouper, since they were not part of that assessment.
41 Black grouper is normally managed with the South Atlantic, and
42 some of those other considerations, and so that's why those two
43 species are being grouped together in the new groups that they
44 are.

45

46 Here's the motions that the council made from its last meeting,
47 and so the first was sort of how to break up the other shallow-
48 water grouper complex in terms of the IFQ program, and so the

1 motion was made to add the IFQ distribution alternatives from the
2 Considered and Rejected section of the document.

3
4 That decision was made when the document was considering shallow-
5 water grouper and deepwater grouper, and so that has now been
6 pulled out and focused on shallow-water grouper, and,
7 additionally, develop options for setting share caps for the new
8 complexes, and so that was the motion to that, and so that's the
9 first action I'm going to speak on.

10
11 There was also several motions regarding the black grouper complex
12 recreational accountability measure action, and so one motion that
13 was passed was to modify the post-season AM as follows, and so it
14 was to add that language that, in a season where the recreational
15 ACL and the black grouper complex ACL are exceeded, in the year
16 following that average, or overage, excuse me, NMFS would close
17 the recreational black grouper complex to harvest when that
18 happened, and so it was added in there that that would be the
19 complex ACL. It had originally just read the recreational ACL.

20
21 The other one was to move an in-season accountability measure to
22 Considered but Rejected, and so that was a new alternative to put
23 in that would look at this three-year average. Again, it would
24 look at this moving average, and, you know, if this was exceeded,
25 either the recreational ACL or the complex ACL, then that would
26 trigger the accountability measure, and so that's just to sort of
27 set the tone.

28
29 I'm going to focus on that top one right there, the IFQ
30 distribution, for the first part of this discussion, and then we'll
31 get to the other ones, moving down, and so this is focused on
32 discussion of Action 1.2

33
34 Okay, and so this was the alternatives, and this language was
35 largely borrowed from what came out of the Considered but Rejected,
36 but it was then modified now for shallow-water grouper, and so
37 Alternative 1 is the no action.

38
39 It's going to proportionally distribute, to the scamp complex and
40 the new black grouper complex, the share categories, the existing
41 share categories, that exist in the shallow-water grouper complex,
42 and so the mechanism with which you would calculate shares for the
43 two new complexes in this is only considering share categories.
44 That's the first one.

45
46 The second alternative would proportionally distribute the scamp
47 complex and black grouper complex share categories based on just
48 the landings history of that species within each subcomplex, and

1 it's going to use the landings histories from those various options
2 that you see there, a longer time series starting in 2011 into
3 2024, a little bit shorter from 2016, and then a very recent just
4 five years, but the mechanism for Alternative 2, when you go to
5 calculate how we're going to have new shares in these complexes,
6 is landings history of that species only. That's the only
7 consideration, and so that's number two.

8
9 For Alternative 3, again, you're going to look at these sort of
10 suite of options in terms of landings history, and that's the same,
11 but we're also going to get -- For lack of a better term, you're
12 going to get credit, equaling 50 percent, on your landings history
13 and your share categories, and so it would use both of those
14 things. You get, as a said, for lack of a better term, you get
15 credit for having landings and having shares.

16
17 I'm going to kind of give a little bit of an overview. I purposely
18 have made it sort of oversimplified, just so we can help understand
19 the mechanisms, right, and so we're going to do just a little
20 comparison of what are these alternatives actually doing, and so
21 we're going to start with the three sort of shareholder types here,
22 and I have in my best rendition of art that I can do.

23
24 On the left, you have an IFQ shareholder with a permit, okay, and
25 this individual has a permit, hence the little fishing rod there,
26 and they also have shares in the bank, and so that's the fish in
27 the bank. This individual can land IFQ species. They can lease
28 in annual allocation, and so they can get allocation from somebody
29 else, but they can also lease out their annual allocation.

30
31 There in the middle, you have an individual who is a permit holder,
32 but no IFQ shares, right, and so this individual only has a fishing
33 pole. That's all they can do. They don't have any fish in the
34 bank, and so they can land IFQ species after purchasing shares, in
35 which case they become the person on the left, or from leasing
36 annual allocation from another shareholder, and, after purchasing
37 that, they could also lease that out, if they wanted to, but they
38 do not have shares, as they exist at that moment.

39
40 Then the third type is that individual on the right, and so this
41 person is an IFQ shareholder with no permit, and so they do not
42 have a fishing pole. They cannot land IFQ species, but they have
43 fish in the bank, right, and so they can lease in or out IFQ
44 allocation, but, like I said, they can't land those species, and
45 so those are our three sort of contestants, or participants, in
46 the program here, just very broadly.

47
48 Let's walk through some scenarios with our individuals that we

1 have here, and we see how their outcomes may change depending on
2 what alternative is selected, and so, again, Alternative 1 is only
3 going to look at your share percentage only when considering how
4 you're going to break out your IFQ distribution, and so let's start
5 at that top row, and so we've got a shareholder with a permit.
6 They've got fish in the bank, and they've got their fishing pole.
7
8 They currently have 1 percent shares of shallow-water grouper, and
9 so, under Alternative 1, when you break out the complex into two,
10 they would then receive 1 percent share of scamp and 1 percent
11 share of black grouper, and so the net change in shares is not
12 there, although there's an asterisk there, and I'll go into that.
13
14 The middle row there is an individual who can fish, but has no
15 shares, and so, under Alternative 1, that individual has no shares
16 of shallow-water grouper, and so, therefore, they would have zero
17 shares of scamp and black grouper, and so they would experience no
18 change in shares.
19
20 That very bottom row then is a person who cannot fish or land IFQ
21 species, but does have shares. They've got fish in the bank, and
22 they have 1 percent of shares, and so, under Alternative 1, they
23 would retain 1 percent share of scamp and 1 percent share of black
24 grouper. Again, no change in shares, and there's a little asterisk
25 there.
26
27 That asterisk indicates that a shareholder could receive shares of
28 a shallow-water grouper species they've never landed before, and
29 so let's say, in their landings history and things, they only ever
30 landed scamp, but now they're going to get shares of black grouper,
31 and so that could happen.
32
33 Now, the program certainly allows for shares to be harvest, leased,
34 or divested. As I mentioned before in that previous slide, right,
35 there are some things that you can do. That mechanism still stays
36 in place. An individual would still have that, you know, something
37 that they can do. Any of these actions don't touch anything like
38 that, right, and so they would still have the ability to move
39 shares, lease shares, that kind of thing, and so that was
40 Alternative 1.
41
42 Alternative 2 is going to use landings history only to calculate
43 the new IFQ shares. In this case, leasing does not equal landings,
44 okay, and so a landing -- What I'm talking about here is you have
45 physically touched the fish, right, and you have put it on the
46 dock, and that's sort of the landings there, and so that's all
47 that's being accounted for here.
48

1 When we take our shareholder types, and we'll start at the top row
2 there, we've got a shareholder with a permit. In this case, we're
3 going to put some numbers to these percentages. Let's pretend
4 that 1 percent share equals 1,000 pounds of shallow-water grouper.
5 This particular individual landed all of those, and I'm also
6 pretending that this person does the same thing every year, okay,
7 and let's just keep it simple. They land that 1,000 pounds of
8 scamp.

9
10 Under Alternative 2, because we're just looking at landings
11 history, and we're only looking at that column there, they get 1
12 percent share of scamp and zero percent shares of black grouper,
13 and so, functionally, if that's somebody who ran their business or
14 whatever, they don't see any functional change, necessarily.

15
16 Let's look at an individual shareholder with a permit who had 1
17 percent shares, still equating to 1,000 pounds, and they have 500
18 pounds of scamp, and still zero pounds of black grouper, just to
19 try to keep this simple, and, under Alternative 2, they would have
20 0.5 shares of scamp, 0 percent shares of black grouper, equating
21 to a loss of 50 percent of their current shares.

22
23 Then we look at our permit with no shares, and so that person has
24 zero shares, which equates to zero pounds, but let's say they
25 leased allocation every year from somebody, and they landed all of
26 that, and so they landed 1,000 pounds of scamp. That individual
27 would then receive, under Alternative 2, 1 percent share of scamp
28 and zero percent share of black grouper, and so they would gain
29 shares based on their landings.

30
31 The last scenario here has shares with no permit. Again, a 1
32 percent share of shallow-water grouper equals 1,000 pounds, but
33 remember, they're not permitted to catch IFQ species, right, and
34 they don't have a little fishing pole next to them, and so they
35 have zero landings, in terms of pounds.

36
37 Under Alternative 2, they would receive zero percent shares of
38 scamp and zero percent shares of black grouper, and so they would
39 lose all of their shares in that scenario, because it's just
40 looking at landings history. That's all Alternative 2 is doing.
41 It's the only thing that goes into that equation.

42
43 Okay, and so here's the last one, and so this is Alternative 3,
44 which, like I said, it's going to give you a little credit for
45 having landings history as well as some share percentage, and so
46 that top row, again, we have a shareholder with permit, and so 1
47 percent shares of shallow-water grouper, and it's still 1,000
48 pounds. They have 1,000 pounds of scamp, and so they are going to

1 get 1 percent share of scamp and, again, zero percent shares of
2 black grouper, because they don't have the landings history of it,
3 and so there's really no changes, functionally, there for that
4 individual.

5
6 If we look at a shareholder with a permit, and, again, a 1 percent
7 share equals 1,000 pounds, and they that 500 pounds of scamp, with
8 zero pounds of black grouper, and so this is where the 50 percent
9 comes in, and so you get sort of a 50 percent credit of having
10 shares, 1 percent share, and so that equates to 500 pounds, plus,
11 you landed half of your -- You landed 500 pounds, and you get half
12 credit for that, and so that's 250 pounds, and so, when you add up
13 500 plus 250, you get 750 pounds of scamp, and so you would lose
14 25 percent of your shares.

15
16 The permit and no shares, and so, again, this person has zero
17 shares, but they do have 1,000 pounds of scamp that they landed.
18 They were able to get allocation from somebody, and they landed
19 1,000 pounds of scamp. When you go under Alternative 3, 50 percent
20 of zero is just zero, and so that just zeroes out, and so then you
21 get 50 percent of 1,000 pounds, and so that would give you 500
22 pounds of scamp, and so you would gain landings, 50 percent of
23 landings, as shares. That's how that would equate out in
24 Alternative 3.

25
26 The last one, this person has shares, but no permits, and so,
27 again, starting with a 1 percent share of shallow-water grouper
28 equals 1,000 pounds, but they have zero pounds of landings, because
29 they can't -- They're not permitted to land IFQ species, and so we
30 put it in our little equation again.

31
32 They do get the credit for having shares, and so equally split at
33 50 percent, and so that equates to 500 pounds, but, you know, they
34 don't have any landings, and so they don't get any credit for that,
35 and so that comes out as zero, and so 500 plus zero is 500 pounds
36 of scamp, and so they lose 50 percent of their shares, because
37 this gives you, again, a little credit for landings history and a
38 little credit for share percentage. I'm going to pause right there
39 and ask if there's any questions.

40
41 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** It was my understanding there would be no math.

42
43 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** There's also graphs. I'm so sorry.

44
45 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Ms. Ballard.

46
47 **MS. BALLARD:** I just want to thank you for this. This made it
48 very easy to understand and see the examples of what happens in

1 each situation. It's very easy to understand. Thank you.

2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I echo those sentiments. Good job,
4 Dr. Hollensead, so far. Any questions? I think we can proceed.

5
6 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay. Thanks. Next slide, Bernie, and so this
7 is just sort of an overview. Again, there are lots of different
8 people in the program using, you know, fish in a lot of different
9 ways, and so we're just going to walk through this, real quickly,
10 just as an overview, and then, unfortunately, it is going to get
11 a little bit more complicated as we go through here.

12
13 That top row, if you land fish based on all available shares
14 throughout Alternative 1, Alternative 2, and Alternative 3, you
15 basically remain equal, right? You've retained your shares, and
16 you've landed all of them, and you get credit for having shares
17 and landings. If you, you know, completely utilized every bit
18 that you ever had, you don't change very much, but, most people,
19 that's not how they operate, right?

20
21 There's things that happen. You know, your boat can break down,
22 or you're just not fishing as much, and things happen, and so
23 you're probably going to be in one of these other rows here, and
24 so what about the individual that lands some fish, but leases some
25 fish annually?

26
27 Well, under the Alternative 1 percentage, you're just looking at
28 your percentage only, and you would sort of hold station there, in
29 terms of, you know, you have a percent of shallow-water grouper
30 shares, and that would create the same percentage of shares for
31 the new scamp and black grouper, but, if you're looking at your
32 landings only, and, you know, you didn't land some of those, and
33 you leased them out to somebody, you know, you're going to see a
34 decrease, as well as landings and share percentage, but the swing
35 may not be as dramatic, right, and so it mitigates a little bit by
36 having credit for both of those things.

37
38 Lands some fish, and leases some fish annually, and some allocation
39 might be unused, and so not caught or leased, and the same pattern
40 that you would see there. You know, if at any point you've leased
41 some, you would see a little bit of decrease under Alternative 2
42 or Alternative 3.

43
44 The individual that leases only, and so this is somebody who, you
45 know, doesn't have a permit, but has fish in the bank, and,
46 obviously, when you're just looking at shares only, they would
47 retain that percentage under Alternative 1, but, for Alternative
48 2, they could potentially lose all of their shares and would have

1 nothing for the new scamp, or the new black grouper, or they would
2 lose a fraction of it under Alternative 3.
3
4 Here's somebody who would land all fish in some years, but not all
5 qualifying years, and so, you know, this might be a new participant
6 that's come in and just recently bought shares in the last year or
7 two, right, and so, the longer time series of history, they don't
8 have that history to them, and so, you know, that wouldn't equate
9 as much, and so they could stand, potentially, under Alternative
10 2 and 3, which considers some landing history -- They could see
11 potentially a decrease, and so this might be some of your new
12 entrants, that kind of thing to think about.
13
14 This is the lease-only fisherman, who doesn't -- Who does not own
15 shares, and, again, sort of this -- This person, right, was the
16 person in the middle, who had the fishing pole, but no fish in the
17 bank.
18
19 If they had zero percent shares, they're still going to have zero
20 percent shares under Alternative 1 for the new complexes, but,
21 under Alternative 3, they would receive that as part of their
22 landings history. They would then receive that as shares for the
23 new complexes, and the same with Alternative 3.
24
25 In all the scenarios I gave, you know, I just -- You know, sort of
26 a hypothetical, so you guys could see the mechanisms with how
27 things work, but, obviously it's a little more complicated than
28 that, and so, for example, scamp is getting sort of a 50 percent
29 reduction based on SEDAR. The landings history that you would be
30 looking at would be the landings history of what people caught,
31 and not the quota, and so I'll say that again. It would be the
32 landings history of what individuals in the program caught, and
33 not the quota.
34
35 So, for example, if, most of the time, all of the IFQ participants
36 for this caught 99.9 percent of the quota, you know, you may not
37 see a big difference when you go to parse this out, by looking at
38 landings history, but, if you don't catch that much of the quota,
39 you could potentially also be losing some poundage there to -- I
40 don't know how else to say it, but as a function of the math to
41 redistribute everything, and so, Bernie, if you wouldn't mind
42 pulling up that auxiliary table
43
44 This comes from the 2023 IFQ report, and so it's going to show you
45 what percentage of the commercial quota of shallow-water grouper
46 was harvested from 2010, and it goes to 2023, and so you see values
47 ranging there from the low thirties up to, you know, 59 percent,
48 but it's not all of the quota was being harvested. It's a small

1 bit, and so that will also kind of dissipate a bit in the ether as
2 a function of administratively putting out these IFQ
3 distributions, and so that's some of the complications there.

4
5 This is the shallow-water grouper, and so that's all four species
6 combined, and so I just wanted to make that point as well again,
7 and not everything -- This was sort of an oversimplification, just
8 so you could see how things go through those various scenarios,
9 but these are the other things, and what we're doing in this action
10 is not happening in a vacuum, right? There's other things in this
11 document that -- From the SEDAR, we have to reduce harvest level
12 and things like that of scamp, and so I just wanted to make that
13 clear as well, that that's going on, and I think -- Is there any
14 questions about that?

15
16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Osborne.

17
18 **MR. OSBORNE:** I'm just trying to understand a little bit. Well,
19 first off, these shares that they're getting in these species,
20 when we're talking about a change in the shares, we're not talking
21 about it transferring over to the other species, right, and like
22 if your shares are reduced because they're based on the overall
23 complex?

24
25 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** I think I think I've got your question right, and
26 so your landings history would be based specifically on that
27 species, correct, and so it would be your species-specific landings
28 history.

29
30 **MR. OSBORNE:** So the theory -- I mean, if you're the -- I've got
31 to get the pictures, because the pictures help me. If you're the
32 IFQ shareholder with no permit, and you just -- You lease out your
33 shares, and then you're in a situation where you lose half of your
34 shares that year, and then, the next year, say you lose another
35 half, but then, the third year, you could -- If you're still just
36 leasing out shares, and nobody is landing, I mean, it could be
37 kind of back and forth for a number of years, right?

38
39 **DR. HOLLENSSEAD:** Yes, and my understanding is like, when you see
40 the percentage of the quota here, there may have been somebody who
41 landed all of their personal, but somebody that didn't, and so,
42 for example, if everybody landed that, in 2010, 39 percent of their
43 quota, it wouldn't make as much of a difference, but, if I landed
44 80 percent of mine, and you landed 10 percent of yours, then, yes,
45 it's going to come out a little bit different, because it's based
46 then on that, you know, 39 percent of harvest that all IQ
47 participants did.

1 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any questions? Dr. Overton.

2
3 **DR. ANTHONY OVERTON:** A quick question. In general, what
4 percentage would the new black grouper and yellowfin account in
5 the shallow-water? Just an idea.

6
7 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** I think that would be a Dr. Stephen question,
8 but, yes, I think there's the -- Yes, it is smaller, and this is
9 mostly scamp. It's mostly scamp. In the document, the landings
10 table -- So, Dr. Overton, in the document, that would be Table
11 1.1.2, which give you a breakout of all of those, and so that is
12 that is something to think about.

13
14 Again, and so now I'm getting into a little bit that maybe Assane
15 can help me out here, but also thinking about that, for the scamp
16 quota in this document, we're going to have a 50 percent reduction,
17 because of SEDAR 68. That's not the case for black grouper, right,
18 and so there should be -- You know, based on historical landings
19 of black grouper, and what we are considering for the commercial
20 ACL there, and, generally, historically landings have been below
21 that for black grouper, and so the black grouper complex.

22
23 You would think about -- As you're thinking about allocation prices
24 or those things, scamp would be -- You know, you would think there
25 would be more demand of it, because there's less of it, and so
26 that price could go up, but, the black grouper complex, maybe not
27 so much.

28
29 I believe shallow-water grouper, and Dr. Stephen can correct me if
30 I'm wrong, at the moment, in 2024, was going for -- I think it was
31 seventy-one cents a pound, and I hope she can correct me if I'm
32 wrong about that.

33
34 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going to the presentation, please.
35 That's all I had to sort of present on my end. The one thing, you
36 know, before I kick you over to Dr. Stephen, because she is going
37 to give you some very detailed examples with IFQ data and
38 information, and so it's sort of like more real-world examples
39 than what I could provide, you know, here.

40
41 I guess just some of the take-home messages, again, that I'll just
42 reiterate, to go through your head as she's giving her
43 presentation, is the Alternative 1, and so that would be the number
44 of shares of shallow-water grouper, is what the participants would
45 receive for the new complexes in equal measure. You get 1 percent
46 of one, the shallow-water grouper, and then you have 1 percent of
47 black grouper and 1 percent of scamp.

1 Alternatives 2 and 3 would result in some IFQ participants
2 receiving more shares, but, you know, that would come from
3 shareholders who at some point had decided to lease allocation,
4 and so that's just what to sort of keep in mind, but I'll certainly
5 kick it over now to Dr. Stephen, because she can give you some
6 real IFQ numbers, to help you all sort of line up what we're what
7 we're thinking about here.

8
9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that, Dr. Hollensead. Dr.
10 Stephen, whenever you're ready, and we can pull up her part of
11 that presentation.

12
13 **DR STEPHEN:** While they're pulling it up, can everyone hear me?

14
15 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Loud and clear.

16
17 **DR. STEPHEN:** Perfect. All right. Thank you for pulling that up,
18 and so I did some work, this past week, trying to get you guys
19 some real-world examples. I think I heard a comment about math.
20 I apologize, and my next slide will have a little bit of math. We
21 can go ahead and move to the next slide.

22
23 All right, and so, for the examples that I'm going to show here,
24 I'm going to use an example where the quota for the black grouper
25 complex is going to be 227,000 pounds, and, for the scamp, we're
26 using it at the 70,000-pound limit, which is where your preferred
27 is once we do the rounding that we need to do within the IFQ
28 system.

29
30 As Lisa had mentioned, when we're looking at landings, it's going
31 to be based -- Your proportion of shares that you get for landings
32 would be based on your ratio of your landings across the different
33 time series compared to -- Or divided by the total number of
34 landings overall for everything, and so, in order to think about
35 this, if you look at the little diagram I have, we have the big
36 fish, which is all the total landings, and it's comprised of all
37 the individual accounts landings within it. It's your individual
38 account landings across those years divided by the total as a
39 whole.

40
41 When we're looking at the 50-50, I'm going to use that same
42 calculation that we did for the landings, but times it by 0.5 for
43 the 50 percent, and then take the other shallow-water grouper
44 shares that that account might have held and times that by 0.5,
45 and then add those two together, and so those are just the
46 mathematical ways in which we get to the individual accounts
47 shares, based on the three different alternatives, and then
48 considering the different time series.

1
2 Just to give you a preview of what we're going to be doing here,
3 I did two different types of analysis, and so, the first set of
4 analysis, we're going to just compare what the overall shift is in
5 share distribution by the different accounts, based on whether the
6 accounts have shares and have landings.

7
8 Our four different categories that we're looking at are accounts
9 that have both shares and landings, accounts that have shares but
10 no landings, accounts that have no shares and landings, and then
11 accounts that have neither shares nor landings.

12
13 The following set of tables, for the next couple of slides, is
14 going to sum that up, and I'm going to show you some comparisons
15 to what it would look like if we just took the other shallow-water
16 grouper shares and applied it to each of the two new complexes.
17 After I'm done with those slides, I'm going to give you some real-
18 world examples.

19
20 I looked at our data, and how I generated this is took some examples
21 of data, and I'm going to show you what it would look like from an
22 individual perspective and how that changes based on the different
23 activities that they do within their accounts.

24
25 I'm going to start with the black grouper complex here, and so the
26 very top table would show you how we would distribute shares for
27 black grouper based on what their other shallow-water grouper
28 complex shares would be, and so, in this case, those total amount
29 of shares -- We would have 79 percent of all the shares that belong
30 to the black grouper complex would be associated with accounts
31 that had shares, but had no landings, while 21 percent of those
32 shares, in total, would be under accounts that had shares and
33 landings.

34
35 Remember that each person's individual share amount stays the same,
36 but we're just grouping them by these four different categories,
37 to see where it plays out.

38
39 The next table down, we're looking at the landings-only scenario,
40 and I have the three different time series there, from the longest
41 time series of 2011 to 2024 to the most recent time series of 2020
42 to 2024.

43
44 I would like to point out that the color coding is there within
45 the cells to help you do the comparison to what it would be if you
46 were just using the other shallow-water grouper shares, and how
47 that changes based on the different alternatives, where the
48 summation of the shares land by the different categories.

1
2 I have little arrows next to this, and so I was trying to kind of
3 work with some of the presentation that Lisa did, and so the little
4 arrows that you see in the cells are indicative of how that has
5 changed compared to what they would get just straight from the
6 other shallow-water grouper landings, and so let's take and walk
7 through one of them.

8
9 Let's look at the landings for the most recent time series, the
10 2020 through 2024. Under this scenario, accounts that had no
11 shares, but did have landings, which under the status quo would
12 have zero shares, would end up with 60 percent of total shares
13 under those types of accounts.

14
15 The accounts that had shares, but had no landings, would end up
16 with zero, because this is based on the landings criteria, and
17 then accounts that had both shares and landings would actually
18 increase from having the 21 percent we saw under just the shallow-
19 water grouper shares to 40 percent of those shares would belong to
20 accounts that had both shares and landings, and so what you
21 typically see here is that there's been an increase in both types
22 of accounts that had landings and a decrease in shares compared to
23 the other shallow-water grouper for accounts that had no landings.

24
25 The bottom set of tables is the 50-50 scenario, and so this is
26 where 50 percent of the landings -- Sorry. 50 percent of the
27 shares came from the landings calculation and 50 percent came from
28 the other shallow-water grouper calculation, and so, once again,
29 the color coding is there.

30
31 Because we're using a 50-50 model, those accounts that had shares
32 and no landings do receive shares in those accounts. Overall,
33 they only equate for 25 percent of the overall shares within the
34 complex.

35
36 Those accounts that had landings also received shares, but here
37 you can see that those with no shares and landings is slightly
38 decreased from the landings-only model, but still greater than
39 they would have gotten under the just straight other shallow-water
40 grouper shares model, and, for accounts that had shares and
41 landings, they as well go up from what they had done under just
42 the other shallow-water grouper shares, but are slightly
43 different, or lower, than what we've typically seen in the
44 landings-only model.

45
46 I want to stress, again, that this is just where all the individual
47 shares sum up for the total amount of shares, and so equal to 100
48 percent in the end across these, and so these are not necessarily

1 individual distributions. I'm going to stop here and see if anyone
2 has questions. Then I'm going to kind of summarize the black
3 grouper, and do the same for the scamp. Are there any questions
4 about this? I know it's a lot of information on one page.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any questions for Dr. Stephen thus far? I'm
7 seeing none, Dr. Stephen. It looks like you can proceed.

8
9 **DR. STEPHEN:** All right. Let's go ahead and move on to the next
10 slide. All right, and so what were the kind of key takeaways when
11 we looked at it at this level? Under the landings scenarios, we
12 see that the majority of the shares reallocated from IFQ accounts
13 with shares and no landings to IFQ accounts with landings and no
14 shares, which is sort of the point behind the landing scenarios,
15 to give shares to those accounts that were more actively landing.

16
17 We also notice that the total shares for IFQ accounts that had
18 both shares and landings did actually increase under both the
19 landing scenario, and more than doubling what it was under just
20 the straight other shallow-water grouper share scenario.

21
22 When we look at the 50-50 scenarios, while the IFQ accounts with
23 no shares and landings do receive shares, it's nearly half of what
24 was received under the landing scenario, and then the total shares
25 for accounts with shares and landings have increased again under
26 both scenarios, similar to what we saw in the landing scenario.

27
28 We did the same kind of analysis here under the scamp complex.
29 Remember that the scamp complex might have different accounts that
30 are doing landings than what you saw under the black grouper
31 complex, and that's why you see, for here, 45 percent of all the
32 shares end up under the shares with no landings, and 55 percent of
33 the shares ended up under the shares and landings.

34
35 Again, I want to stress the individual amounts within each account
36 are still allocated to people, but here we're dividing up by how
37 they're doing the landings for these categories for the different
38 complexes, and so, as we look at the landings scenario for this,
39 again, I'm going to concentrate on the 2020 to 2024, but you'll
40 see similar patterns and trends within all the different time
41 series.

42
43 Under the landings scenario, those accounts that did not have
44 shares, but did have landings end up compromising 59 percent of
45 the shares, while 41 percent of the shares ends up with those who
46 have shares but no landings.

47
48 When we look at the 50-50 scenario, we see, again, that those with

1 no shares and landings do get a higher percentage of shares than
2 they would under just the other shallow-water grouper share
3 scenario, but it's less than under the landings scenario, and that
4 those accounts that had shares and no landings, in this case, do
5 receive some landings, but it is less, about half, of what they
6 would have received under the other shallow-water grouper shares,
7 and, for accounts with shares and landings, the values are similar
8 to the landing scenario.

9
10 In most cases, in the shorter time series, they receive less than
11 they would under the other shallow-water grouper scenario, and, in
12 the longer time series, they receive slightly more.

13
14 Once again, some of the key takeaways, when we're looking at the
15 scamp complex, is similar to what we saw under the black grouper
16 complex. We see a lot of the shares allocating the landings
17 scenario to those accounts that had landings, even those accounts
18 that have landings with no shares.

19
20 Under the longest time series, the amount of shares that end up
21 with accounts that had both shares and landings is slightly
22 increased, compared to what we see in the other shallow-water
23 grouper scenario, but, under the other time series, it's slightly
24 decreased, by a small percentage overall.

25
26 In the 50-50 scenario, once again, we see a very similar pattern,
27 where some of the shares are being allocated to those accounts
28 with no shares, but those that did have landings, and those are
29 primarily coming from accounts that had shares with no landings,
30 and once again, we see differences across the time series for
31 these, where the shorter time series seems to have more of a
32 decrease than what you would see under the longer time series.

33
34 Those slides were good at telling you overall how the shares would
35 go, based on categories, but doesn't give you an idea how someone
36 in particular would be affected by the different scenarios, and
37 those things that would affect them would be how much of landings
38 they have for each species in the different time series chosen, as
39 well as what the alternatives are, and so what I wanted to do here
40 was take some individual examples, and so I went through some of
41 our data.

42
43 I looked for some prime examples, and I did modify the data, and
44 so you're not seeing anyone's particular data and information
45 that's being outputted and I put these through the decision tool
46 we created, in order to show you what the outputs are, and so just
47 to get -- To have you understand your inputs are currently what
48 your other shallow-water grouper shares are, as well as by year

1 what your annual landings are for black grouper and then for the
2 scamp complex.

3
4 The scenarios I was trying to look at are similar to what Lisa was
5 talking about. I went to look at someone who had shares and
6 landings, and maybe bought additional allocation to make their
7 landings, people who had shares and no landings, and no shares and
8 landings, and I also looked at a different variety of amount of
9 shares that they held.

10
11 Before I get into this, I wanted to kind of just point out a couple
12 bits of information we got when looking at it, and so, if you look
13 down at the IFQ accounts with landings for the different time
14 series, I'm showing you how many accounts had landings under each
15 category, as well as the last 2024 numbers were, and so, in 2024,
16 ninety-seven accounts had black grouper complex landings, and then
17 260 accounts had the scamp complex landings.

18
19 Keep in mind that the scamp typically has a higher degree of
20 participation, and so more accounts landing scamp than we see with
21 black grouper.

22
23 Then, if you look at the table above this, I took the different
24 scenarios and looked at the maximum value that would be generated
25 for any individual IFQ account under each scenario for each
26 complex, and those are what is shown here. This just gives you an
27 idea of where we're going to probably have to end up setting share
28 caps, as we're coming through, if we choose anything other than
29 just using the other shallow-water grouper our complex shares as
30 a scenario.

31
32 I do want to caution that these will not be the maximum, because
33 we do look at share caps for individuals instead of accounts, and
34 we look at them across accounts, and so that would be the mechanism
35 in which to set the share cap, so the most we distribute is what
36 then sets the share cap. This is similar to what we did when we
37 started the IFQ programs.

38
39 Here we're going to get into our very first example, and so, in
40 this example, this is an IFQ account that has both shares and
41 landings, as well as they purchased additional allocation in order
42 to make their landings. The amount of other shallow-water grouper
43 shares that they had was 0.0047 percent. To give you an idea,
44 that's roughly equivalent to about twenty-five pounds of shallow-
45 water grouper.

46
47 In this example, this person, or this account, has landed both the
48 black grouper as well as the scamp complex, and so, in each of the

1 next set of slides, you'll see we'll have very similar information
2 displayed.

3
4 The yellow table will always show you the amount of allocation
5 they will receive from shares under each of the methods. The green
6 table shows you the actual share percentage, and then the blue
7 table below shows you what the average landings were for each of
8 the different time series, just to get a feel for how much they're
9 landing overall.

10
11 When we're looking at the green table, the arrows that you see on
12 the right-hand side of the cells are comparing the landings in the
13 50-50 scenario to the other shallow-water grouper share percentage
14 scenario, and then the arrows that you see on the left are just
15 comparing the 50-50 to the landing scenario.

16
17 When we look at this in this account, the person has typically
18 landed more allocation than they received from shares, and that
19 was through purchasing or obtaining that allocation from another
20 account, and so, in a scenario like this, this account would see
21 an increase in shares under both the landings and the 50-50
22 scenario, although the 50-50 scenario would give them less overall
23 than they would receive from the landings.

24
25 What you can see is that the average amount that they've been
26 landing, depending on what scenario you use, may or may not end up
27 with sufficient allocation from their shares in order to land the
28 scamp, and so, for an example, if we look at the 2020 to 2024
29 landings, those averages ranged around twenty-four pounds per
30 year.

31
32 Under the different scenarios, they would only get sufficient
33 allocation from their shares under the 2020 to 2024 landings
34 alternative that is based primarily on landings. In other
35 scenarios, they would get some allocation from shares, typically
36 more than they would receive just from the amount of shares they
37 would get, and then they would have to purchase additional to keep
38 towards that average landings.

39
40 Under the black grouper, you see that they have more than
41 sufficient allocation, in most of the scenarios, to land the amount
42 of black grouper they were traditionally landing.

43
44 Let's change this up a little bit, and so I'm going to keep the
45 same amount of shares, but this is someone who had no black grouper
46 complex landings during any of the time series throughout here,
47 and so, in this case, when we use the same logic for history in
48 both black grouper and scamp complex shares, you'll see that they

1 will go down in shares for both the landings in a 50-50 scenario
2 for black grouper, but that they go up in shares for some of the
3 scenarios under scamp.

4
5 You'll notice that the 2020 to 2024 landings do go down in shares,
6 because, in this scenario, they had no landings in those recent
7 years, and you can see that by the average landings table below
8 that has zero landings of both black grouper and scamp complex
9 species.

10
11 Part of the point here is just to illustrate that what your
12 landings were when they occurred really do drive individually how
13 much of the shares you would receive under these different
14 scenarios, and let's go ahead to the next slide.

15
16 This is an example where they still have the same amount of shares
17 that were equal to twenty-five pounds, but, in this case, they had
18 no landings of black grouper and no landings under the scamp
19 complex. This is one of the more easier scenarios to think about
20 overall. Apologies that my graph on the bottom is wrong for this
21 one. I must not have updated that.

22
23 In this case, when we're looking at the shares, we'll see a
24 decrease in shares for all of the landings scenarios. They get
25 zero amount of shares, because they had no landings in either
26 category, and, under the 50-50 scenario, they actually could have
27 an increase in some amount of shares -- Sorry. They have a decrease
28 in overall shares, but the 50-50 is a greater amount of shares,
29 since it's greater than zero, than they would have received under
30 the landings scenario. In this case, again, someone who had no
31 landings would receive a small amount of poundage, based on their
32 shares under the 50-50 scenario.

33
34 This is the opposite example. This is a person who had no shares.
35 They received no allocation from shares, and they purchased
36 everything, and they happen to be fairly high landings of black
37 grouper and the scamp complex species overall.

38
39 When you're looking at this, you see that this type of account
40 typically will benefit under the landings scenario, as well as the
41 50-50 scenario, but less benefit under the 50-50 than under the
42 landing scenario, because they do not have any shares within it.

43
44 Under a lot of the landing scenarios, they don't quite get all the
45 allocation for scamp that they would need, based on their average
46 landings, but they do get a good proportion of it, and, under the
47 black grouper, because of the higher quota in black grouper, and
48 how their landings were, they seem to get more than enough

1 allocation to cover their black grouper landings.
2
3 Next slide, and I promise you this this is the last one of the
4 examples, and so, before, I kept most of the shares on the smaller
5 share percentage side, and I wanted to show you an example with a
6 higher shareholder of other shallow-water grouper shares.
7
8 In this case, this is someone who has 3.4 percent. That means
9 they would have received, in 2025, around 17,850 pounds from those
10 shares. This account had pretty high landings in both black
11 grouper and the scamp complex in most years, but they did not
12 necessarily have it in every year.
13
14 Under this scenario, for black grouper, based on their proportion
15 of landings compared to the total landings, they actually go up in
16 the amount of shares that they would receive under the landings
17 scenario versus the other shallow-water grouper scenario, but,
18 under scamp, because their proportion was smaller of the total
19 landings, they go down a little bit.
20
21 Under the 50-50 scenario, we see the same pattern, and, in this
22 case, for black grouper, the 50-50 scenario decreases their shares
23 compared to landings, but, in the scamp complex, it increases their
24 shares per landings, and you can see, within some of these, what
25 their average landings are and how the different amounts of
26 allocation they get from shares would compare.
27
28 Again in black grouper, most of those people, because of the high
29 quota, are getting sufficient allocation to make their landings,
30 whereas, under scamp, depending on scenarios, they might need to
31 purchase additional allocation, in order to keep to the same degree
32 of landings that they had in the past.
33
34 What I wanted to do is kind put this together, so you could see
35 some of the different scenarios. Really, some of the take-home
36 message is it depends, individually, what will happen to you based
37 on your proportional landings and what years you landed and what
38 time series was selected for either the landings or 50-50 scenario.
39
40 Overall, we can say there are certain trends we saw in the
41 beginning of the presentation. Individually, those trends could
42 be variable, or different, because it is based on your individual
43 landings.
44
45 I am not going to go over this one, and I'll summarize it in the
46 next slide, if you want to show the next slide. Kin of the
47 takeaway, from looking at these different scenarios, is there is
48 no one pattern that is going to fit all the examples for either

1 the landings or 50-50 scenarios.

2
3 Your individual amounts, that are an increase or decrease in
4 shares, is driven by what years you had what landings of what
5 species and how that compared to the total landings over all the
6 species. As Lisa mentioned, we've had a smaller percentage of the
7 shallow-water grouper for many years now, and so looking at the
8 quotas is not as helpful as knowing what the total landings were.

9
10 Accounts that had remaining allocation from shares, and so they
11 didn't land all the allocation from shares, typically will receive
12 lower shares under the landings and 50-50 scenarios, but that does
13 not mean it's always the case, based on what proportion of shares
14 they landed compared to everyone else.

15
16 Because this is complicated, we have created a decision tool that
17 will allow fishermen to predict their share for each one of their
18 accounts under each of these different scenarios. We built tools
19 into the IFQ website to assist them in populating it, and so it
20 can easily grab that information. Information on how to use that
21 view within the IFQ program is under one of our Fishery Bulletins
22 released in December 2024.

23
24 Then just one more slide I have left, and this is giving the
25 council an example of some of the information that's going to be
26 seen by the fishermen when they want to use a decision tool. What
27 you see in step one is the information they're going to be entering
28 from their individual accounts, and so they would enter in their
29 current other shallow-water grouper shares, and then their
30 landings for each of the complexes for each of the years under
31 consideration.

32
33 The step two, the model would then select what the quota is. I
34 think I have it defaulted to what I've been using here in the
35 presentation, and then what they'll get is some model outputs like
36 you've seen in the presentation. They'll see the amount of shares
37 they'll get under each scenario. They'll see how much allocation
38 they did receive in 2025, based on their shares, and they'll also
39 see what that share percentage equals as allocation, and so a
40 little bit more real-world example for them.

41
42 The decision tool also has a couple of different graphs for them
43 to visually represent it, and so, at this time, I would be happy
44 to take any questions. I know that was a lot that I threw at you
45 guys, but hopefully it will be able to let you understand better
46 the variable nature of how the shares would be distributed by
47 individuals, compared to how they would be summed up when we group
48 people by shares and landings.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that presentation. Dr. Steven,
3 are there any questions for her? We have a question from Dr.
4 Diagne.

5
6 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll preface this by saying
7 that I have two questions, but I'll just ask the first one. If
8 you allow only one, and that's my quota, okay. The first question,
9 Dr. Stephen, is, the time series considered here, the terminal
10 year is 2024 for all of them, right, with the landings, and
11 landings are 50-50, and so my first question is what would happen
12 to someone who entered the fishery, you know, from January 1, 2025
13 onward, and entered the fishery and bought shares, and have
14 landings, or not, and so, essentially, how are we going to deal
15 with those folks?

16
17 I understand we have to cut it somewhere, but, I mean, this is a
18 resource allocation, and how are we going to address those? That's
19 my first question, and then I have another one.

20
21 **DR. STEPHEN:** Thanks, Assane. As you mentioned, we have to cut,
22 you know, somewhere, where we're making our determinations, and,
23 obviously, we couldn't use 2025, because it's not over yet at this
24 point, and so someone who came into the fishery, and had no
25 accounts, right, and, if they bought shares under Alternative 1,
26 the share scenario, they would retain their same shares, but they
27 would be, you know, the same amount for each of the two new share
28 categories, regardless of what their landings were.

29
30 Under the landing scenario, they would no longer have those shares.
31 Under the 50-50, they would retain some of those. If they had
32 zero landings, or a small proportion of landings, depending on the
33 time series taken, they most likely would get -- So the shorter
34 time series, if they had any landings, maybe they would get more
35 or less. In general though, they would be less shares, and sorry,
36 than what they would have had under Alternative 1.

37
38 **DR. DIAGNE:** All right. Thank you, Dr. Stephen, and so the gist
39 of it, just for those folks, Alternative 1 would be the best bet.
40 Anything else, they would take, you know, a full haircut, or, you
41 know, a slight haircut.

42
43 The second question, let's say we suppose that we use landings
44 only, or 50-50, and are we going to have, in this action, a non-
45 transferability clause attached to the distribution? The reason
46 why I'm asking is that, if we don't, we are going to, I guess,
47 penalize folks for leasing out shares, but the recipients would
48 have the full latitude to turn around and lease it out the minute

1 we are finished with the distribution.

2

3 Unless we attach a non-transferability clause to this, it would be
4 difficult to justify a distribution based on landings when we
5 cannot make sure that the recipients are going to land what they
6 receive, and so just are we going to have non-transferability
7 conditions for the scamp and black grouper?

8

9 **DR. STEPHEN:** The landings distribution is similar to how, in
10 essence, we distributed shares at the start of the IFQ programs,
11 right, and so they were based on a landings time series and
12 distributed out. In this case, if we were basing it on either the
13 landings or the 50-50 or the other shallow-water grouper share
14 percentage, right, it's an IFQ, and it's fully transferable.

15

16 The intent behind the landings and 50-50 is to at least take the
17 distribution of the shares for these two new share categories based
18 on past landings history. What someone chooses to do with that
19 after the fact is, you know, the flexibility within the IFQ
20 program, and so there would always be transferable criteria allowed
21 for this. Otherwise, it becomes a very different IFQ program.

22

23 Then the people who bought shares, and I need to look it up, but
24 there are very few share transfers in general throughout a year at
25 all, and I will take a look and see how many we've had of other
26 shallow-water grouper shares. They also have some of the lower
27 share transfers in general as well, but we could get an
28 approximation of how many people bought shallow-water grouper
29 shares in 2025.

30

31 **DR. DIAGNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I said only two questions,
32 and so, just to make sure I understand, so let's take one of them,
33 100 percent based on landings, and so, at the end of the day, there
34 is going to come a penalty for leasing out shares.

35

36 If I lease out all of my shares, and someone else is landing them,
37 that someone else is going to presumably receive shares, and I
38 won't, but the part, I guess, that doesn't, you know, close the
39 circle for me is that that recipient, when they get the shares,
40 can turn around and sell them to anyone else, including myself,
41 who just lost them. That's why I was asking for transferability
42 provisions, and I don't know, and there is something maybe I'm
43 missing in this.

44

45 **DR. STEPHEN:** Assane, I would just say that, you know, in general,
46 since the start of the IFQ program -- You know, initially, and
47 let's just take shallow-water grouper. In 2010, 98 percent of all
48 the landings were landings by people who also had shares, and that

1 percentage has decreased over time, similar to what it has in each
2 IFQ share category, right, and, as fishermen are going from being
3 strictly harvesters to selling the allocation to other people,
4 right, which is sort of where the annual reviews have pointed out
5 -- Sorry. The five-year reviews have pointed out some of this
6 discrepancy between those landing and those holding the
7 privileges.

8
9 In shallow-water grouper, we went from 98 percent of the landings
10 being made by those with shares in 2010 to 46 percent of those
11 landings being made from accounts with shares in 2024, and, even
12 looking at that, that does not mean that those accounts with shares
13 did not also purchase additional allocation in order to make some
14 of those landings.

15
16 This is a pattern we've seen in all the share categories
17 throughout, and so, in essence, the new share categories being
18 distributed by landings or 50-50 resets that back close to what we
19 saw at the start of the programs, and whether fishermen continue
20 in that behavior of doing both landings and the selling allocation
21 would be up to them.

22
23 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Mr. Strelcheck.

24
25 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Maybe pulling this all together, and, Bernie, can
26 you go back to slide 4 for me, and I want to thank Jessica Stephen
27 and Lisa, because I think they provided us some hypothetical and
28 real-world examples.

29
30 Getting to, to some extent, the comment by Assane, you know, I
31 think a lot of this comes down to what is our goal and objective
32 for the program, right, and there's certainly people that are going
33 to benefit, and potentially people that are going to be impacted,
34 depending on decisions we make.

35
36 At the last meeting, there was some discussion about, well, let's
37 just let the market kind of figure things out, right, but I think
38 black grouper, what's on the slide, is a great example of the
39 challenge that's before us, which is we have a substantial amount
40 of accounts that aren't landing black grouper or scamp, right, if
41 you look at the scamp slide, but yet they would be getting
42 shareholdings and the allocation that comes along with it, right?

43
44 The scenarios that we're looking at essentially have a
45 redistributive effect, and, depending on whether we want to just
46 stick with the status quo of you use your other shallow-water
47 grouper shareholdings, and, you know, send quota to accounts that
48 aren't landing it, or we want to take a 50-50 approach, which

1 allows for some shares to be maintained for those that are not
2 landing it, or we're distributing everything to accounts that are
3 only landing those species, right, I think is the decision before
4 us.

5
6 I know we've spoken a lot, at this council, about the focus on
7 trying to get quota in the hands of the fishermen, right, and so
8 that's why I keep emphasizing, you know, the importance of this.
9 Will this be exactly correct? Will there be people that maybe
10 want to transfer their quota shares away that are rewarded by quota
11 shares?

12
13 Absolutely, right, and we can't, obviously, address every single
14 scenario, but at least some of this gets at trying to get quota
15 more in the hands of the fishermen, from my perspective.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Mr. Strelcheck, and so I see a couple
18 other hands. I do just want to -- What I would like to do is we
19 do have another action that we need to go through, on Action 3,
20 and then we need to work through an entire document here, and so
21 there will be further opportunity, obviously, to kind of go through
22 some of these details. We've had some really good discussion, but
23 I did see a couple hands raised that I want to get to first. Dr.
24 Banks, and then Captain Walker.

25
26 **DR. BANKS:** I appreciate both Lisa's and Jessica's presentations
27 here. I don't know that this is the time to change the rules mid-
28 game. I think we're going through an IFQ reform, and so I think,
29 to get this document in place, it might be cleaner to stay status
30 quo, and maybe we either go with Alt 1, or consider this action
31 rejected, and I'll look around the table for an appetite.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Banks. I think my
34 recommendation there would be, as we're kind of working through
35 the actual document, then maybe we can make kind of recommendations
36 there, as we're action-by-action, if that works for you. Captain
37 Walker?

38
39 **MR. WALKER:** I'm fine with just wrapping this up before we get
40 deep into the discussion, if you want to finish this last action,
41 and let's go ahead and do that, and then we can talk.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I think that would be prudent, just to kind of
44 move this along a little bit here. Okay. I'm seeing some heads
45 nod at the table. Dr. Hollensead, I'm going to pass it back to
46 you for Action 3.

47
48 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Stephen, and sorry.

3
4 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going back to the
5 presentation, and it's slide 12. Okay, and so now we're going to
6 switch gears a little bit, and so now I'm only going to be
7 discussing the black grouper complex, so those two species, just
8 that, and specifically also the recreational sector, looking at
9 accountability measures, and so that's all that's being considered
10 in this action.

11
12 The alternatives here would be, Number 1, not to establish any
13 recreational sector accountability measure. The second
14 alternative would be to establish a post-season recreational
15 accountability measure, and that would be implemented for the black
16 grouper complex if the recreational ACL and the black grouper
17 complex ACL is exceeded, and so that's -- What I mean by complex
18 ACL is the recreational and the commercial, and so, in years
19 following an overage, you know, this is when this would be
20 reviewed.

21
22 Alternative 3 would sort of have a similar mechanism, in terms of,
23 okay, we're looking at when there is an overage of the black
24 grouper complex, or black grouper ACL and the black grouper complex
25 ACL, but this time we're going to be looking at a running average
26 as well as the average of those ACLs to combine those, but sort of
27 the linchpin mechanism is still the same, but, you know, either
28 post-season or using a three-year average, and so that's the
29 difference between Alternative 2 and 3.

30
31 Trying to explore, because, you know, looking at this from the
32 black grouper complex, this is sort of the first time this complex
33 has come about, and so what might be appropriate, and so sort of
34 worth exploring some of these things, and so perhaps exploring a
35 three-year moving average.

36
37 The question is does a three-year moving average provide a better
38 prediction of black grouper complex recreational landings than
39 assuming what you caught last year is what you caught this year,
40 and so that would be the most rudimentary thing that you could
41 say, right, in terms of predictive analysis.

42
43 We looked at comparing what's called like a naive prediction, and
44 so that says, you know, what I caught last year is what I'm going
45 to catch this year. You can also take that three-year average,
46 which is what's being considered here, and so that would be a
47 running average of the most three recent years of landings, and
48 see how well that does in predicting the next year.

1
2 Then just for, you know, giggles on my own, it was, you know, what
3 about a weighted three-year average, and so a three-year average
4 is still a weighted average, but you weight one year 33 percent,
5 the second 33 percent, and the last one 33 percent, but a weighted
6 average would be like, well, let me take into account different
7 years and see if I need to weight them more closer to that year,
8 the first year, that kind of thing.
9
10 I won't get into it, but I actually used Solver in Excel to optimize
11 for the lowest mean square error to get to that, and so, if you
12 want to talk about it more, I'm happy to do so, but we certainly
13 don't have to do so now. It's also in Appendix D, if you need to
14 look at it.
15
16 Here was sort of the results, and so, on the X-axis, you have the
17 years, and in the -- I actually went back to like the mid-1980s
18 for this, but this is just a snapshot focused on 2013 to 2023, and
19 so that's on the X-axis, and on the Y is the harvest in pounds for
20 the black grouper complex, and so those two species together.
21
22 The total is that dotted line right there, and so that's what the
23 estimates were. That yellow line is that naïve, and so it's
24 actually just that total line shifted, and so, in 2012, there was
25 actually an uptick in that, and so that's what you're seeing there,
26 in the naïve there, and then the gray and green colors are the
27 various three years.
28
29 What you would be looking for is you're like, okay, which one of
30 those lines is closest to the dotted one, because that would tell
31 me how good I am at predicting it, and it turns out the naïve
32 analysis, you know, the one that's like, hey, just whatever I
33 caught last year is what I caught this year, is a little closer to
34 that line, especially when the landings are trending in either
35 direction.
36
37 To get back to our question of does a three-year moving average
38 provide a better prediction of black grouper complex recreational
39 landings, the answer is at least, no, not -- It does not appear so
40 initially.
41
42 The three-year average has difficulty capturing if there are any
43 truly-needed management measures where landings are trending in
44 any direction, as this approach can create a bit of a lag, right,
45 and so what might be happening three years prior is affecting what
46 you're thinking is going to happen years down the line, and so
47 it's a little difficult to reconcile this if there's a trend either
48 way.

1
2 I would say more investigation is warranted, necessarily, but, at
3 least from just a quick glance for black grouper, it doesn't seem
4 like you would get a whole heck of a lot of benefit, while also
5 requiring a little bit more complicated methodology with which to
6 come up with that, but, again, this is a brand new kind of complex
7 that we're looking at.
8
9 We're just looking at it recreationally, and so it still begs the
10 question of do we have an analysis that can be conducted to compare
11 how historical black grouper complex recreational landings look
12 relative to a new recreational ACL that we want to consider, and
13 that should be Action 3.
14
15 Well, the answer is yes, and so this top table here is all of the
16 -- It's the catch limits considered in Action 2, and that
17 recreational ACL of 83,109 pounds, and so what I did is I looked
18 at the black grouper complex recreational landings, and I looked
19 from 2000 to 2023, and I took that average, and then I also looked
20 at what the PSE, and so the proportional standard error, and so
21 how these things are done is, you know, an estimate is created
22 from the recreational data collection.
23
24 Then it says, well, how confident am I in that number, and you
25 know, if I'm not particularly confident, you know, I'm going to
26 apply a 0.9, multiply it by 0.9, and, if I'm really, really certain
27 of it, then I'll apply 0.1, and so that's sort of how you get your
28 error estimate, and then that's my completed and finalized
29 estimate, and so that's what I looked at, is those ranges over
30 time.
31
32 Then I developed a negative binomial probability distribution
33 using that average, and so what it says is I'm going to take this
34 distribution from 2000 to 2023, and that's where I'm sort of going
35 to center my probability distribution.
36
37 Then I'm going to say it's about as wide as I need it to be, at
38 about a level of, you know, 0.45, and so I set a floor of zero,
39 because you can't catch a negative fish, but then I also set a
40 ceiling, and so the highest level of observed landings, multiplied
41 by a PSE of 0.45, and that's sort of the median PSEs that was
42 observed through that time period, because I don't want to catch
43 like -- The probability of distribution would allow you to catch
44 like ten million pounds of black grouper, hypothetically, but I
45 know that can't possibly happen, right and so I put a little
46 ceiling, put a floor and a ceiling.
47
48 Now I'm going to run 200 simulations, and so I say what if we had

1 the years 2000 to 2023 200 times, and we went through that exercise
2 200 times, and that's my simulation, and then I varied the PSE
3 values, and so how confident do I feel in terms of my recreational
4 data simulated and collected? You know, I feel really good about
5 it at 10 percent, or I don't feel very good about it at all at 90
6 percent.

7
8 Here's an example of an output that you get, and so there's year
9 on the X-axis, and on the Y is the value, and so that's my
10 recreational estimate of landings. That dotted line, on the tippy
11 top, is the recreational ACL being considered in Action 2, and
12 that black line, that's on the bottom, that's the average black
13 grouper complex landings from 2000 to 2023. Those pastel lines
14 jumping back and forth, those are my simulations.

15
16 Now this one is a PSE of 10 percent, and so you can see it's like
17 snuggled up real nice to the average, because I feel super
18 confident about what it is that I'm doing in this simulation.
19 Okay, but let's go nuts, right, and like let's go crazy, and we
20 say, okay, well, I'm going to do this, but I'm also going to say
21 I'm highly uncertain about it, and let's see what it does.

22
23 You get these higher variations, right, and you get these higher
24 amplitudes, in terms of what you can catch, but only 2 percent of
25 the time did I actually exceed the recreational ACL, and so, in
26 all those simulations, all of those thousands of estimates that I
27 pulled out there, only 2 percent of the time was I over the
28 recreational ACL, and so not very much.

29
30 At no point in any of these simulations where I ran anything did
31 I come close to the complex ACL. Not even close, and so what it
32 seems to indicate, or the simulation seems to show, is that the
33 historical recreational harvest for these two species, or this
34 complex here, is lower than the catch limits we're setting,
35 especially if you're considering it against the stock, or the
36 complex ACL, and excuse me, and so there's very low probability of
37 the recreational landings exceeding the recreational ACL
38 considered in Action 2, and it certainly didn't do that within
39 comparing the complex ACL.

40
41 I might recommend some potential revisiting of the language in
42 Alternatives 2 and 3, you know, maybe just sticking to the
43 recreational ACL, in terms of looking at it. Otherwise, you don't
44 have a lot of evidence, necessarily, to suggest that, you know,
45 Alternative 2 and 3 are that different from the no action, because,
46 if you set something that you're never going to hit, you know,
47 establishing it, you know, may not be prudent, and so that's the
48 sort of the exploration analysis, exploratory analysis, and if

1 anybody has any questions about.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think we do. Dr. Allen.

4

5 **DR. ALLEN:** Lisa, thank you. So, summarizing this whole thing
6 since we started at lunch, I understood your simulation. In four
7 years on the SSC though, I'm not sure I ever saw anything as
8 complicated to understand as the previous allocation discussion we
9 have between all these options. There's a lot there.

10

11 With regard to the black grouper complex, we honestly don't have
12 a sense of what the PSEs will be around the recreational landings,
13 right, but I was glad to see the three-year average as an option
14 in here, because of what I would anticipate would be a similar
15 place we would find ourselves to where we were with deepwater
16 grouper, that the landings are going to be highly uncertain, but
17 your point that these simulations is a good one, and it's, even
18 with highly uncertain landings, we're not likely to reach the ACL,
19 and so why not just go with the regular one-year thing, and so I'm
20 in agreement with your conclusions there, and so thanks.

21

22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any other questions, comments for Dr.
23 Hollensead? I mean, I think I read you loud and clear in this,
24 Dr. Hollensead. It's almost like keep it simple, stupid, and while
25 that hurts my feelings, it's good advice here. I mean -- Anyways,
26 and so I think we just have maybe finishing touches on this
27 presentation, and then we can kind of work through the document,
28 unless there's other questions or comments about Action 3 in here
29 that Dr. Hollensead has presented. Seeing none, Lisa.

30

31 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thanks Mr. Chair, and so just one last slide, and
32 this is to give you an idea of the timing for this. Just a reminder
33 that SEDAR 68 was completed nearly three years ago, and so, in
34 March, it will be three years, and so the time is sort of ticking
35 to make sure that, you know, we get these catch limits in that are
36 certainly set for the conservation and the sustainability of the
37 harvest of the complexes.

38

39 Certainly, you know, everything that goes with that, and this also
40 includes information that it's consistent with BSIA, that sort of
41 thing, and Action 1.2 will require a little further analysis.

42

43 Unfortunately, due to the shutdown, we weren't able to write that
44 section up in the document, and so we gave the presentations, you
45 know, and I think, Jessica and I did the best we could, in terms
46 of trying to at least give you that information, so that you had
47 that handy, but that would have to be still written up at that
48 point.

1
2 All the other actions have sort of their necessary analysis. You
3 know, for Action 3, I was able to sort of go through those, and I
4 did, before the shutdown, speak with the IPT about those, and so
5 they did, you know, state and agree that it could be used to inform
6 that action, and so I just wanted to make sure that there was
7 understanding, you know, if this body was interested in looking at
8 this for final action consideration in January, meaning just sort
9 of where you were at along the development of the timeline of this,
10 and that's all I have, Mr. Chair, and I'll take any questions, if
11 there are any.

12
13 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you very much, Dr. Hollensead, and thank
14 you, Dr. Stephen, for presenting there too. All right. Are there
15 broader questions about kind of what we saw today relative to these
16 two particular actions, and, again, we're going to kind of dive
17 into the document here, so we can kind of -- Go ahead, Captain
18 Walker.

19
20 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. Back to the beginning
21 here, the Action 1.2, and so I spent a lot of time evaluating all
22 these options. I talked to Dr. Stephen several times last week
23 about it, and then I started talking to a bunch of the commercial
24 guys, and I sat in with the shareholders yesterday, and, to me, my
25 overarching opinion, and the one that I delved from speaking with
26 others, was that there's little support for options that take away
27 from people who bought in and give to those who didn't.

28
29 I would point out that shallow-water shares have been dirt cheap
30 for a long time. They've been like six-dollars a share, and that's
31 not the allocation, and that's a share, and so there weren't huge
32 financial hurdles keeping people from buying in if they wanted to
33 get some shallow-water quota, and, if that was the price -- The
34 fish sells for about eight-dollars a pound, and so you could
35 literally buy a share, that you own for perpetuity, or whatever
36 the timeframe may be actually, and profit two-dollars that year
37 and then own it for there out.

38
39 I don't think there's a real good explanation for people that have
40 been overburdened and that couldn't afford scamp in the fishery.
41 At some point, you do have to invest a little bit in your own
42 business.

43
44 I would also suggest that some of this, the low price, would have
45 already in some manner shifted the shares where people want it to
46 be. It's not all bundled up over here. The market has been pretty
47 easy on scamp. If you want it, it's there, and so I think it has
48 probably, to some extent, migrated to the people who need it. I

1 know it doesn't necessarily show up there in the landings, but,
2 then again, they only catch a small fraction of the scamp anyway.

3
4 With that said, I think, if we can do this, I'm in favor of no
5 action, although I think it would be better -- I think it would be
6 better if we just remove Action 1.2 from Amendment 58A. That way,
7 it would naturally default to going back based on percentage, the
8 way it's always been done, and it won't have to go through any
9 more work, through the council staff or anybody, and nobody will
10 have to try and process what Dr. Stephen just showed us and figure
11 out -- I mean, you can see the difficulties in trying to do this
12 any other way.

13
14 I've waded through it, and, to me, in my opinion, the best way is
15 to let the shares go where they're already, you know, based on
16 percentage of ownership now, and, if they need to shift around,
17 they can.

18
19 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** To that point, Mr. Strelcheck?

20
21 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and a question for Ed, and so would you
22 suspect, given the substantial reduction in the scamp quota, that
23 share prices for scamp are going to go up substantially?

24
25 **MR. WALKER:** Oh, there's no doubt. Yes, they will go up fivefold,
26 maybe.

27
28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Then my broader concern, regardless of the share
29 price for scamp, is how do we see the market settling out for this,
30 because you essentially are going to have a lot of quota shares
31 for black grouper in the hands of people not landing black grouper,
32 and a very tight market for scamp, because of a reduced quota, but
33 potentially also sending a lot of scamp quota to people that aren't
34 landing scamp.

35
36 **MR. WALKER:** You will be sending scamp quota to people who already
37 have it, right, because you're going to eliminate sending it to
38 people who just leased it from other people, and so you're really
39 not making any change there.

40
41 On the black, there's going to be way more of that. For now,
42 there's going to be way more of that than anybody needs, and so
43 that lease price is going to be free to thirty-cents, and so
44 allocation on black, I don't think, for now, is going to be an
45 issue. I know there's a black grouper stock assessment in the
46 works that may change that, but, yes, when we cut this quota back
47 like that, it's going to change things a lot, but, in my mind, I
48 don't see a better alternative method of shifting things around at

1 this time, even though that is definitely going to happen.
2
3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Sanchez.
4
5 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes, and I was just going to ask Ed, and, if that
6 was a motion to remove Action 1.2 from the document, I would like
7 to second it.
8
9 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker, was that a motion?
10
11 **MR. WALKER:** Sure. I'll make the motion for discussion, if nothing
12 else, the motion being to remove Action 1.2 from 58A.
13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** It looks like Bernie has got the motion on the
15 board to Considered but Rejected, and you can look at what's on
16 the board there, Ed. Is that --
17
18 **MR. WALKER:** Is that the proper terminology?
19
20 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, sir.
21
22 **MR. WALKER:** So I'm not selecting any alternative with what. **Okay,**
23 **and, yes, I'm okay with that.**
24
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Does that work for you, Mr. Sanchez? Were you
26 the seconder?
27
28 **MR. SANCHEZ:** Yes.
29
30 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Simmons?
31
32 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thanks, Chair. We have a couple new
33 council members, and so just maybe try to explain things a little
34 bit, and so, if you were to select Alternative 1, we would leave
35 it in the document, and staff would continue the analysis, and so
36 that -- By taking it out, we're no longer working on that in this
37 amendment, and so I just wanted to kind of make sure everybody
38 understood that, as new council members.
39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Simmons. Okay. We have a
41 motion on the table. Is there any further discussion about the
42 motion? Mr. Strelcheck.
43
44 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, I'm going to channel Mara here, because I
45 think it's important that we have a record, and I know Ed and John
46 have weighed-in, but I would be interested in others' perspectives
47 on this with regard to why we're removing it from the document,
48 just so that we have a solid record.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Banks, and then Mr. Sanchez.

3
4 **DR. BANKS:** I'll just state, again for the record, that I agree
5 with this only because we're already in the process of redoing the
6 IFQ program, and discussing reform, and I think anything but this,
7 accepting the alternative or removing this entire action, is
8 changing the rules mid-game, and so nobody that's bought this quota
9 has had the chance to say, okay, well now I need a four-year
10 landing history, or whatever, and so I think this is the only fair
11 option while we're also in the process of reforming that program
12 and discussing.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Banks, and, to that point, I
15 mean, I certainly -- Throughout the Amendment 60 process, I think
16 that's been a common theme, is we don't want to take shares away
17 from people in any capacity there. Mr. Sanchez.

18
19 **MR. SANCHEZ:** I don't know if it helps build the record, or it was
20 an after-lunch thing, but, watching the presentation, which
21 Jessica always does great, but I could literally see the blood
22 leaving everybody's face across from me.

23
24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That was a useful comment, Mr. Sanchez. All
25 right. Dr. Allen.

26
27 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I support this motion as well.
28 I feel like this Action 1.2 was trying to do too much. We have a
29 really solid scamp assessment, that's getting older by the day,
30 and there's a need to move forward on that. I think this would
31 hopefully streamline that process and allow management to happen
32 for the scamp, and we can move forward.

33
34 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Allen. Any further discussion
35 on the motion on the table? Okay. Seeing none, let's do it this
36 way. **Are there any objections to the motion on the table? Seeing**
37 **none, the motion carries.**

38
39 All right. Thank you all. Dr. Hollensead, since we are trying to
40 move this potentially forward for approval for a public hearing,
41 would you like to work through some of the other actions that are
42 in here, to get preferreds, or what is your --

43
44 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Mr. Chair, if possible, yes, and I would go
45 through just sort of action-by-action and just remind everyone,
46 you know, what has been selected as preferred, and what not, if
47 somebody has changed their mind, or they want to double-check what
48 they've got, so we're all on the same wavelength, would be good.

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Sounds good to me.
3
4 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay. Bernie, if you wouldn't mind pulling up
5 the document and going to Action 1.1, and so we jumped a little
6 ahead, and that's fine, but there's actually no preferred
7 alternative here, and so this action considers whether or not you
8 want to break up the shallow-water grouper complex.
9
10 Considering we've selected preferreds in some of the other ones,
11 I think that's the case, but certainly that has not -- Also,
12 Alternative 1 is inconsistent with the best scientific information
13 available, and so it's not a viable alternative, and so here's a
14 bit of a softball. If we get a motion to make a preferred here,
15 we can get that in the record, and then staff can be directed to
16 make that the case.
17
18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any takers? We have Alternative 1 that's not
19 viable and Alternative 2 that is. Captain Walker.
20
21 **MR. WALKER:** If nobody is going to take this easy one, I'll take
22 it. **I don't want to hog the easy motions here, but, just to keep**
23 **us moving, I'll make a motion that we adopt Alternative 2 as**
24 **preferred under this Action 1.1.**
25
26 **MR. OSBORNE:** Second.
27
28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Second by Mr. Osborne. Okay. We have a motion
29 on the table in Action 1 to make Alternative 2 the preferred. Is
30 there any discussion? **Seeing none, is there any objection to the**
31 **motion? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Dr. Hollensead.
32
33 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Okay, Bernie, and we went through Action 1.2. Do
34 you mind going to Action 3, please, or, excuse me, Action 2. I'm
35 sorry. In this case, this was looking at setting up biological
36 reference points and status determination criteria, catch limits,
37 and sector allocations for the black grouper complex.
38
39 There was only two alternatives in this action, and so, at the
40 last meeting, you all had selected Preferred Alternative 2, and
41 just keep that -- That you will establish those criteria and things
42 like that for the new black grouper complex.
43
44 Bernie, could you please go to Action 3, and so this is the action
45 that was highlighted in the presentation looking at the
46 recreational accountability measure for the black grouper complex.
47 I don't know that I need to go through it again, but Alternative
48 1 would be the no action. Alternative 2 would be a post-season

1 AM. Again, I might recommend -- Certainly you could pick a
2 preferred if you would like, but I might recommend amending the
3 language to remove the complex ACL consideration, as the
4 simulations resulted in that it did not look like -- It was very,
5 very low probability that that would ever happen, and so that
6 language is in both Alternative 2 and 3.

7
8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I have a question there, Dr. Hollensead, and
9 so removing the complex ACL, if we're looking at Alternative 2
10 there, so then we would only have the recreational ACL be in that
11 kind of line there, and so I know we weren't going to exceed, or
12 it would basically never exceed the complex ACL, but what about
13 relative to the rec ACL? Would it ever -- Would we be looking at
14 any closures there?

15
16 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** In the simulation, where you had a really high
17 PSE, there was a chance, you know, a 2 percent chance, and so
18 that's still pretty low, but it could happen.

19
20 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

21
22 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and I appreciated Lisa's analysis. I guess
23 a couple of points I would make. One is I don't think it hurts to
24 keep the language in. Our goal is, obviously, to keep catches at
25 or below the catch limit as a whole, right?

26
27 The other point I guess I would make is that she's simulating based
28 on current conditions, right, and, if the quota comes substantially
29 down in the future, we already have this accountability measure in
30 place, something that can, obviously, be used where the potential
31 probability of exceeding the catch limit might go up over time.

32
33 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker.

34
35 **MR. WALKER:** Does that mean like the three-year average over the
36 one?

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** What I think, and correct me if I'm wrong, Dr.
39 Hollensead, but, from what I saw on the three-year average, it was
40 that it wasn't too informative, quite frankly, too useful, for
41 anything along those lines, and so do you want to speak to that?

42
43 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Yes, and, if we're talking about black grouper
44 recreational landings being uncertain, you're adding more
45 uncertainty into a more complicated methodology with which to do
46 it, and I actually don't know if those are additive, or actually
47 how that would work, but, you know, that's sort of the case. A
48 post-season, at least, if there is an exceeding of the rec ACL,

1 you know, NMFS would then monitor that following year and, you
2 know, adjust as necessary for the conservation of the complex.

3
4 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so I think, in an ideal world, we
5 would like to select a preferred, maybe considering what Lisa
6 highlighted about potential adjustment of some of the language in
7 here about removal of the black grouper complex ACL, and just
8 keeping it straight to the rec ACL, and is there any appetite for
9 that? Mr. Strelcheck.

10
11 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I'll make a motion to select Alternative 2 in
12 Action 3 as the preferred.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Keeping that complex ACL language in there?
15 Okay, and we have a second from Dr. Allen. Okay, and so we have
16 a motion on the table. In Action 3, to make Alternative 2 the
17 preferred, by Mr. Strelcheck, and seconded by Dr. Allen. Are there
18 any -- Is there any discussion on this motion? Mr. Strelcheck.

19
20 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I mean, I think Lisa has already done a great job
21 of explaining this, but I think, from a simplicity standpoint,
22 rather than using the three-year average in a single year, and, as
23 I just mentioned, I think including the complex in addition to the
24 rec ACL just provides for some added flexibility. It may not be
25 needed in the near-term, but longer term, as things change, it
26 will be available to us.

27
28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I would agree with Mr. Strelcheck. Okay. Any
29 further discussion? All right. **Are there any objections to the**
30 **motion that's on the table? Seeing none, the motion carries.** Back
31 to you, Dr. Hollensead.

32
33 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Bernie, can we go to
34 Alternative 4, please? Okay, and so now we've dispensed of all
35 things black grouper complex, and we're now in the scamp complex,
36 and so there's only two alternatives in this action, and this is
37 setting or establishing biological reference points and status
38 determination criteria for the scamp complex, and you all selected
39 that as the preferred, to go ahead and establish those as outlined
40 in the table there, mostly informed by coming out of SEDAR 68, and
41 so just to refresh everybody's memory there.

42
43 Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going to Action 5, please, and so
44 this is looking at catch limits and sector allocations for the
45 scamp complex. At the last meeting, you all selected, and, Bernie,
46 if you wouldn't mind scrolling down just a little bit, as the
47 preferred option, Preferred Option 2b.

48

1 If you recall, there was a little bit of exploration that we did
2 for this, and sort of that long time series, sort of an equal
3 haircut, to sort of look at how that might work out, and it actually
4 came out that there's only like one or two percentage points from
5 what is outlined here in Option 2b.

6
7 I think, you know, there's certainly an argument to be made that
8 this sort of looks like a middle-of-the-road option, and it
9 probably it is, as that, you know, the equal haircut in Option 2c
10 is very similar in the short time series, you know, that same
11 method, and, when you do the haircut through the longer time
12 series, you get the values that are largely there in Option 2b,
13 and so just to refresh everybody's memory on that. Any questions?
14 Okay. Next action, Bernie.

15
16 This is Action 6, and so here there was a preferred alternative
17 selected. There's three alternatives here, selecting for a
18 recreational annual catch target, and, again, there is some
19 uncertainty associated with this. This is the first time we've
20 had this complex together. It's just coming out of an assessment,
21 where we, you know, had some conservation measures here by reducing
22 the limits by about 50 percent, and so putting in an ACT to account
23 for that management uncertainty, you know, is probably here a good
24 idea.

25
26 It was selected for Preferred Alternative 2, which would sort of
27 consider the two fish together in the ACL/ACT control rule as a
28 single stock, and that would be consistent with what was done in
29 SEDAR 68, and so keeping that rationale over, and so that's what
30 was selected for Action 6.

31
32 Bernie, if you don't mind going to Action 7.1, and so Action 7.1
33 is going to establish a fixed closed season and recreational sector
34 AMs for the scamp complex, and so no preferred has been selected
35 here, but Alternative 1, the no action, would not establish a fixed
36 closed season for the recreational sector.

37
38 Given the cuts that are coming out from the catch limits in the
39 previous couple of actions, you know, that would probably lead to
40 unsustainable harvests at that case, and so probably something in
41 Alternative 2 or 3 would be better to meet those catch limits that
42 are being established in the previous actions, specifically Action
43 6 to the ACT.

44
45 Alternative 2, if you all recall, we did a shallow-water grouper
46 framework, for lack of a better term, a Band-Aid, right, so that
47 everything would go into place as this document was being
48 developed, and one of the actions considered in that framework

1 action was a recreational season. In that document, a start of
2 July 1 was selected, and so that would be that Alternative 3, if
3 I've got that right. Mr. Chair, I'll pass it back to you.

4
5 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Hollensead, and so we don't
6 have a preferred selected here. Obviously, this would be a new
7 recreational season, and so I think this definitely warrants some
8 discussion. I'm looking around the table, to see if there's any
9 appetite. Go ahead, Dr. Froeschke.

10
11 **DR. FROESCHKE:** Just as a reminder, when the -- Assuming that the
12 framework action gets implemented, that would close both the black
13 grouper complex and the scamp complex. When this one would get
14 implemented, it would no longer apply to the black grouper complex,
15 and that would revert back to a year-round season.

16
17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that, Dr. Froeschke. That was
18 certainly a consequence of splitting up these complexes and trying
19 to navigate that here, trying to fix that here. Okay. Any appetite
20 for selecting a preferred here?

21
22 I guess I have a question, just in general, and so we're talking
23 about fixed closed seasons here. Is there any reason why we would
24 work towards a fixed closed season, as opposed to just setting
25 what an open season would be, or that might be directed towards
26 Andy?

27
28 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I think it's just semantics, and so you just want
29 to reword it as an open season, rather than a closed season? I'm
30 fine with that.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Captain Walker.

33
34 **MR. WALKER:** So maybe refresh my memory, but the two alternatives
35 we have here both pretty much select closed January through May or
36 June, and I don't remember -- Did we bat that around and come up
37 with that? Maybe I forgot. I don't know, because it's going to
38 make a big difference to, you know, certain people.

39
40 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Dr. Hollensead, or Mr. Strelcheck.

41
42 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Well, so, going back to your point, I think the
43 reason it's the fixed closed season is because there's potential
44 for us to close during a window when we're projecting, you know,
45 to open, right, and so, under the preferred options, if we open
46 May 1 each year, it would close on August 10, and June 1 would
47 close September 17, right, and so I think we have to keep the
48 language as-is, based on that wording with the potential for a

1 closure at the tail-end of the year.

2

3 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Looking around the table here.
4 Dr. Hollensead, have you got something?

5

6 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Maybe it might be a little helpful, and so there
7 was a season duration analysis done for this action. Bernie, if
8 you wouldn't mind scrolling down to Table 2.7.1.1. Okay, and so,
9 in this case, there was actually two analyses done. One was using
10 the most recent three-year average to get an idea of, you know,
11 where effort is during that season, and then, based on the
12 alternatives in Actions 5 and 6, to give you an idea of what the
13 season duration might be.

14

15 That was done for here, and you can see those days open in that
16 table, but, Bernie, if you wouldn't mind scrolling down one more
17 table, to 2.7.1.2, and so this table uses a two-year average, and
18 the reason that we're using a two-year average here is we're also
19 now considering that it's likely for the recreational sector, given
20 the recent recreational management changes to gag, that it would
21 affect, you know, the recreational effort for scamp.

22

23 This table would take that more into account, so you can look at,
24 you know, what you would expect for the season days open from that,
25 and then make your selection of, you know, a June or July,
26 depending on, you know, what your appetite was.

27

28 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. Dr. Froeschke.

29

30 **DR. FROESCHKE:** I think I know the answer, but maybe someone
31 doesn't, but the assumption is that, if gag is open, then the catch
32 rate of scamp is higher, because you kept some bycatch of scamp.
33 Okay, and just so everyone knows, and so, as the gag season -- The
34 longer the gag season is, the higher the catch rate of scamp.

35

36 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for bringing up this table. I think
37 that's important to highlight there, that despite, you know, having
38 a fixed closed season, open season, whatever, it doesn't look like
39 you're going to get that full duration there, and that's for sure,
40 under any of these options here, and so just kind of pointing that
41 out.

42

43 Certainly we don't need to select a preferred right now. I'm sure
44 we would like to hear from the public on this, but, if there's no
45 appetite for it at the committee meeting, we do want to kind of
46 put this forward for public hearing, and so be thinking about that
47 potentially for Full Council, but I'm not necessarily seeing an
48 appetite right now for selecting a preferred. Okay. I think

1 there's maybe one more action, Dr. Hollensead.

2
3 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Yes, Mr. Chair. One more. Bernie, can you go
4 down to Action 7.2? This action would consider establishing a
5 recreational payback provision for the scamp complex. Again, this
6 is just the scamp complex.

7
8 Alternative 1 would have the no action, and so to not establish
9 that payback provision, and Alternative 2 would in fact establish
10 a payback provision, and so, if the recreational scamp landings
11 exceed the complex recreational ACL in a fishing year, and the
12 stock complex is overfished, NMFS would reduce the recreational
13 ACL and ACT in the following fishing year by the amount of the ACL
14 overage in the prior fishing year, unless the best scientific
15 information available determines that a greater, less than, or no
16 average adjustment is necessary.

17
18 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Fairly standard language as far as a payback
19 provision. A question I guess I have is so are we required to
20 implement a payback here, or is that kind of what the council --

21
22 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** I don't believe so. At the previous IPT meetings
23 that we had, where we were talking about creating a new complex,
24 and the various management measures, the IPT wanted to put this
25 forward to the council for their considerations, but it's my
26 understanding that it's not required. There are certainly lots of
27 other management mechanisms going in for the scamp complex, the
28 ACT, implementing the catch limits, and things like that, and so
29 to help the sustainability of the site.

30
31 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

32
33 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Yes, and, just to add to that, you're required,
34 obviously, to have catch limits and accountability measures.
35 Paybacks are encouraged as part of our National Standard Guidelines
36 for species that are overfished, but not required.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you for that Mr. Strelcheck. I think we
39 do have some concerns about scamp here, especially when this quota
40 gets reduced, and so I would just offer that for consideration,
41 depending on how the council wants to proceed here, but I will --
42 Are there any comments about Action 7.2 here? Do I potentially
43 hear a motion from Dr. Allen?

44
45 **DR. ALLEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. **I'll make a motion that we make**
46 **Alternative 2 in Action 7.2 the preferred.**

47
48 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. We've got a motion on the table from

1 Dr. Allen. Do we have a second? Second by Captain Walker. Okay,
2 and so the motion is, in Action 7.2, to make Alternative 2 the
3 preferred. Is there any discussion? Mr. Strelcheck.

4
5 **MR. STRELCHECK:** I recognize this is for the health and betterment
6 of the stock, right, to do this, but my concern was that, with the
7 substantial reduction in the scamp quota, we could quickly run
8 ourselves into a situation where we could have an overage, and not
9 have a fishing season, and, because it's not required, we still
10 could do post-season accountability measures that shorten the
11 season based on prior years overages, to at least partially
12 address, you know, past season performance, which would be
13 consistent with our accountability measure requirements, and so
14 just something to consider.

15
16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Appreciate that point, Mr. Strelcheck. Does
17 that spurn any further discussion on this motion?

18
19 **DR. ALLEN:** I think I would like to hear from the public on this
20 one, you know, tomorrow.

21
22 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay, and so are you thinking of withdrawing
23 your motion?

24
25 **DR. ALLEN:** Could we withdraw?

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** You can certainly withdraw your motion.

28
29 **DR. ALLEN:** I think I would like to hear more about this, because
30 I didn't consider that issue, and so I would like to withdraw it.

31
32 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. All right, and so it sounds like maybe
33 we want to -- Unless there's someone else that wants to put forward
34 a motion here, we'll hear from the public on a couple of these
35 alternatives, get a better understanding about kind of where
36 they're at, and then, maybe at Full Council, we can either select
37 a preferreds and then, I mean, ultimately trying to move this
38 forward to final approval for public hearing.

39
40 **DR. ALLEN:** Fair point.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That was a beast. Good job, Lisa. Thank you.
43 I appreciate it. Mr. Chair. Okay, and maybe we're not done.

44
45 **DR. HOLLENSHAD:** Bernie, would you go to the purpose and need,
46 please? This has been updated a little bit since you all last saw
47 it, as things have come more in line, and so, again, we've added
48 some language here to get more into the meat of what this was.

1
2 The purpose of the amendment was to modify the status determination
3 criteria, catch limits, sector allocations, accountability
4 measures for individual species within the shallow-water grouper
5 complex by creating the two new complexes.
6

7 The need for this action was to consider the new stock assessment
8 advice for scamp and yellowmouth grouper, and so, sort of went
9 over in the presentation, that that is consistent with the best
10 scientific information available, and to implement those measures
11 to avoid future overfishing, avoid triggering a rebuilding plan,
12 and to achieve OY for the species herein.
13

14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. Any
15 discussion on the purpose of need statement? Hearing none, check
16 that off the list. Okay. All right. Dr. Simmons.
17

18 **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SIMMONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and so just
19 think about, for Full Council, you know, if you want to take this
20 out to in-person hearings. We do have some funding in our request
21 for carryover that we have to spend by the end of the year, and so
22 we could do a couple of in-person hearings. We can look at what
23 we've had for participation in the past and think about -- Well,
24 we haven't don't these for scamp before, and so if we could think
25 about what would be the best use of our time, but, in order to use
26 the no-cost money, we would have to do it before the end of the
27 year.
28

29 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Yes, and let's consider that, too. To
30 each individual state there, let's think about this, and see how
31 we want to proceed there, and we can kind of discuss about that at
32 Full Council, to see what the best locations, if we wanted to do
33 in-person public hearings for this, would be. I agree, and maybe
34 we can work with council staff to understand maybe where some of
35 this might be. Okay. Mr. Chair, I think we're long overdue for
36 a break here.
37

38 **MR. DUGAS:** Yes. Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. We will take a break
39 and reconvene at 3:45.
40

41 (Whereupon, a brief recess was taken.)
42

43 **MR. DUGAS:** All right. We have one more agenda item that Dr.
44 Sweetman is going to run us through in Reef Fish today. Dr.
45 Sweetman.
46

47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before we get into that
48 last agenda item, I think we've got some housekeeping items

1 relative to shallow-water grouper that I think Dr. Hollensead wants
2 to touch on relative to kind of how share caps will be handled.

3
4 **DR. HOLLENSEAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, just a little bit of
5 housekeeping, so we can put in the summary and talk about it at
6 Full Council, but, when we go to write the action for distributing
7 or breaking up the shallow-water grouper complexes into the two
8 new ones, there will also have to be consideration of share caps
9 within that language, and so staff will get together and draft up
10 some of what that would look like, and then present it at Full
11 Council, and so I just wanted to get in there, and so thank you,
12 Mr. Chair.

13
14 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Dr. Hollensead. Okay, and so, as
15 the chair said, we have one more agenda item here, and that is
16 going to be, well, first of all, just to highlight that, obviously,
17 due to the government shutdown, we're going to kind of tweak this
18 a little bit here.

19
20 We're not going to have the Reef Fish IFQ landings, or any of the
21 other landings that we have, and so those will be given at the
22 January council meeting, and so just an update there, but that's
23 relative to the shutdown. With that, I don't know if we need to
24 read through the action guide here to provide state landings. Mr.
25 Rindone.

26
27 **REVIEW OF STATE PROGRAM LANDINGS FOR RED SNAPPER AND GREATER**
28 **AMBERJACK**

29
30 **MR. RINDONE:** The state directors are going to talk about their
31 state private recreational landings for red snapper for 2025,
32 including lengths and weights, and talk about projections for the
33 2026 season, as appropriate, and they are also going to discuss
34 the same for greater amberjack, as available. I think there was
35 some additional data that we're supposed to come in for that. Did
36 that get submitted, Kevin?

37
38 **MR. ANSON:** No.

39
40 **MR. RINDONE:** It didn't? Okay. Well, what's available will be
41 discussed, and so, Mr. Chair.

42
43 **FLORIDA RED SNAPPER LANDINGS UPDATE**

44
45 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** All right. Thank you, Ryan. It looks like
46 we've got Florida up first, and so I'll tee it off to myself here.
47 All right, and so, as Ryan highlighted, we're going to go over the
48 2025 Florida Gulf red snapper initial landings that we have, as

1 well as a greater amberjack update.

2
3 Just kind of a standard slide that I put in all these, just as
4 kind of a reminder about Florida's State Reef Fish Survey. This
5 covers thirteen species of reef fish that are fishing from a
6 private vessel. This is extended to both the Gulf and the
7 Atlantic. It's an annual no-cost designation.

8
9 We do have two survey components. The first is the mail survey
10 and dockside interviews, and we do supplement this with MRIP angler
11 interviews, and, as I always highlight, you know, a little bit
12 different than some of the other states, and not necessarily
13 designed for real-time monitoring.

14
15 I won't go over into the specific detail here, but Florida's Gulf
16 red snapper season is 126 days. It's split between a summer
17 component that is continuous, and it started Memorial Day weekend,
18 and continues for three-day fishing weekends in the fall, which is
19 what we're currently in here.

20
21 Because we were unable to get some of the landings data from MRIP
22 there, we've got landings thus far from the May and June component
23 that we have. We have currently landed 763,596 pounds, which is
24 about 28 percent of the quota. We do expect that to go up quite
25 a bit once we get those July landings, but we'll be able to provide
26 those at a later time.

27
28 Another component that we consistently talk about here is the
29 average weights and lengths that we have of red snapper. You can
30 see, in this last year, we did have an increase in both the state
31 charter weight and the private weight, respectively. They were
32 both going up, and showing consistent trends. Moving on to the
33 lengths, similar patterns that we see here. You see, on the
34 charter-for-hire side, it's a little bit more on the flat, and so
35 clearly we just had some kind of fat fish at that size here.

36
37 Moving into catch per unit effort for red snapper, again, you know,
38 this is based on reef fish angling trips here, but, when we're
39 looking at red snapper catch per unit effort, and your basically
40 point for this is really for comparison purposes for previous
41 years, to see kind of how CPUE has changed over time.

42
43 Again, we're only able to provide the month of May, which has not
44 been historically a season -- A time of the year that Florida has
45 fished, and so you can see that's why there's not really any
46 comparison purposes, and then you can see, for June, just that one
47 comparison in previous years, and it is a little bit smaller catch
48 per unit effort that we're seeing since 2023 and 2024, but

1 consistent with what we saw in 2022, and so overall relatively
2 average.

3
4 Now we'll go into both greater amberjack, a little bit different
5 part of this presentation here. Florida, over the last several
6 years, has moved through executive orders to try and set the state
7 season consistent with the federal season, and so, as kind of Andy
8 mentioned, when it offers up when the seasonal closure date is
9 going to be, Florida will initiate an executive order in order to
10 go consistent with that.

11
12 Again, you know, Gulf greater amberjack is one of our SRFS species,
13 so that second bullet there, and so they're supplemented with MRIP
14 intercepts, and it's the same across-the-board. I will say that
15 our 2025 and 2026 landings, from this most recent time period, are
16 not available yet, and so I'll be presenting data from the last
17 year.

18
19 Okay, and so this is where we were at. Florida's Gulf State Reef
20 Fish Survey estimated landings of about 223,000 pounds. Our PSEs
21 across this timeframe were about 20 percent, 22 percent, and I
22 think the entire purpose for this -- We don't have, obviously, the
23 federal presentation for what Gulf greater amberjack landings was,
24 but, just based on the MRIP data, MRIP was estimating about 700,000
25 pounds that was pulled from Florida waters there, and so just a
26 little bit of a comparison purposes.

27
28 These are the dockside sample sizes that we have for greater
29 amberjack. As you can tell, you know, not a ton of dockside
30 intercepts there, and it's really a function of greater amberjack
31 is in rough shape, quite frankly, and we don't see a lot of
32 intercepts across-the-board for greater amberjack, and so you can
33 see pretty consistent, you know, ranging from four in one year,
34 you know, to sixteen in a given year, but, last year, we had eight
35 MRIP intercepts, and, like I said, we supplement MRIP, or we
36 supplement SRFS with MRIP, and then we added another SRFS intercept
37 to that, and so a sample size of nine. Not a lot.

38
39 Moving on to the average weights for greater amberjack, you can
40 see just -- This is the first time we've kind of really looked at
41 these trends here. What we're seeing is state charter has kind of
42 gone up, and so we definitely do catch greater amberjack in state
43 waters. State charter is, obviously, limited to fishing just in
44 state waters and, for, private recreational, while we have seen
45 some decreases in size over the last couple years, you know, across
46 this time series, it is pretty average, I would say.

47
48 Similar patterns that we're seeing with lengths there, and nothing

1 earth shattering there. They're following kind of the weight
2 patterns, and then, moving into catch per unit effort for greater
3 amberjack, as you can tell, it's not -- You know, we're not
4 capturing a ton of them, but we can see we've had different season
5 openings and whatnot.

6
7 Obviously, we've changed the season structure in recent years here,
8 and so you can kind of just see the catch per unit effort that
9 we're seeing. Nothing too crazy and formative here, I would say,
10 and then our last slide, please, and this is just overall the
11 private recreational effort that we have for Gulf reef fish,
12 utilizing the State Reef Fish Survey program.

13
14 I kind of show this because we don't have, you know, directed
15 species effort there, and so we have to take these recreational
16 efforts that we have across the board for the thirteen reef fish
17 species that we manage and then compare that with greater amberjack
18 landings that they get per trip, and so I'm happy to take any
19 questions that we have on this, whether it's Gulf red snapper or
20 greater amberjack. J.D.

21
22 **MR. DUGAS:** Thank you, Dr. Sweetman. On slide 9, I believe it is,
23 I'm just questioning why the sudden increase in 2024-2025 versus
24 the other four years that are up there. It seems like, around
25 September and October, it shot up pretty quickly.

26
27 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and I think that's really a function of
28 kind of, obviously, the season opens in September, right, and so
29 you would expect to see a large increase there every year.
30 Relative to why 2024 was so different, I don't have an answer for
31 you there, quite frankly. I mean, we do see that pattern of a
32 significant increase in landings right off the bat there, but maybe
33 Mr. Rindone has some insight.

34
35 **MR. RINDONE:** Just, you know, anecdotally, anyway, last year's
36 storm season, you know, late summer and early fall, was a lot
37 busier, and so it was windy this year, but it -- You know, a lot
38 of people got blown out on several days, but storm activity --
39 Obviously, we had a quiet year in the Gulf this year, but last
40 year definitely had its bad moments also, and so maybe it could be
41 -- There could be a weather effect.

42
43 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and something we could certainly explore.
44 Dr. Banks.

45
46 **DR. BANKS:** I think -- Same slide. I think, on this slide, you
47 said MRIP had 700,000. Was that referring to last year's landings?
48 Okay, and so you don't know what MRIP this year's landings are?

1
2 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** That's correct.

3
4 **DR. BANKS:** Okay. Just clarifying.

5
6 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Mr. Strelcheck.

7
8 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Can we go to the last slide, and so just maybe a
9 comment. I don't know if you have noticed the same thing, but it
10 looks like there's kind of year-over-year reduction in fishing
11 effort that's occurring in the State Reef Fish Survey, and so do
12 you guys look into that? I mean, obviously there's just, you know,
13 less people going out fishing, less surveys coming in, and any
14 combination of any factors that you're seeing in your survey?
15

16 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and we're certainly exploring these
17 patterns here, trying to get, you know, more responses that we
18 get. I think, consistently across the board, we've -- You know,
19 it's not like we're seeing a major problem there, but we are seeing
20 a decline in responses there. Relative to whether it's a realized
21 actual change in fishing effort that's out on the water, I think
22 that's something that we're currently exploring, but that's a good
23 question. Any more questions for me? Okay. I think we can move
24 on then to the next one, and so that moves up to Alabama. Mr.
25 Anson.
26

27 **ALABAMA RED SNAPPER LANDINGS UPDATE**

28
29 **MR. ANSON:** Thank you, and, as Ryan stated earlier, I do not
30 currently have amberjack information with this. My apologies. I
31 hope to have it by Full Council. There's some issues related to
32 sample sizes for fish weights, and so I have to just pool data a
33 little bit differently than for the red snapper estimates.
34

35 Summary for the 2025 red snapper season, we opened as normal the
36 Friday of Memorial Day weekend, and this year was our first year
37 where we implemented a seven-day continuous season for long periods
38 of time. We had previously had like the 4th of July week open for
39 the full seven days, plus the bookend weekends on Friday and
40 Monday, but this was the first time we did this, and so we did
41 that through July 1, or to July 1, and then went back to our four-
42 day weekend schedule through September, realizing that we weren't
43 going to come close to meeting our allocation.
44

45 We opened up again for seven days a week beginning on September 2,
46 and we anticipate being open through the remainder of the year,
47 with the seven-day-a-week schedule.
48

1 The same as in previous years, sixteen-inch total length minimum
2 size, two-fish-per-person-per-day limit. As of October 19, the
3 estimated harvest was 545,700 pounds, or 82 percent of the
4 allocation, and, as I said earlier, the season will remain open
5 until the end of the year, or when the allocation is met, or
6 projected to be met.

7
8 A summary of the seasons by day, and it depicts the harvest, and
9 so you can see, in the early years, when we first started state
10 management under the EFP in 2018 and 2-19, those two years, we had
11 relatively fast seasons, as far as getting close to meeting our
12 allocations during those years. Then, in subsequent years,
13 particularly in the last few years, it's taken us longer, and we've
14 not met our allocation.

15
16 Here's the average weight, for private vessels in the green, and
17 state charter vessels in the blue, and it has been a declining
18 trend, as we've discussed here at council meetings. There's an
19 anomaly in 2023, where we had those large fish encountered during
20 a couple of interviews, intercepts in the state charter, and that's
21 why you see that bump-up, and the table at the bottom displays the
22 number of fish that those average weights represent, or come from.

23
24 All right, and so here's the average total length for the same
25 time period, 2018 through 2025. Again, that bump-up for the state
26 charter in 2023, indicating larger-sized fish, and the table at
27 the bottom, again, represents the number of lengths that go into
28 those averages.

29
30 Here's a compilation of the same graphs I provide in these
31 presentations, and so the one on the left is an estimated number
32 of vessel trips, with error bars representing 95 percent confidence
33 limits, for both private and in the green and state charter in the
34 blue, and we've seen a decline back in 2022.

35
36 We had -- That was the first year of calibrations, as I recall,
37 and we also had, during that summer -- That June was very hot, and
38 that impacted our -- Not only access, or the willingness of folks
39 to go fishing, but that is our key period there. That last week
40 of May, and into June, is when we see the most activity, and, if
41 bad weather comes up, hot weather, extended hot weather during
42 that time, it seems to affect the overall number of trips for the
43 year.

44
45 Then you can see, in the middle chart there, the mean number of
46 anglers per vessel trip, and the graph on the right there is the
47 mean harvest per vessel trip, and harvest includes those fish that
48 are reported as dead discards. I think that concludes -- No, and

1 so here's just a summary of the season duration by year, the season
2 structure, reopen dates and closure dates, if they're opened and
3 closed, you know, for an extended period of time, and then the
4 total days, and the allocation for those particular years, and
5 2025 is yet to be determined. That concludes.
6

7 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Anson. Are there any questions
8 for Kevin? Mr. Geeslin.
9

10 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Kevin, remind me, and how do
11 you do your waves?
12

13 **MR. ANSON:** So they're the same as the MRIP. It's six waves in a
14 year, two-month periods. January and February is Wave 1, and
15 November and December is Wave 6.
16

17 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any more questions or comments for Kevin?
18 Okay. Thank you, Mr. Anson. I think we will move on to our next
19 one, and I'm going to go to you, General Spraggins, from
20 Mississippi.
21

22 **MISSISSIPPI RED SNAPPER LANDINGS UPDATE**

23
24 **GENERAL SPRAGGINS:** All right. We have the Mississippi red snapper
25 season. I don't think this will take very long, since we only
26 fished a day or two, but we'll go forward with it. As far as
27 amberjack, we don't have anything to report, but, if we did, we
28 would shut the whole Gulf down, and so, you know, thank goodness
29 we don't report them, and so good thing about that.
30

31 All right. As you can see, our snapper, we had 79,047 pounds this
32 year, 96 percent of the ACL, and that was only forty-five days,
33 from May 23 to July 6, and we did not try to open back up. We
34 didn't want to take a chance of overfishing.
35

36 As you can see, our anglers per trip is about consistent, almost,
37 you know, 3.5, a little over, per trip, and that's holding along
38 for the last four or five years. As you can see, the vessels are
39 up a little bit from last year, because we had a little bit longer
40 season this year, as far as the poundage, around 3,000 vessels for
41 the year. The vessel CPUE basically held the same from last year,
42 at about 4.5.
43

44 Our weights are going up a little bit, and so that's good, and you
45 can see that trend, and they went down from 2023 to 2024, and then
46 started back up, and so it's good to see the weights going back up
47 and getting a trend for that.
48

1 Our private recreational average length is going up also, as it
2 went down last year, and then you had been seeing a large drop,
3 and now it's going back up, and so that's always good, but,
4 overall, Mississippi is holding about the same as normal. We are
5 -- Hopefully next year we'll have a little bit longer season, and
6 maybe be able to give a little bit better report. Any questions?
7

8 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, General. Any questions for General
9 Spraggins? All right. Seeing none, we'll move on to Louisiana.
10 Mr. Schieble.

11
12 **LOUISIANA RED SNAPPER LANDINGS UPDATE**
13

14 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Bernie, if you can go to
15 Slide Number 2, please. It's just a recap here of our season
16 structure for this year. As a reminder, we had a payback from an
17 overage of last year of 39,632 pounds, and so our allocation for
18 this year was 894,955 pounds.

19
20 We started the season with a May 1 opener, and we fished seven
21 days a week, with a four-fish bag limit, and we've continued to
22 fish for 175 days at the seven days per week schedule, and so we
23 haven't changed anything throughout the season, like we did last
24 year.

25
26 To date, we have about 97.8 percent has been harvested so far, and
27 I'll get a graphic up here in a little bit to show you that, and
28 we are now estimating, instead of November 9, and I just got some
29 landings in real time actually, and, looking at the most recent,
30 it's a very low number, because of weather, and so it's probably
31 going to be more like the 16th or the 23rd, but at least we're able
32 to do that on a weekly basis, and so we'll let you know.

33
34 This is kind of the breakdown of the landings by sector, and so,
35 our private recreational landings for this year, we have the
36 786,576 pounds, and then the state charters have landed 88,202
37 pounds, but, also, I put this slide up because I would like to
38 emphasize the fact that LA Creel is able to monitor the federal
39 for-hire landings. That's not part of our allocation, that 147,830
40 pounds, but that's what they landed during the season for this
41 year from June 1 to September 16.

42
43 This is just a graphic showing the difference of the 20,178 pounds
44 remaining, and you can subtract probably roughly only about a
45 thousand pounds from that for this week that I just received the
46 landings notice for. It's not official yet, but I'll know before
47 the end of the meeting this week what that is.

1 This is the comparison among years, just to kind of see where we
2 are, and it's very interesting, even though we're sort of trying
3 to find that sweet spot in angler preference, and so, if you
4 remember last year, we started the middle of April, and that's
5 that dashed orange line there from 2024, with a very early start,
6 and that skyrocketed a lot of access.

7
8 We used up a lot of allocation early in the year. We had to do a
9 closure, and then restart, and, this year, with the May 1 start,
10 it sort of seems like we're getting closer to that sweet spot of
11 angler preference, and what they really like, because that graphic
12 is running right up the middle of previous seasons.

13
14 Just for reference, week 22 on that graphic is Memorial Day
15 weekend. That's typically a big weekend for landings. July 4th
16 is week 27 on the graphic, and you can see a little spike there,
17 and then Labor Day was week 36, and Labor Day traditionally is not
18 a big weekend for us, even though we get requested to try to have
19 the season last through Labor Day by our commission, just so
20 there's access, I guess, that weekend, and it typically is an
21 average, at best, if not below-average weekend, and that's why you
22 don't see much of a spike in landings on that graphic.

23
24 These are weights. We have -- On the left side is the time series,
25 going all the way back to the inception of LA Creel, and so that's
26 when we switched over to LA Creel, in 2014, so the weights would
27 be standardized.

28
29 What I have on the right is when we started doubling the weight
30 and length sampling to get better data starting in 2021, and so I
31 zoomed that out a little bit, so you can see the error bars a
32 little bit better on that. Keep in mind over the time series here,
33 by the numbers at the bottom, we're really looking at a difference
34 of about 1.34 pounds since the start of state management in 2020.

35
36 We've heard a lot of discussion about, well, the weights are
37 dropping off, the lengths are dropping off, and we're looking at
38 1.34 pounds in here, and I don't see that as a significant change.
39 It does vacillate up and down in different years, and I think a
40 lot of that has to do with especially the blue line on this graphic,
41 which is the charter.

42
43 They've had better access now, the state charter fleet, to state
44 waters since we started state management, and that is typically
45 smaller fish, especially when they get earlier starts in the year,
46 like last year in April, or this year in May, and they're accessing
47 smaller fish, closer to shore, and they're able to get four of
48 those, the state charter, versus two of the federal for-hire, and

1 so it tends to change that average weight significantly over the
2 course of the year when that access to closer snapper fishing takes
3 place.

4
5 This is the lengths correspondingly, and a similar trend. The
6 orange, again, is the private, and blue is the charter, which is
7 combined overall. I blew out, again, the time series from 2021 in
8 the graphic on the right, once we doubled the weight and length
9 sampling starting in 2021, and, again, if you look at the
10 difference over the time series, from 2014, you're looking at a
11 difference in length of only 1.7 inches here.

12
13 That's not a huge significant difference, especially when you look
14 at the actual numbers at the bottom of that table, how much they
15 vary interannually up and down. I don't see 1.7 inches as much of
16 a difference over the time series at all.

17
18 This is age. I like to bring this up. You've seen me put this in
19 our report regularly, because I think it really tells the story.
20 We hear a lot of comments about the recreational management by the
21 states is not working, because the lengths and weights are trending
22 down on the pattern.

23
24 I think you have to include age, when you start looking at that
25 reference, and especially the orange line here, which is the
26 private recreational. The interannual variation, it goes up and
27 down about the same amount any given year as you go across, but,
28 on average, it stayed about the same, especially if you took out
29 2014, the first year in the time series for LA Creel.

30
31 In fact, the ages have gone up, and the average age is really
32 around six. It oscillates from five-and-a-half to six-and-a-half,
33 really, but the movement there is not much different any given
34 year, and that's good.

35
36 I added one more graphic this time to talk about age, and that's
37 the next one, Bernie, and this is sort of the age comps and
38 distribution. This displays basically the age-length comps over
39 the same time series. I know it's very cluttered with color, but,
40 essentially, what it's showing is that we have a large number of
41 three, four, and five-year-old fish in the system that are being
42 landed.

43
44 We've had large recruitment spikes identified in 2021, 2022, and
45 2023. That's what I would see when I look at this, and, also,
46 there's no evidence of age truncation in the fishery when you look
47 at this. We're still catching fish upwards of twenty years old,
48 all the way out to the end of that scale.

1
2 If there was a problem through state management, I don't think you
3 would see any of that. You would start seeing a whole bunch of
4 two-year-olds, and maybe three-year-olds, being caught, and that's
5 about it, and that's not evident, and so we do keep track of these
6 things.

7
8 This is the catch effort that we talk about basically with vessel
9 trips, and, interestingly, if you look at the bottom graphic there,
10 and the charter vessels are the blue line, and then, of course,
11 orange still is the private. The highest number of vessel trips
12 occurred this year, which was 11,713 for charter, and I think
13 that's an artifact of the lengthening of the federal for-hire
14 season this year.

15
16 We had a little bit longer end date on the federal for-hire season,
17 and I'm sure they got more trips in because of it. That's what I
18 would expect, especially since you don't see much difference with
19 the private. In fact, it's a lower number of vessel trips this
20 year, so far to date.

21
22 The next slide goes into basically the summary of our landings
23 table over time. This year, so far, as I said, we're running seven
24 days a week, four fish per person. Last year, we modified that a
25 little bit, with a start and stop. One thing I would like to note,
26 as you see in red, the years where we had overharvests, or
27 overages, and years in parentheses, if not red, where we had
28 underharvest.

29
30 If you sum the total for this, going all the way back to 2018, in
31 cumulative allocation, it's an underage in total for that entire
32 time series, and so I think the state management works, especially
33 on a long-term basis. There may be some years we go over, and
34 some years we go under, but, overall, it's an underage of the total
35 allocation, if you were to sum for that total time period in years.
36 I think that's important.

37
38 Moving on to the elephant in the room, amberjack, and so I have a
39 table here with the landings, in numbers of fish on the left, and
40 then landings in pounds on the right and this is in LA Creel units.
41 That's why it starts in 2014, and so if you look at, you know, the
42 most recent years, you can see where management changes took
43 effect.

44
45 2018 is where we changed the fishing year structure, and then,
46 again, we changed things in 2022. There's really been a drop-off
47 since then, as far as the private landings in weight, and then the
48 next slide is this year's landings so far.

1
2 We've gotten some comments from the council members, as well as
3 letters sent directly to my governor, regarding our choice to keep
4 amberjack open in state waters, and I kind of wish the folks that
5 wrote those letters would have looked at this presentation before
6 sending things to the governor's office, because in here you can
7 see that, once the season closed in federal waters, we haven't
8 landed any fish in state waters anyway, even though it's still
9 open until the end of -- Until the first of November, but we
10 haven't had any.

11
12 I don't -- I mean, I expect that, in nine miles, that you're not
13 really going to have a lot of access to amberjack, but the
14 potential is there. There are some spots that could potentially
15 hold them, and so we did not want to take that access away from
16 anglers.

17
18 The next and last slide is the catch effort, and this is really an
19 artifact of recent management actions. As I mentioned earlier,
20 you can really see the time series, especially on the graphic on
21 the bottom left-hand corner there, where, in 2022, we had the
22 emergency action, which adjusted the fixed closed season, and it
23 only allowed harvest from September and October, and that really
24 changed how anglers were able to land amberjack, for the most part.

25
26 Major changes there, and it's also led to amberjack, in Louisiana
27 at least, becoming almost a rare-event species, and, because of
28 that, our weights and length data are kind of all over the place,
29 and so I don't have graphics for those in here, because the error
30 bars, I think, are just so bad.

31
32 It looks terrible, and it really isn't worth trying to have a
33 discussion over. It's not very good. Prior to these management
34 changes, and the very short truncated two-month season and limited
35 access, we had really good data, and so I think that's really kind
36 of telling the story and that, you know, as these seasons are
37 getting shorter and shorter, we're getting less and less quality
38 data to be able to use in the future. That's it. I've reached
39 the end here, and, if we can maybe have some sort of discussion
40 about any of the slides I have, I would be willing to have it.

41
42 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Schieble. Any questions, or
43 comments, for Chris? Mr. Strelcheck.

44
45 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Thanks, Chris, for the presentation. Out of
46 curiosity, how many intercepts of amberjack do you guys see on
47 average year? I mean, I know just commented about it's harder and
48 harder to gather data, but are you seeing many intercepts of

1 amberjack?

2

3 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** So this is a good example. Looking at slide 14,
4 that table in there, I mean, it's -- You know, we had three weeks
5 this year. In the previous year, we would have those two months.
6 The total numbers are hit or miss in between. It's not like it
7 used to be where you had a longer season, especially when we had
8 the May season, and that overlapped with snapper season typically,
9 and it really comes down to where it's a hit-or-miss rare-event
10 species. I don't know the total number.

11

12 **MR. STRELCHECK:** Right, and I guess what I'm getting at is these
13 are expanded estimates, based on self-reported catches, right, and
14 so what's the expansion factor around this? There's, obviously,
15 a lot of uncertainty, I would assume, in terms of reporting and
16 compliance, based on the intercepts you're doing, correct?

17

18 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and the PSEs for these are over 30 percent. I
19 would say that they're probably in the forties, most likely, just
20 because of that rare-event species, but I don't know the exact
21 number of fish that would have come from last year, from 2024.
22 This is this year.

23

24 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Okay. Any questions for Chris? Any more
25 questions? Mr. Geeslin.

26

27 **MR. GEESLIN:** Chris, you all opened up a little earlier, and I'm
28 just wondering how your rec anglers responded to that. I can see
29 the catch pattern, but, generally, is that being favored, to open
30 up a little earlier?

31

32 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and so, this year, we did things a little
33 different for our commission. We actually did an angler survey,
34 prior to the season-setting commission meeting, to try to figure
35 out what is the avidity of these anglers, and what do they really
36 want to see? Is Memorial Day, you know, a huge thing, or starting
37 before Memorial Day is not a big deal? What about Labor Day? Is
38 that as important as we think it is?

39

40 It turns out that, no matter what you do, you're going to upset
41 about a third of your anglers, no matter what choice. It really
42 splits out about one-third, one-third, one-third for any one of
43 those things, but I think it did help, because that line, as you
44 saw in the graphic, is sort of shooting right up the middle of
45 previous seasons, and so maybe that is the sweet spot.

46

47 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** I've got a quick question for you, Chris, and
48 so, on slide 10 here, and, Bernie, if you wouldn't mind going into

1 that, and so it looks like your number of red snapper vessel trips
2 is significantly below kind of what you've had in previous years.
3 I'm wondering if you had any explanation for that. Is it because
4 you've kind of -- As you've expanded your season, you're not seeing
5 the reliance for people to just to kind of get out on the water,
6 and they're taking their time to go out fishing? I'm just curious
7 if you have any opinions as to what that might be.

8
9 **MR. SCHIEBLE:** Yes, and I think we're kind of seeing that in all
10 the presentations we saw today, is that, you know, it's a longer
11 season. Anglers aren't catching -- It's not a derby anymore, where
12 people thought I've got to get these done before a season closes
13 early in the year, because now they feel like, well, under state
14 management, there's consistency, and I know what this season is
15 going to look like, and so I can pick and choose when I want to
16 go.

17
18 Also, keep in mind, on this graphic, that's 2025 to-date right
19 there, and so that bar, last bar, will probably change a little
20 bit by the time I get to the end of the season of numbers in there,
21 but it probably still will be lower. I think it will look more
22 like 2022, but still be probably within statistical range of the
23 others.

24
25 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thanks, Chris. Any more questions for Mr.
26 Schieble. Mr. Anson.

27
28 **MR. ANSON:** Not a question, but, just to follow up, and I did not
29 mention it during my presentation, but I just wanted to -- Since
30 you brought it up, we did look at our dockside sampling data, and
31 we looked at the amount of anglers that were being counted during
32 the assignment over the time period, from basically 2018 forward,
33 and we have seen a drop-off. It is steady and consistent, from
34 the 2021 time period forward, at our public access sites.

35
36 Then just a comment about the weight, and we're seeing these little
37 ticks up here for this year. I think that ties into the effort,
38 and I'll be curious -- I know a point doesn't make a trend, but
39 I'll be curious -- If the economy does not do too well, it will
40 have an impact, more than likely, on trips, and I'll be curious to
41 see what happens in the next year with that, if it does impact.
42 We should see it continue to go up a little bit more.

43
44 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Yes, and interesting things here. Okay. Any
45 more questions, or comments, for Chris? All right. Seeing none,
46 last, but not least, Texas and Mr. Geeslin.

47
48 **TEXAS RED SNAPPER LANDINGS UPDATE**

1
2 **MR. GEESLIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. While the slides are coming
3 up, and there it is, I just wanted to give a shoutout to fellow
4 state directors. I get a lot of value, and we learn a lot from
5 each of your presentations, and I applaud my Cajun brother to the
6 left in really integrating some of that human science, and really
7 getting out and listening to their anglers about their preferences
8 for seasons. That's why I asked that question, so I find a lot of
9 value in these presentations.

10
11 All right, and so, for our red snapper season, we started off with
12 the same quota as we did last year, 286,000 pounds. We opened up
13 on -- Our state waters opened up on January 1 and ran through May
14 31. For our federal season, we project to run -- Well, we will
15 run 172 days.

16
17 That will close, and you all probably have noticed a Federal
18 Register notice, and a press release, and a shoutout to Andy over
19 there. I emailed him on Tuesday, October 28, and, lo and behold,
20 given his low staff load over there, and him working those extra
21 hours late at night, he got a Federal Register notice out
22 yesterday.

23
24 We turned around and issued a press release for the closure at
25 12:01 a.m. on November 21, and, subsequently, Ms. Muehlstein
26 provided a press release also, and so I think that's important to
27 communicate on multiple channels, multiple conduits, to our end
28 users, our anglers there.

29
30 As of, and I'll update this, because this is -- We turned this in
31 on the 24th of October, but as of Friday, which was Halloween,
32 including the almost 10,000 pounds of state headboat landings from
33 January through May, we are currently at 194,769 pounds, and that's
34 68 percent of our allocation there, and, like I said, we'll be
35 closing November 21 at 12:01 a.m.

36
37 All right, and here's the trends and patterns in the last five
38 years. You can see 2025 started out, and those are our January
39 through May state water landings, but, really, the beginning of
40 the season, especially in June, was really slow, for whatever
41 reason.

42
43 We know we experienced high wind days, choppy seas, and folks just
44 aren't getting out, and then I'll point to, you know, some of the
45 economic factors, and then maybe some of these extended seasons,
46 you know, and the reduced sense of urgency to get out and
47 capitalize on the fishery, and it may be playing a role in just
48 some of the reduced landings that we're seeing this year.

1
2 This is where we get into our average weights, and we see a high
3 degree of variability within a season. I was just looking at some
4 of our data from January 1 through May 31. Those are state water
5 landings, and we get a six-and-a-half-pound average. The first
6 two weeks of the season, June 1 through the 13th, we see a 2.6-
7 pound average.

8
9 Somewhere in the middle of the season, from July 26 to August 8,
10 and these are our biweekly reportings to NMFS, we get a four-and-
11 a-half-pound average, but check this out. Here in October, as we
12 see that variability, you know, those bigger fish moving inshore,
13 October 4 through 17, we see an 8.2-pound average, and here, within
14 just the last two weeks, October 17 through Halloween, we see an
15 average weight of 9.6 pounds.

16
17 That's a high degree of variation across the season, but,
18 regardless, across the years, that interannual variability, you
19 see that, both from the private and the charter sectors, the
20 average weight has gone down.

21
22 I will say that's -- You know, looking at the proportion of decline
23 there in our average weights, that's really just about a pound
24 from the private sector, from about five pounds -- From a six-
25 pound average over the last three years, dropping down to a five-
26 pound average.

27
28 I will say, you know, and I'll get to it here in a minute, but I
29 just want to preface by saying our charter trips, as you would
30 expect, on average, six anglers per boat, and our rec boats,
31 private rec boats, we're seeing an average of four anglers per
32 vessel.

33
34 Correspondingly with our average weight, you see a decline this
35 year with our average lengths. Again, the magnitude of that
36 dropping about, you know, a little over an inch in the private
37 sector, and a little larger decline, a couple of inches average
38 length, there in the charter sector.

39
40 Here are our vessel trips per year. You'll note there is no 2025
41 on there. That's because we are still in the middle of our -- We
42 have two waves. The way we bifurcated our season, or our year, we
43 have two waves, what we call a high-use wave and a low-use wave.
44 Those generate pressure estimates, and expansions, and we are still
45 in the middle of the high-use wave, but you can see the vessel --
46 Even the vessel trips, in the last year or so, in the private rec
47 sector in 2024, dropped off.

1 I will suspect, and speculate, that those will be even lower this
2 year, and it will be interesting to see what the charter trips
3 show as well.

4
5 This is the average catch in pounds that we see. The charter,
6 even this year, on the charter average catch, you can see it's a
7 much reduced overall haul, and not necessarily just quite half,
8 but a substantial decrease in the overall pounds being landed.
9 The same with the -- Not as steep of a decline, but still a reduced
10 landings there in the private sector as well.

11
12 All right. Getting into our greater amberjack, our amberjack regs,
13 we've got the one fish daily bag limit there. Of course, the
14 season, the federal season, is September 1 through October 31.
15 Our minimum length is a total -- Thirty-eight inches total length.
16 That's a little different than the -- We do a conversion from a
17 fork length to a total length for an effort of consistency across
18 all of our other fisheries regulations.

19
20 Just like we've heard today, we just don't see -- Especially in
21 the western Gulf, we don't see a whole lot of these fish come
22 across our creel surveys, and, consequently, our effort, our
23 landings estimates, are pretty small. I think the highest we've
24 seen in the last five years is 21,000 pounds, and that was back in
25 2023, and I'll show you that here in the next slide, please.

26
27 Here's our landing estimates across the sectors, and, again, we're
28 still in the middle of that wave, and so we don't have the 2025
29 landings there yet, but you can see the charter trips are landing
30 the bulk, except for that 2019, for whatever reason, and we just
31 didn't intercept -- We didn't intercept a whole lot of charter
32 boats, or they just weren't landing fish as much as they have, but
33 you can see some of the patterns in the landings estimates, again,
34 but, through both sectors, the highest we've seen is around 21,000
35 pounds. More common than not, we're in that 5,000 to 10,000-pound
36 landings estimates.

37
38 A high degree of variability here with the average weights. That
39 star indicates that we did not intercept any of those charter
40 boats, and so it's hard to calculate an average when you don't
41 have an intercept to provide you that critical data.

42
43 You can see the variability there. We're usually about twenty-
44 five to thirty pounds, except for that one year in 2021, and we
45 must have ran into some bigger fish, or simply the intercepts we
46 saw had bigger fish onboard, and a similar pattern in the lengths.
47 You can see the rec sector landing, on average, you know, about a
48 forty-inch fish, notwithstanding that year of 2021, and we had

1 some larger fish there.

2
3 The vessel trips per year, these are the expanded vessel trips,
4 based on those pressure estimates that I talked about with our
5 different wave seasons there. You can see the effort across the
6 sectors somewhat shifts in that 2021-2022 timeframe, where you're
7 seeing slightly more private rec trips than your charter trips.
8 Again, it will be interesting to see how 2025 stacks up there.

9
10 The mean catch per vessel, you can see that the charter fleet,
11 within the last several years, is simply out fishing, and catching
12 more fish per vessel. They've got more anglers onboard, and
13 they're outdoing the rec sector there in the last -- At least in
14 the last three years. To date, in 2025, we have not intercepted
15 a charter boat with greater amberjack onboard.

16
17 For the mean catch for the private, we're looking at about a
18 thirty-five-pound average on the private rec sector, and I believe
19 that should be the last slide.

20
21 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. Any questions for Mr.
22 Geeslin? Captain Walker.

23
24 **MR. WALKER:** Thank you, Mr. Geeslin. So, these trips per year,
25 are those trips with intercepts, or are those just trips, period?
26 I'm looking at it -- It says you had 103 amberjack trips in the
27 State of Texas.

28
29 **MR. GEESLIN:** So that's going to be expanded, and I can give you
30 a number of intercepts. The expanded -- That's a factor of -- You
31 factor in the pressure estimates, and those are expanded trips,
32 and so intercepts, and this, I think, gets to Andy's question that
33 he posed to Chris, from 2019 to 2025, we had a total of fifty-nine
34 total intercepts with greater amberjack.

35
36 **MR. WALKER:** Okay. Thanks.

37
38 **CHAIRMAN SWEETMAN:** Any more questions for Dakus? All right,
39 Seeing none, thank you, Dakus. Mr. Chair, this concludes the Reef
40 Fish Committee. We've already hit on Other Business, and so I'm
41 going to yield a couple hours back to the council there.

42
43 (Whereupon, the meeting adjourned on November 4, 2025.)

44
45 - - -